



[Ladder, Hat and Jason Shannon.](#)

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[Photo By Darin Back](#)

[Jason Shannon CD Release Show Listing.](#)

Listen to  Long Lost Friend from the new album.

With the advent of the American Idol T.V. show, it's not hard to realize that there is a large group of people out there who have pretty talented vocal abilities. Having that talent however is not necessarily a free ticket to super stardom, as many contestants find out.

Local singer/songwriter Jason Shannon has an incredible voice but also has the other qualities of someone who should be successful in music. He is good looking as well, and we all know that's all it takes to get ahead in the music business. Actually I was going to say it's his hard working attitude and his ability to create a song that fits his voice.

His new album bluesy, soulful and also meanders into folk, rock and reggae. Jason answered some questions about the new album and also how to do a dangerous photo shoot without getting fatally injured.

Rift: Who played on the new album and will this be the same as your live show?

Jason Shannon: The cast of players that contributed to my record is too long to name. You'd have to buy the record and read the liner notes to find out (hint hint....). But I can say that my live band emerged from these sessions and I'm very happy with the lineup right now and we're working hard to sound tight and cohesive, yet free to interpret the songs according to the moment.

The live show, in my opinion, is probably a lot more energetic than the record. Don't get me wrong, the record has good energy and the core of each song is a live take. But we're a lot more rocking now, and I'm not just saying that either. I've switched to electric guitar in the live setting and that definitely brings a different vibe to the sound. So hopefully we can get back in the studio sooner than later and document the evolution. All in all, I'm very proud of the record but I'm equally banking on live performance as being the vehicle which brings people back to the music... that and the songs!

Rift: You have a huge voice, that always seems to stay in tune and always sounds great. Is there a method to it, vocal exercises, or does any drinking and smoking add to it?

JS: Well, I'd have to kill you if I told you the answer. So take your pick. I will say this: I practice hard and pay attention, moment to moment, to what is projected outwardly. I feel like I'm getting better and better all the time. I even listen to the record and think, "Damn, I wish I could do that one again!" That thinking, however, may be a whole other dilemma. Drinking and smoking don't add to my approach. Other than that, my voice is what it is.

Rift: Do you have any influences that might surprise people?

JS: Yeah, but listing a pile of names is not my thing. I consider myself more of a creative human than a musician or songwriter or singer. Those titles are the cars I drive. At the core, I'm imagining things all the time or things are imagining me. It's been that way



since I can remember. I guess I haven't grown up and gotten stuck in the mud. A lot of influence comes through re-arranging the realities of the present moment via imagination. It's almost like playful projection rather than mundane projection. That's one way to explain it, and that's happening all the time. I think everyone's like that. The here and now is my biggest influence.

Rift: Are you really standing on a ladder in that picture on your album cover, or was that done with photoshop? If you were, was that difficult or scary?

JS: I am really standing on that ladder. And if you don't believe it, well then you don't believe in miracles because it's a miracle I'm not dead or gravely injured. The album shot was done up on Lake Superior last July. I went up there with a bunch of ideas and props. All my ideas bombed. I was bummed. Then, in the last hour, before being overtaken by a wind and rainstorm, I just sorta walked up there. Suddenly, I'm standing barefoot on the ladder and screaming at the photographer, Darin Back, to "Take the f—ing picture!" I remember being scared but there was a point where I became really calm and gave myself about 30 seconds of peace to stand there and be still. I guess some part of me knew that this was maybe gonna be the shot. It was windy and rainy and really intense and I think Darin transcended the conditions and captured a moment. If you were to ask me what my first album's cover was gonna look like, I would never have thought it would be what it is.

Rift: What's with the hat? Is there a story behind it?

JS: It was the summer of '86. I was eight. I ran away from home. Crazy from the heat. I hitchhiked all the way to Minnesota from Louisiana. I was like a little salmon traveling upstream with the mighty Mississippi and the Great North Star as my traveling guides. I played guitar along the way. Wrote my songs, got my sounds. I called it the Salmon Sermon. My guitar case got filled with pennies and nickels and dimes from busking on the streets. There was nowhere for me to store the loot. I met a man who sold elixirs and crossroads crosses. He had a moustache, some good hash, and a hat stash. We

made a trade: I gave him old age, regret, forgotten dreams, and the spare change. He gave me the tophat and umbrella. I'm still using them. He spent his share.

Rift: It seems like you have put a ton of time and effort into this new album, what are the plans after the release? (Touring etc....)

JS: Hell yes I put a ton of time and effort into this record! Thanks for noticing. That doesn't matter, it's what I love to do and I do my absolute best until I can't do anymore. Strangely enough, I still feel like I could've done better! That's not to say I'm not happy with it, that's just the way I am and I've made peace with that part of me. Someone would probably say to me it was a labor of love but there was no labor. I loved every part of the process...the writing, the tracking, the mixing, the mastering, the album design, everything. So it's all love.

As for post-release, I intend to play as much as possible wherever the kids will have me. I want to tour anywhere and everywhere, here and abroad. I want the whole band to come with me and I wanna make another record soon because I have a few more in me and they're gonna be better and better each time, I hope. So in the meantime, I'm gonna rob some banks and shave the stache and maybe we'll have enough luck in the cache for some success beyond the release. What else am I gonna do? Get a job? This is my job, sucka!

Rift: Any rants, opinions or good things to say about the local music scene?

JS: The local music scene is definitely amazing. I can't think of another place where people consistently wanna go see bands and bands wanna keep forming and evolving and changing and creating. It is a fortunate situation and I'm happy to just be a part of it and to get started playing with my group. There are so many cool venues too. It is not to be taken for granted. What's cool too is that there's a lot of different stuff happening as well. Not all of it gets noticed by people who write about the music and the scene, but it's still thriving. That is my rant. I love it. I encourage anyone who wants to start a band to do so and get out there and play and have fun.

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