

Lake County Veterans Services

Assisting Veterans and their families

Contact your Veterans Service Officer for federal and state benefits eligibility and details.

Please contact for an appointment

Two Harbors Office: 218-834-8326

Silver Bay Office: 218-220-6273

email: cvso@co.lake.mn.us

www.co.lake.mn.us/veterans-services



Rocky Wall Entertainment brings free music to the community

by Kitty Mayo

Rocky Wall Entertainment is a nonprofit organization based in Silver Bay dedicated to making live music accessible to everyone. Its mission is simple yet powerful: to bring talented musicians to the public through free concerts, creating spaces where people can gather, connect, and celebrate the joy of music without financial barriers.

At the heart of this effort is Nelson French, the driving force behind Rocky Wall Entertainment. French is not just an organizer—he’s a lifelong music enthusiast whose passion for sharing music shines through every event he helps create. His belief that music should be a communal experience, not a luxury, has shaped the nonprofit’s vision from the start.

French’s enthusiasm is contagious. Whether he’s talking about a jazz quartet or a rising folk singer, his excitement reflects a deep love for the art form and the people who perform it. “Music brings people together,” he often says, and his work proves it. By curating concerts



Rocky Wall Entertainment’s free concerts in Silver Bay draw a crowd. Here with The Jayhawks in August 2024. photo courtesy of Don J. Olson

featuring skilled, diverse musicians, French ensures audiences experience high-quality performances without worrying about ticket prices.

French wants to thank the dedicated Board of Directors—Lisa A. Berg, Marilyn L. French, Shannon G. Walz—and the many volunteers and professionals who help deliver

a high-quality product to the public. “For each concert, we partner with Silver Bay native Jerry LaVigne of North Shore Sound for stage, sound, and lighting—one of the region’s best, and we’re fortunate to have him,” said French.

Rocky Wall Entertainment’s free concerts have become more than just events—they’re community gatherings that foster connection and cultural enrichment. From intimate acoustic sets to lively outdoor shows, the nonprofit creates opportunities for everyone to enjoy music in welcoming spaces.

For French, it’s not about profit or prestige; it’s about sharing something he loves with as many people as possible. His dedication reminds us that music, at its core, is a gift meant to be shared—and thanks to Rocky Wall Entertainment, that gift is reaching more hearts than ever.

If you want to support Rocky Wall Entertainment, including their work to bring a City Center Amphitheater to Silver Bay go to rockywallentertainment.org.

Please join us for our

Holiday Open House

December 18, 2025
Harbor Insurance, Two Harbors

December 19, 2025
Park State Bank, Silver Bay

Have lunch and treats with Harbor Insurance staff.

★ 11am -1pm each day
Door Prizes and Giveaways too!

Holden
AGATE ELECTRIC DIVISION
Since 1957

(218) 834-9226

Two Harbors / Duluth
www.holdenelectric.com

Candlelight Christmas Eve

AT EMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

4 P.M. WITH FESTIVE INSTRUMENTS
10 P.M. WITH THE EMMANUEL CHOIR
602 4TH AVE, TWO HARBORS
ALL ARE WELCOME

THE NORTH SHORE JOURNAL


Serving all residents, businesses and visitors in Lake County, MN.

[Home](#) › [Community](#) › [Charlie Parr Returns to Open Silver Bay's Summer Concert Series](#)

[Community](#) [Silver Bay](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Entertainment](#) [Music](#)

Charlie Parr Returns to Open Silver Bay's Summer Concert Series

 By **Sarah Simon** July 10, 2025

 1500  0



Charlie Parr. (Photo courtesy Charlie Parr Facebook)

I spoke with Charlie Parr while far from home, a place I rarely leave, especially not for long or for far-flung destinations. As a nervous traveler, I figured it was the perfect time to ask someone who has spent more than 200 days a year on tour how he manages it.

Parr himself was also far from his home in Duluth, Minnesota, having traveled to Stoughton, Wisconsin, to perform at the Catfish River Music Festival. It's a recurring stop for him that's part of the town's multi-day July 4th celebration.

Despite all his time on the road, I was surprised to learn that he, too, has struggled with the challenges of traveling.

"There's so much out of your control, and I think that is the cause of a lot of that anxiety," he said. "You're putting yourself in the hands of maybe a pilot or a bus driver or an automobile that you're not really 100% sure is going to make it across the country."

This understanding has helped Parr develop techniques to stay grounded, even while in motion. His number one piece of advice is to give yourself plenty of time. He also brings along comforting things. For Parr, "music is my comfort," and he ensures he has a good variety on hand. He also listens to audiobooks, avoids the news, and practices positive self-talk, reminding himself that everything will be fine.

