

music

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BITTERSWEET RELEASE FOR GOLDBERGER

BY JOHN LAW
REVIEW STAFF WRITER

At some point Saturday night, Steve Goldberger will look over at his keyboard player. And once again, he won't be there.

These are bittersweet days for the Toronto singer/songwriter. He's supposed to be celebrating the release of a new CD, 'Clueless', but instead he's mourning his longtime friend Joe Ingrao, a veteran Niagara musician who died last month.

Ingrao played on 10 of the 14 tracks on 'Clueless,' and it was his last recorded work. "I don't remember being affected by someone's death the way I was affected by Joe's," says Goldberger. "I knew him for a long time.

"I actually feel really weird promoting this (CD) right now. How do you do this tastefully at a point in time where we're all still grieving? I don't want it to look like I'm trying to take advantage or capitalize on the loss of Joe. But I also want to mention him whenever I can in tribute."

In addition to Goldberger's band, the Fringe Locals, Ingrao played with the likes of Long John Baldry, Liberty Silver and Niagara bands Jambone and The Ants. Goldberger is still adjusting to his absence on stage.

"We played at the Angel Inn the week after he died - it was supposed to be his 50th birthday - and it was just really, really odd," he says.

"There was one point just before the second set where I went 'Well, I better go find Joe'. He'd (usually) be outside having a smoke. Then I looked over at the stage and there was no piano there."

A sad footnote for an otherwise joyous CD. With his usual assembly line of Niagara talent chipping in, Goldberger has made another diverse, bluesy gem. It gets unveiled at a CD release party April 9 at The Anchorage restaurant.

In addition to the Fringe Locals, he'll be joined by guests Doug Miller of the Gallery Players and Niagara blues guitarist James Brown.

"It's not about me, it's about the whole collaborative effort."

For Goldberger, every CD is a celebration these days. It's his fourth since open heart surgery seven years ago opened his eyes.

"You learn something new with every project, and we get better and better as we go," he says.

Goldberger was a founding member of Canadian band Black Creek in the '70s, and has been a freelance guitarist for more than 30 years. 'Clueless' is his fourth independent release.

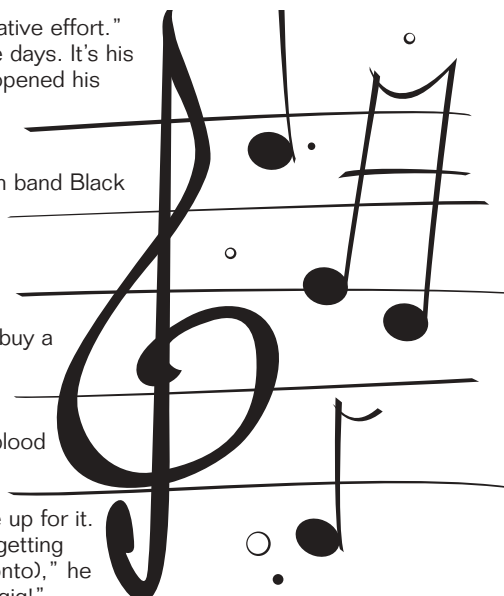
Among other things, it also celebrates Niagara. After visiting the Shaw Festival, Goldberger and his wife fell in love with the region and decided to buy a cottage in Niagara-on-the-Lake 11 years ago.

The move inspired the new tune, 'Blue Shuttles Blues', about escaping Toronto for the calm of Niagara: "When I get on the Queen E / I feel my blood pressure going down."

Goldberger was worried about leaving the Toronto music scene, but the Niagara scene made up for it.

"Once I started meeting people in Niagara and getting gigs there, it was the same if not better (than Toronto)," he says. "And you don't have to pay for parking at a gig!"

Steve Goldberger and the Fringe Locals play The Anchorage (186 Ricardo) April 9 at 10 a.m.



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