

Musician a great family man with a 'smile like a blessing'

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Like the Pope, Joe just loved people. He never tired of talking, always had time for everyone. Remembered the details, paid attention, cared. Okay, he didn't unite the Eastern Bloc or bring millions of people together, but he did connect.

He linked musicians and regular folk alike. Says close friend and band-mate Garth Vogan, "We'd be at a gig, and Joe would be talking to the people at every table.

He had time for everybody, but there was no small talk. It was all about people's lives, their families. I'd have to say, 'Hey Joe, maybe we should play...?'"

In a band, he was the core, the one everyone watched. Penner MacKay, who has been in half a dozen bands with Joe over the years, says, "You could always learn something about music and playing from Joe.

"You'd try whatever he recommended and you knew if you'd nailed it, because he'd say, 'Yeah, brother, that's it.'"

He gave music his all, says Penner, "It didn't matter what we were playing, or how many



Joe Ingrao

people were watching, he'd always get right into it. I loved him and admired him, because he came to play every night, no matter what. There were weeks when he was playing two gigs a day, and he still wouldn't say no if you needed him." A musician loyal to musicians, and devoted to music itself.

We watched him from off-stage too. His character was so rich, it was like being at the movies, but better than being in the movies, because he'd include you, connect you, bring you close.

He was bigger than life,

mously liked and looked up to.

That was Joe, dammit, with his smile like a blessing and his voice like a dirt road, and we'll miss him.

Missing him most of all, of course, will be his wife Micheline, and his young-adult children Joelle and Isaac.

True to counter-type, Joe the professional musician was a great family man. Says Garth, "Joe was always, 'Miche thinks this, Miche says that,' and those were the rules. She was always right too: her instincts were perfect."

Let's all honour Joe, and so many of those early departers, by being sincere and passionate, and living each day like it might be our last.

And, like Joe, pay attention. Really, really pay attention to each

other.

Here's the rant: Joe experienced chest pains on the night of Wednesday, March 16. An ambulance ride to a St. Catharines hospital, some tests, and Joe's back in his home.

No need for observation or immediate further tests, just a 'Come back next week and we'll look

into it some more.'

Next week, of course, never came. The message to the rest of us?

Hassle that health system until it bloody well works properly.

There will be a tribute and benefit concert for Joe and his family on May 29, at the CAW Hall on Bunting Avenue in St. Catharines.