

Joan Bujacich leads TourBaby into Brattleboro

NORTHAMPTON, Mass.

Major label artists represent less than 1 percent of the music that exists in the world today. Unfortunately, they also command more than 99 percent of the media's attention. So many deserving performers remain obscure and unheard.

There are some reasons for optimism amongst the indie underdogs these days. The world-wide reach of artist Web sites, the decreased cost of producing CDs and the burgeoning number of venues available for playing live, has made for new, intriguing ways of receiving all-important exposure. But the odds remain stacked.

With unadventurous radio controlled by a handful of conglomerates and the music press obsessed with celebrity voyeurism, finding independent music with guts, heart and integrity takes some digging for fans and some innovative networking on the part of the musicians.

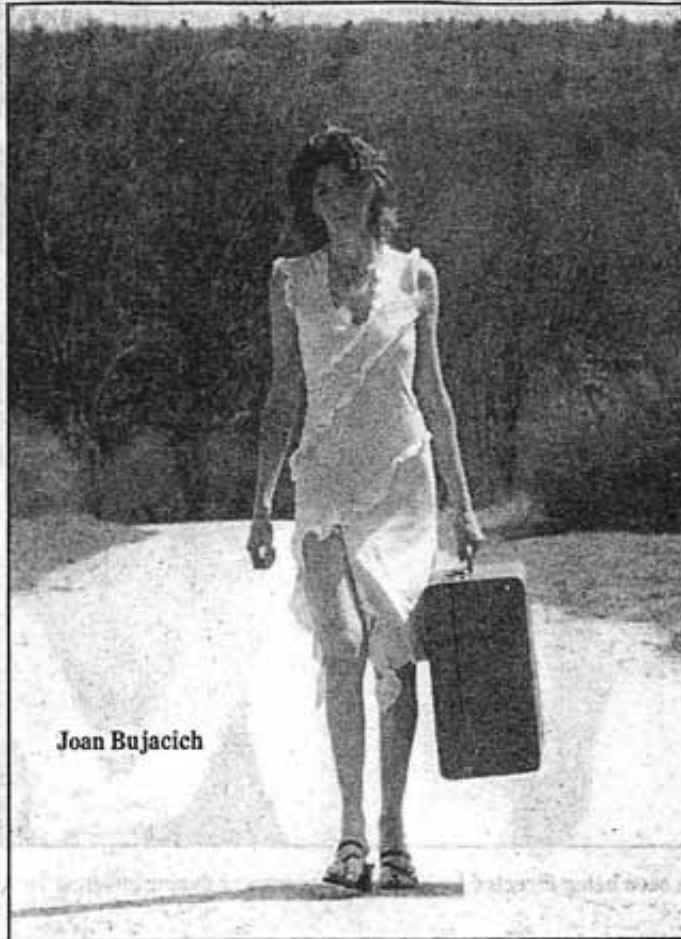
One such innovation is coming to Brattleboro Wednesday night, when TourBaby invades the Robert H. Gibson River Garden, the usual setting for the Wednesday Night Song Jam, Derrik Jordan's fine indie showcase series.

The ubiquitous Jordan explained, "TourBaby is a unique concept in which independent artists have banded together to put on a national tour of regional artists. Ideally, one band from every show 'tags' or goes on to open the following night's show in the next town."

Each TourBaby gig is unique, featuring a variety of local players along with an artist coming from the previous show — with a ceremonial doll in tow.

The Brattleboro-tagger will be New Jersey pianist/singer/songwriter Joan Bujacich, who happens to be one of TourBaby's

DAVE MADELONI



Joan Bujacich

of a group on the internet called 'Musical Thoughts,' of which I am a member," wrote Bujacich via e-mail. "A bunch of people launched it, and I jumped on to help organize the New Jersey show in 2002. ... Through persistence and this strong belief in this concept of artists helping each other, I ended up on the 'exec' board which I affectionately call the Big Babies."

The grassroots effort, fueled by the kind of linking that cyberspace fosters, could serve as the antidote for struggling musicians to overcome the forces that have impeded their

"We are empowering artists to put on shows," said Bujacich. "We are developing the tools on how to put on a show, how to promote a show, how to get sponsors interested in their shows."