"I'm gonna do this a mile at a time, you know? And I'm gonna conquer the next mile and then smile about that and take on the next one," he said. "I've traveled a lot and I've been in cars that break down or flights that get canceled and, somehow, the universe has always found a way to put me to my next stop."

Those stops have included, according to concertarchives.org, over 1,500 concerts for the musician and will soon include another in our neck of the woods for Rocky Wall Entertainment's 2025 Silver Bay Music in the Park live concert series.

This won't be his first time opening for the series, which is now in its fifth season, and he's looking forward to heading up to the North Shore.

"It's a cool little town and it's got an interesting history," he said. "The folks that live there, they've always been really really kind to me."

After his many travels across the country and around the world, Parr still appreciates when a concert series feels like more than just music.

"It feels very community oriented," he said. "I think that's really important because sometimes the world feels like all the attention is on the big picture all the time. I'm a person who really values local things. The more local I can get, the happier I am. The Silver Bay series feels very local to me. They come down for a concert series, they're happy to be there, and it's really special. I'm just grateful that they thought of me for their event. That's a big deal to me."

Parr himself grew up in a small town, Austin, Minnesota, where, like many families, his parents worked at the local meatpacking plant. He remembered a neighborhood full of latchkey kids who played, fought, and looked out for each other.

"It was good growing up," he said. "I was not unhappy; I just didn't see my folks a whole lot. When they did come home from work, they were exhausted. They had hard jobs. My dad always told me, 'You can do whatever you want in your life, but don't do this, this is terrible.'"

His dad loved music and had eclectic taste. Parr recalled that the centerpiece of the living room he grew up in was a massive Magnavox stereo and a record player that allowed you to stack records on the changer to automatically flip through them.

"He had just this weird, shambolic collection of records," Parr said. "Music played all the time. He listened to everything. He would indiscriminately choose five or six records to throw on that changer, like Johnny Cash, Lefty Frizzell, the soundtrack to Mary Poppins,

Albert King, or one of my sister's Grateful Dead records. You never knew what was going to be in that pile."



Parr said he learned a lot about music and life from his dad, who was born in 1922 into a family of 16 children. Growing up during the Depression era, they were tenant farmers in Northern Iowa, led by an abusive and alcoholic father. When he was 14, Parr's dad ran away from home, hopping on a train and heading off on an adventure.

"He was an intelligent person," Parr said. "He was a homespun philosopher. He worked hard, and he encouraged me to adopt a calm, meditative perspective toward things so that I wouldn't get upset or make decisions without some forethought."

Parr says his first batch of original songs were written "because of him and were about him," referring to his dad.

Since then, Parr has released more than 20 albums influenced by his dad's eclectic taste. He draws inspiration from blues and folk legends like Mississippi John Hurt, Reverend Gary Davis, and Charlie Patton. His music lives at the crossroads of country blues, Piedmont blues, and American folk, with lyrics that explore working-class struggles, small-town life, soul searching, and philosophical themes.

"My technique is to write stuff out kind of as stories," he explained. "I can see the plot happening and tweeze out the lines that fit into the melody of the song but still carry the plot forward."

He believes songs are living beings that are always evolving, never quite finished. With each performance, a song takes on new life, growing and changing with the moment. For Parr, this ongoing evolution keeps his music fresh and exciting, both for himself and his listeners.

"Writing songs is really unique because they're never done," said Parr. "You know you get to rewrite them every time you perform because it's never going to be the way it was on the record. The record is just a moment in the song's life. There is no definitive version."

Performing his songs gives Parr the chance to breathe new life into them again and again. Each time he takes the stage, the songs evolve, shaped by the energy of the moment and the connection with his audience.

"They're never finished being written as long as I'm still excited about them," he said. "Recreate them in performance and something new will happen with them. And I'm always excited about them. Sometimes something radically different happens with them and I can break off that difference and make it into a song of its own."

Collaborating with other musicians amplifies that creativity. On his new album, *Little Sun*, Parr stepped away from his usual solo approach and worked with a slew of talented musicians.

"It's an incredible experience," he said. "You sit down with your instrument and you write a song and you work it out and your ideas about it. As soon as you sit down with other musicians, suddenly their perspectives are involved. You can tell them what to do, or what you want, but you know because of their unique ability they're bringing their fingerprint to your music and it's going to change it."

He described the songs on his new album as "hopeful," marking a shift from his previous album which was maybe more somber work.

"I don't think it's as depressing a record as the one before it," he said, recalling *Last of the Better Days Ahead*, which was written during the pandemic.

Parr's song "Boombbox" from the *Little Sun* album earned him top honors at the 21st Annual International Acoustic Music Awards, taking both the overall grand prize and Best Folk/Americana/Roots Song. The song is about fully being yourself in rhythm with something bigger, encouraging us all to dance the way we dance.

