



CONSTANTLY IN TRANSIT: CHRIS REDDY'S ENDLESS GIG

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Normally, Wormtown.org will do a story on a performer or group to hype up their next gig knowing that it might be the only time to sing their praises in some time. That's not the case with Chris Reddy - especially this month, when he's playing more shows (or so it seems) than even the omnipresent Bill McCarthy. We caught up with Reddy at the start of a December in which he's got 11 appearances scheduled. So you've got plenty opportunity to check him out and get a copy of his latest CD, "Drinking Songs for the Working Stiff," sure to be a Christmas present to give the relatives and leave them with a shit-eating, "You know me..." grin on their face.

WORMTOWN.ORG: You've got a pretty busy December ahead of you? Are you stopping at 11 gigs or still looking to play a few more?

Chris Reddy: I have actually fit in a couple of Christmas parties to fill out the month.

WORMTOWN.ORG: Where do you go for lyrical inspiration and what subjects tend to show up most in your songs?

Chris Reddy: The first CD I released "Info Junkie," was completely instrumental and was recorded on a digital four-track recorder in my living room. I wasn't comfortable doing vocals in that environment after having sung with Transit for so many years and being used to plush studios like Metropolis and Normandy.

However, after putting together the Digital Kitchen as I call it. I had a little more privacy to start another project with some vocals. I released "Sonification" which has several tracks with vocals, as does the new release "Drinking Songs for the Working Stiff." The inspiration for writing always comes from a different source. On Sonification, "Corporate Guy" evolved from my experiences in Hi Tech for 20 years and the way I saw corporate America changing. I guess you could say it was a slam against the man. Not the guy in the Nextel commercial, another man. Oh, he's out there. Other songs on the CD were also work related "Time Flies Away" and the reprise. Sometimes places inspire you, for example the song "Devil's Acre Half" is an actual place in Canada near the Bay of Fundy. The woods were pretty creepy and I ended up writing the rough draft that night around our campfire eventually recording it for the CD. "Over and Over" was written for my wife Mary and many of the lyrics I wrote for Transit were relationship driven also.

On the new disc I decided to have some fun and write some drinking songs with some substance. I also threw in the old Irish standard "All for me Grog" recorded in a sort of Dropkick Murphys style. The title track was inspired by the original House of Nips on Route 12 - the cover art reflects my nostalgia. I guess you could say I received some inspiration from Guinness stout.

WORMTOWN.ORG: What's the process you use in promoting your music? Are you satisfied doing it yourself or have you tried to hook up with an independent label?

Chris Reddy: Since starting my solo acoustic venture I have really spent most of my time learning songs and writing arrangements with the loop for my solo gigs. It's very time consuming but I have still managed to release two CDs over the past couple of years. I have just started to send out copies to independent labels and link up to indie artist sites. I just received some interest from two firms who provide radio promotion on the west coast so that's a positive sign. As for my performance promotion, I have managed to work without an agent in most cases but I do not count it out in the future.

My belief for promoting is to be organized and keep your local following constantly updated. When I gig, every venue gets posters and email support. My website is constantly updated and added to and press releases are weekly. I will also probably get involved with Taxi and a couple of other publishing sites early next year to market my instrumental work. Locally, Peter Caputa at Whizspark has been a big help in networking clubs and Jim Brindisi who works with OSB has been a good friend and supporter.

WORMTOWN.ORG: Your music's been included in some independent films- anything more come out of that? Is that an outlet you continuously try to work?

Chris Reddy: I have been involved with some independent film makers such as John Chang and Sorry Dog pictures in Chicago but I am looking to expand into other areas as well. I recently had material used in sports features on WGME Channel 13 (CBS) out of Portland and "Corporate Guy" was just featured on a podcast for a political activist site called Saint Kermit. I am currently working some deals with Warren Miller's film group to submit instrumentals for his next extreme sports movie and I hope to break into advertising at some point.

WORMTOWN.ORG: Tell me a little bit about Digital Kitchen Studios. Is that only for your recording projects or have you worked with other acts?

Chris Reddy: I call the digital studio "The Digital Kitchen" because it once resided in my kitchen. When I moved back to Worcester a year ago I decided to set up a room for recording and started up again. I use a combination of equipment based around a Yamaha AW4416 digital recorder. Some Sony digital equipment and Lexicon processing gear. It's very simple but works well for my solo projects. I have plenty of guitar sampling tools and some decent mics and gear to get the job done. I recorded Nathan Moore's acoustic demo a few months back and it worked out well for him. I can do small demo projects not requiring full drums and typically those are the types of people who approach me regarding recording or production help. I provide the cheap alternative to get your idea down on CD.

WORMTOWN.ORG: You play with Transit, who advertises themselves as "America's Loudest Band." That seems a contradiction to your solo material but I suspect you lay a few originals on the crowd as well - how does that go down?

Chris Reddy: I started the band Transit in High School in the late '70's with the current drummer Mark Venterea. The line-up with John Phillips, Nathan Linsky and I still exists today even though we play much more infrequently. The band has been together for over 20 years and has played all over New England regardless of the purported loud volumes. Transit produced four albums over the past several years with latest being "End of the Line" in 1998. The hardest part of trying to play originals at shows was the demand by club owners and the audience for cover material. Not to mention the difference in draw and money. As we got older with more responsibilities, the original side of Transit became less appealing and we have existed over the past few years as another cover act. I do have admit though, it is a more progressive cover band. How many cover bands can you name locally who will play The Tubes, Frank Zappa, Blue Oyster Cult and deep cuts by Velvet Revolver in the same set?

I think it may be time to start Transit on the original course again. As for my solo gigs, I try to limit the amount of original material to a few a night unless requested. I don't mind it as much as my arrangements of some covers I play are rewarding enough musically that I do not mind.

WORMTOWN.ORG: Most performers who play outside the coffeehouse circuit tend to play covers to the bar crowd; how have you found your originals accepted when you play these venues and have some of those being introduced to your music been inclined to buy a CD from you?

Chris Reddy: Because my gigs bring me to all sorts of different venues around New England, I find the local crowds, specific to that demographic you may be playing, dictate how far you can go with the material, and whether or not to play originals. In some instances, I can really branch out and play original instrumentals, such as my gigs in Stowe, Vermont or Sunday River, where others might have less tolerance. Locally, the venues have been great in accepting the material I have been playing, regardless of the progressive nature with some of the material. I think it's healthy to start thinking about some deviation from the norm. What's wrong with some Coldplay or Depeche Mode after Brown Eyed Girl?

WORMTOWN.ORG: Outside of continuing to play as many places as you can, what's in store for you in 2006?

Chris Reddy: Well, the winter schedule continues to get busier and there will be some weekend shows in the mountains of Stowe and Sunday River (check www.chrisreddy.com) followed by some new dates in southern Maine and New Hampshire. I am starting two new recording projects, one jazz fusion/instrumental oriented and the other all acoustic featuring acoustic solo pieces I have written over the past few months. I will be working with the guys to create a fresh version of Transit and I'm jammin' with some local guys to do a funk rock jazz thing kinda John Schofieldish. I guess it will be a busy year.

Thanks to Brian Goslow.