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The Lone Sharks Attack!

Lon S. Cohen

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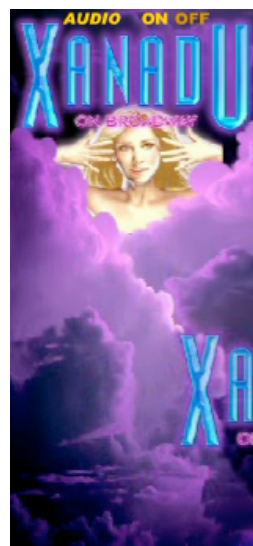
Fri. 06/08/07 - Fri, 08/24/07
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I finally tracked down Gene Casey of The Lone Sharks. After seeing him play with Caroline Doctorow at Vail-Leavitt Music Hall and then hearing him on Nancy Atlas' live album from Guild Hall, Gene is finally in the Hamptons.com building folks.

His band, The Lone Sharks, come on like a bunch of rockabilly killers. They certainly look the part, playing the role of intimidating, darkly dressed, journeymen on their way from one honky-tonk gig to another. The Lone Sharks are carved right out of the stonework of days gone-by. As if they had spent years in the late great era of rock when tours rolled from town to town right into auditoriums busting to the seams with itchy teens ready to jump out of the seats and shake what their Momma gave 'em.

I half expected the music to arrive on a 45 RPM record when I reviewed the latest Lone Sharks album, called "A Lone Shark's Six-Pack." Three covers and three originals are laid out on the CD. Pop it in, hit play and let the music wail. Though a real fun listen, I expect that you're going to want to see them play live this summer because it's one heck of a party when they do.

"We've adopted swing, or jump blues-type music into the act," Gene said about their live shows. "We are obsessed with exploring the points where jazz and swing meet rhythm and blues and meets up with country music then turns into rock & roll. Paul, our sax player, brings his knowledge of jazz and R&B. Chris, our drummer is heavily into swing and jazz; our upright bass players bring a lot of the country feel to the band. I am all over the place, but you'll always hear some Chuck Berry if I am playing guitar."

But the band can also be as tame as troubadours. One of my favorite songs is "Who's Sharin' The Moon" written by Gene Casey. Nancy Atlas covered it on her live CD.

"It was a real joy to hear Nancy sing that," Gene said. "She really internalizes songs and it comes out so pure."

Hearing Gene sing the tune on the album though brings a whole new dimension to it. While I think it's

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a Patsy Cline-type of country ballad that would have been a classic had she sung it, Gene identifies it with other influences.

"Stylistically if there was anyone in mind (for the song) it may have been Dean Martin," Gene explained. "That easy way he had with a song. I tried to imagine Dino singing it. Of course he was one of Elvis' favorites, and he had a lot of hits covering country songs. So, there you go. All the people I want to cover my songs are dead!"

Perhaps it's that smooth easiness that reminds me so much of Ms. Cline.

The band does a brilliant version of an old-time gospel tune that Gene said was originally titled, "There's A Leak In This Old Building." Elvis covered it as "We're Gonna Move," which is the title on The Lone Sharks CD.

"Gospel music is really one of the major elements of early rockabilly, and for that matter all rock," Gene said. "In fact I would argue that what was so startling about when Elvis appeared was not so much the 'white boy sings blues' as it was bringing a spiritual feel to pop songs. We love real backwoods gospel music. We did the tune as a good ol' call and response rockabilly tune. It is a lot of fun to do live."

Gene Casey started his music career in 1980s New York City playing all the classic joints including the now defunct CBGBs. Being a part of that scene meant bumping elbows with underground punk bands, but Gene swears he never sported a Mohawk or safety pins.

"I never was a punk," he said. "I responded to the aggressiveness and simplicity of the music, being so reminiscent of original Rock & Roll."

One summer Gene drifted to the East End looking for work and he stayed. The gigs were plentiful and the money was decent. Then, The Lone Sharks formed. Over the years members have come and gone, but now they have a core group of players.

Gene Casey, sings lead and plays guitar; Joe Lauro plays bass and background vocals; Chris Ripley bangs the drums, percussion and vocals; and Paul Scher does his thing with a Tenor Sax and Steel Guitar.

The Lone Sharks also contributed a track to the "Bob Dylan Uncovered" arranged by Paradiddle Records. They covered "Down Along the Cove," which Gene said had a "country/rockabilly groove that fit our style."

"We Sharked it up," Gene said. "I always picture the Long Wharf when I sing about seeing my baby down along the cove."

Of the East End, Gene says that one day The Lone Sharks can be playing a club till three in the morning and the next afternoon performing at a fancy party.

"Ultimately it's all about getting everyone feeling good, dancing," he said. "That's the East End, so we are pretty lucky to be working out this way."

Before I let him go, I had one last question that burned in my mind.

"Did you ever write anything on the CBGB bathroom wall?" I asked.

"No," he said. "I was reluctant to even GO IN IT!"

- Check out the band's website at www.lonesharks.com for more info. Along with the newest Lone Sharks album, Gene worked on some solo stuff this spring. A few tracks are available on a disk called "What Happened?"

- "Bob Dylan Uncovered" was released last May. It's a collection of fantastic Dylan covers all by Long Island Bands. Find it online at www.paradiddlerecords.com.

- The Mitzvah Department: Rock CAN Roll(tm), a non-profit, hunger relief organization based on Long Island collaborates with rock concerts, schools, corporations, and private individuals to collect canned and non-perishable food for distribution to local agencies and into the hands of children, seniors and families who live with hunger and in poverty. The heart of "Rock" CAN feed a soul.

- Planning an event? Why not make it a rock CAN roll event! The organization is always looking for new collaborators. To make a donation, volunteer or get info: www.rockCANroll.org email: Aimee@rockCANroll.org phone: 516.822.3457.

Lon S. Cohen has been a short order cook, a Generation X slacker (aka artist), a fence installer, a marketing designer and once he was the only Jewish kid working on a Christmas Tree lot. There is no order to the aforesaid list. He currently works full time but only to pay the bills for a McMansion, beautiful wife and three lovely children. What he really wants to do is write, podcast, blog and drink a really good IPA. Again, not in any order of importance. Visit him at www.lonscohen.com and contact him by email at lon@lonscohen.com.

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