

Inspiring Minds

Arts and culture are an important resource in our path to building stronger connections with the present and the past, serving to document and preserve stories and ensure that history is shared. They beautify public spaces, help forge relationships where there is diversity and become stewards of strength in community. At *Live Small Town*, we love to promote local participation and bonds. We believe one of the best ways to engage is through the arts.

DAN FEWINGS

Port Dover DanFewings.com

When you sit down to chat with Dan Fewings, you become a witness to a mind that is chock-full of fantastically fun ideas. A multi-talented wearer-of-many-hats, Dan Fewings is, above all else, a Spreader of Joy!

The last few months have seen Dan connecting with friends and fans online, where he performs and hosts regular weekly Game Shows with enthusiastic audience involvement. As restrictions lift, Fewings looks forward to reconnecting with music and theatre-lovers on a more personal level. "I've missed the collaboration between fellow musicians, and actors and our audiences."

Whether it is *The Great Spontini*, *The Song Chef*, as one of *The Three Martinis*, as a solo musician, actor, concert producer or Emcee, one thing is for certain: Dan Fewings can be counted upon to bring a smile to people's faces! It's what he was born to do, and we are lucky for it!

Noise Makers

They bring community together by weaving stories and emotions in the spirit of sharing and forging bonds.

BY SARA MOODY VELDHIJS

Puttering in the garden, I find myself humming Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi." When I get to the line: "Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone", I realize that this is exactly what I have been trying to express in this article.

When our world was turned upside down in March, we all felt the emptiness and uncertainty of what our futures were going to look like. While everyone has been impacted by the pandemic in one way or another, one of the industries most affected by COVID-19 has been The Arts, with the music business being of particular concern to me. Musicians, whose sole occupation is to share their art with us, are suddenly without work, and many have been left with no safety net.

Joni knew, in 1970, what she was talking about. And her words are as timeless today as they were then. I worry that the music and artistic avenues that we all have taken for granted for so long, may suddenly cease to exist, and so, I hope to get people thinking about ways to become more actively engaged in ensuring this does not happen. We look to artists to enrich our lives, but those gifts come at a

price! It's up to us, the fans to step up, and support the people we love!

Over these past few months, I have followed many musicians that have been keeping our hearts and homes filled with music. I had the chance to speak to three of them recently, and each had a refreshing take on our current reality.

I caught up with Roots and Blues singer and guitar/bassist-extraordinaire Suzie Vinnick *Suzie Vinnick.com* at her home just outside Dunnville. A prolific songwriter and touring road warrior, Suzie has been thankful to have this "down" time to enjoy many online concerts by her favourite artists. "I got to watch Rickie Lee Jones perform from her living room the other day and it blew my mind!", Suzie laughed. "I almost never get to go to concerts, because I am always performing, so this has really gotten my creative mindset flowing, and for that I am grateful!"

While the pandemic has put the brakes on months of booked shows and international tours, things are slowly starting back up again, and Vinnick continues to plan new ways of engaging with her fans. She does weekly Wednesday night concerts on

StreetJelly.com, has been gearing up for teaching more, offering song writing workshops, and her music and merch are online as well. Her determination shines through: "I'm a very positive person — and I am making lemonade out of these lemons!"

Another active touring musician with a great outlook is Port Dover native Dan Walsh *BentBeard.com*, who spoke poignantly about the current state of the music industry. "The landscape of our business has been rapidly changing, with music being severely undervalued for a long time before the pandemic hit," he said. "You have two camps: those that say 'This is everyone's fault but mine' and who whine and don't do anything about it. And then there is Camp 2—where you take the backwoods roads and you just keep on keeping on. That's where I am," he said. "For people like me, music is in our blood. We will always do it and will find a way to connect with those who want to support us!"

And therein lies the crux of all of this: The key to helping artists survive and flourish in this current state, is in connecting directly with the ones that mean something to you personally. So how does one do this? You've heard people say, "Like, Share, Follow, Subscribe" on Social Media? Well this is the easiest way to show support to an artist, which takes very little time to do and cost us, the fans, nothing! If an artist can get 1000 Subscribers on YouTube, for example, this

is a game-changer for them. Their channel becomes monetized, and they can begin making money from views. But this isn't easy to achieve, so, we need to hit Subscribe and then invite others to jump on that musician's bandwagon! Most importantly: you can buy tickets (or give a tip) for online concerts, purchase their merchandise, buy/stream their music, sign-up for lessons, or virtual songwriting advice, offer to host a socially-distanced house concert, become a patron through a monthly membership (like Patreon), and so much more!

And Walsh, like these other musicians, never forgets to give back himself, which he does through his, "Guitars For Kids" programme (which offers instruments free-of-charge to children who can't afford one). "You never know" he said. "One of these kids might be the next Eddie Van Halen, and even if it only teaches kids acts of kindness...well we are just a bit short of that in the world so that's ok too!"

Agreed, Dan! Now let's go and show the musicians, actors, dancers, artists, and arts organizations that we love the most, many acts of kindness and gratitude, and help them sustain their work, so that they can continue to enrich us with their artistry!

Need suggestions on ways to help? Go to *UniversalArtsManagement.com* for an extensive list of musicians and arts organizations who would appreciate your support!