Like an October hurricane, TourBaby II is heading north. "This year the first show started in Miami and is making its way up the East Coast," explained Bujacich. "The night before my show in Montclair, N.J., there will be a show in Philadelphia. The band Flashcube from that show will play at my show bringing the TourBaby 'baby.' "

organizers. "The idea grew out ability to be heard — and seen. Bujacich, whose parents were

Tag, we're it. Rotating tour hands off host of musicians to Wednesday Song Jam

BRATTLEBORO — The Wednesday Night Song Jam presents TourBaby on Oct. 8, at the Robert H. Gibson River Garden at 7 p.m.

TourBaby, a national tour organized by independent musicians who distribute their music on CDBaby.com, hits Brattleboro for the second year with a variety of local and regional music.

The list of performers includes Joan Bujacich (piano-based acoustic rock) from New Jersey, Michael Mrowicki (folk) from Putney, Natural History (world fusion improv) from Southern Vermont, AKA George (Americana) from the Saranac Lakes region of New York and Josh Dodes (piano-based power pop) from Burlington.

The show starts at 7 p.m., and admission is free. Donations are encouraged, and all money goes to support the artists. The Robert H. Gibson River Garden is at the corner of Main and High streets.

Josh Dodes — Propelled by VH1's 2001 hit show "Bands on the Run," Dodes has developed a loyal national following for his high-energy, piano-based pop-rock. His critically-acclaimed debut "Get Up" was voted one of the top 5 CDs of the year by the worldwide customer base of online record giant CD Baby. Recently relocated to Burlington from New York City, Dodes has just

released "Freak." Dodes will play a solo acoustic set at the TourBaby show.

Natural History (aka Derrik Jordan, Barry Hyman and Jared Shapiro) is celebrating the upcoming release of "Great Apes Of Vermont," its second CD, one that commemorates 30 years of joyous music-making. The band's music draws on many diverse world traditions but is non-traditional. When they perform, they improvise. On their forthcoming CD, they branch out into spoken word with the informed ravings of Hyman, including "Perpetual War," "Plastic Wrap" and "We Need Freaks." They are joined by special guests saxophonist Erik Lawrence and percussionist Steve Leicach for this show.

AKA George hails from the Saranac Lakes region of New York. They are Ron Keyes, who is the song writer and provides vocals, guitar, harmonica (master woodworker by day), Catherine Hechmer on bass guitar, vocals (alcoholism counselor by day) and Steve Borst on lead guitar (radio DJ, guitar instructor). They have been playing together since 1994 and have produced five studio albums.

Michael Mrowicki from Putney will play tunes from "Timbre Lines," his recently released second album of original songs.

musicians, started playing piano at age 5. Subsequently, she joined a plethora of bands before flying solo. In many ways, Bujacich represents what is best about indie artists: a dogged persistence and a passion for the craft.

She takes a musical approach that is difficult to pigeonhole, incorporating pop, jazz, classical, and rock influences into a sensual musical stew. "I studied classical right through college and beyond and started playing in bands in sixth grade and kept that going as well. I played in so many different types of original bands along the way from rock, punk, R&B, funk, fusion, I eventually just wanted to concentrate on my own writing and had to give up the other bands to

focus on my work. I've always written music. I have little scraps of paper with lyrics on them in crayon from when I first could write and started writing piano music early on, too. I also write more contemporary piano music in a Prokofiev, Ravel, Bartok-like style, but again with my own jazzy-like stamp on it."

All the disparate musical elements that Bujacich absorbed over the years eventually melted into the multi-genre sound captured on her latest CD, "A Fine Line."

When asked about her influences, Bujacich identified two inventive icons. "If you think of a Frank Zappa, (though my music does not sound like his),

he has rock and jazz and classical and a show-like quality to his music — like a contemporary opera. And then he also composes more art music, contemporary classical. Joni Mitchell also writes in an acoustic folk rock style and then later had a jazz influence in her music but she took that jazz influence and made it her own."

Joan Bujacich has taken her many influences and made distinctive music that is clearly her own. Thanks to TourBaby, she will get the opportunity to share it with us.

Dave Madeloni writes a weekly music column for the Arts & Entertainment section. He can be reached at madeloni@aol.com.

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