Get ready to dance the way you dance at Silver Bay's Music in the Park series opener, featuring Charlie Parr, on July 18th at 7 p.m.

The Friday night concerts remain free to attend thanks to generous support from more than 20 corporate sponsors, over 50 individual donors, and two foundations. The Minnesota State Arts Board, Lovin' Lake County, Best of the North Shore, and the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation lead the way in keeping the music playing.

To learn more about Charlie Parr, visit charlieparr.com. For more information about Rocky Wall Entertainment's Silver Bay Music in the Park series, visit rockywallentertainment.org/events.

THE NORTH SHORE JOURNAL

Serving all residents, businesses and visitors in Lake County, MN.

Home › Community › Jeff Slate & Friends Slated for Silver Bay's Music in the Park...

Community Silver Bay Music

Jeff Slate & Friends Slated for Silver Bay's Music in the Park Series

By Sarah Simon July 17, 2025

1453 0



Jeff Slate & Friends performing Friday, July 25 in Silver Bay. (Photo courtesy Bob Gruen)

I get nervous before every interview, but I had a couple of weeks to really fret over this one. Musician Jeff Slate is set to perform in Silver Bay's Music in the Park concert series, and the chance to talk with him brought a whole new level of *gulp*.

Slate and I happen to share what he calls a "side hustle." We're both journalists, though from very different vantage points. While my work serves a more local audience, Slate's

bylines appear in places like *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Rolling Stone*, and *The Daily Beast*.



He's also co-authored *The Authorized Roy Orbison and Guitar*, the memoir of Earl Slick (best known for his work with David Bowie and John Lennon) and he's written liner notes for The Beatles, Bob Dylan, and the Rolling Stones. So... can you see why I was extra nervous?

I decided to start our conversation selfishly—but strategically. If Slate was willing to share some dos and don'ts of interviewing musicians, maybe I could do my best to follow the dos (and don'ts) during our chat.

As it turned out, Slate recommends a conversational approach and advised it helps to be genuinely interested in your subject.

"I come from the Dick Cavett school," he said. "I interviewed Dick Cavett once, and he said, 'Oh, you must have watched my show when you were a kid.'"

Instead of a strict list of questions, Slate prefers to come prepared with a deep knowledge of the subject and an outline, or some bullet points, as a guide in case the conversation wanders.

I thanked him for the tips, sneaking a guilty glance at my carefully constructed list of questions and wondering if I could magically conversation-ize them. Fortunately, Slate is a pro at making interviews feel like actual conversations. Most importantly, I'd done what he said mattered most: my homework. I'd been reading his work, listening to his music, and was genuinely curious to get to know him.

In my research I found plenty to be impressed by. Slate has released four solo albums and recorded albums with multiple bands, including *The Badge*.

As a solo artist, he's an ASCAP award-winning songwriter whose music has appeared in shows like *Gossip Girl* and *One Tree Hill*. He's contributed to official tributes for artists like Tom Petty and Bob Dylan, and even performed at Duluth's Dylan Fest in 2023, as well as its virtual version during the pandemic in 2020.

As I dug deeper, I got curious about where it all started. Slate described his childhood in Connecticut as a "lovely existence," but a move to New York felt inevitable. His older siblings left behind stacks of records when they went off to college, which opened the door to discoveries like The Beatles, The Who, The Kinks, Bob Dylan, and many other artists that served as inspiration throughout his life.

Slate says he was "bit by that bug really early." He fondly recalls visiting New York City as a kid, where his sister and brother-in-law lived, and taking his first trips to live shows with them.

Recalling some of his earliest musical memories, Slate stated, "As a very young person I'd seen Miles Davis. I saw the Marsalis Brothers when they were teenagers," he said. "I saw

the Clash, The Kinks, The Who, and all these bands that I idolized.”

Slate started playing in a band when he was about 12 or 13, joining a few older kids.

“I started playing and I played all through high school,” he said. “By the end of high school, I was in a band that was professional. We toured around and made a couple records, and we had a real career.”

Founded in the mid-80s, *The Mindless Thinkers* were rooted in punk/post-punk underground. In the early 90s, after the band broke up, Slate launched a solo career and also released *The Townsend Tapes* with Pete Townsend of *The Who*.

The *Badge*, Slate’s band founded in the late 90s, drew heavily on British Rock traditions, and blended mod revival energy, punk edge, and classic rock melodies together. Their debut album *Digital Retro* in 1998 was followed by *Calling Generation Mojo* in 2003. In 2004 and 2005, they released *The EP Collection*, which consisted of 3 EPs.

When Slate again shifted to a solo career, he didn’t just go solo, he expanded his musical universe. His latest album, *The Last Day of Summer* (2024), features collaborations with a who’s who of the music world, including Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics, Earl Slick, Guns N’ Roses’ Duff McKagan, Steve Cradock and Ben Gordelier from Paul Weller’s camp, and Jeremy Stacey and Jess Greenfield from Noel Gallagher’s High Flying Birds, just to name a few among a host of other top-tier artists.

“The pandemic hit and then we were all stuck at home,” Slate recalled. “I’m here writing, and I don’t know how long we’re going to be here, so I’m going to keep writing. I started sending files around. Everybody was at home doing nothing so pretty much anybody I knew that I wanted to work with was available.”

The album has earned strong critical acclaim. *MOJO* called it “an album of classy, Greenwich Village scented folk and soul,” *Goldmine* described it as “an album full of audio gold,” and *Shindig!* said it “tastes like a lost Tom Petty album from the early ‘90s.”

“There are moments in your career where it feels like a pivot point and it did feel artistically like a pivot point,” Slate said. “I’d advanced creatively and lyrically. This was one of those moments. Those songs, people respond to them. I’m very, very proud of that record. I just feel like it’s one of the times in my career where it’s like it’s exactly what I set out to do and it represents that. And that’s a pretty good feeling.”

In addition to performing his original songs in Silver Bay, Slate plans to mark a historic milestone, the 60th anniversary (plus one day) of Bob Dylan’s infamous “going electric” moment at the Newport Folk Festival in Rhode Island. Dylan played just three songs with a Fender Stratocaster, but it caused a major stir.

Folk purists reacted with outrage, booing loudly as they saw the use of electric instruments as a sharp betrayal of traditional folk music values.

"When he went electric, there was a punk rock nature to it," Slate said. "Folk music was speaking to a particular type of person, my brother being one of them, in the early '60s. A buttoned-up middle-class crowd who were progressive and wanted a better world found community in that music. It certainly spoke to people active in the civil rights movement."

To Slate, Dylan's move to electric wasn't surprising, it felt like a natural, even necessary, progression.

"I think when Bob Dylan came into it, he hadn't been a folk artist and really wasn't a folk artist," he said. "Like any artist I've known, he found something that spoke to him that he could replicate, that he could learn his craft from, and build on. Once he had conquered that, not in the world at large but for himself, he started to sort of chafe at the confines of the structures of that."

To honor that landmark moment, *Jeff Slate & Friends* will perform the same three songs Dylan played at Newport, along with selections from his career and additional songs fitting the evening's mood.

The band has been together for around a decade, and Slate reports they are good *Friends* to have. Slate reported, "All of them have pretty formidable careers in rock and roll."

Guitar player Mark Bosch was in Ian Hunter's touring band and also toured with Mott the Hoople. According to Slate, Bosch has a "long history of recording."

Rounding out the sound is bassist Johnny Pisano and keyboardist Charly Roth.

"It's a great band," said Slate. "We've been playing together for a long time. At this point, I can ask them to play pretty much anything. We've been doing it so long that I just give them a broad outline, tell them what I want to do, and they just get it."

He later added, "It's a luxury to be doing this with the same people who are like-minded and there's just no drama to it. You're all working together to make it great."

Jeff Slate & Friends will be working together to make for two great evenings in Silver Bay, first appearing in Rocky Wall Entertainment's Silver Bay Music in the Park free live music concert series in City Center Park on July 25th beginning at 7 PM. (See advertisement on page 2 of this week's Northshore Journal)

The following evening, *Jeff Slate & Friends* will stick around for a Rocky Wall Benefit House Concert, donating their time and talent to raise funds for future Rocky Wall Entertainment live music events. Tickets and more event information can be found at rockywallentertainment.org/events.

Visit jeffslatehq.com for all things Jeff Slate, including links to his journalistic work. Listen to Slate's music on Spotify under 'Jeff Slate'.

THE NORTH SHORE JOURNAL

Serving all residents, businesses and visitors in Lake County, MN.

Home › Music › Beats on the Bay: New Primitives set to Shake Up the Shore

Music Opinions

Beats on the Bay: New Primitives set to Shake Up the Shore

By Sarah Simon July 24, 2025

766 0



The New Primitives will perform Friday, August 1, at the City Center Park Stage from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., a free event open to the public. (Photo by Neil Schloner)

Though I'd been immersed in his music for weeks before our interview, I wasn't prepared for the voice that greeted me that early morning. Stan Kipper, founder of the New Primitives, spoke with a tone as deep and rich as a well-seasoned drum, both friendly and inviting, with just a touch of playful mischief.

In just a few introductory words, the percussionist, singer, songwriter, bandleader, mentor, and writer shifted my heartbeat momentarily. I'm a sucker for a good voice, and Kipper has one I'd happily listen to read the phone book from cover to cover. As I settled in, ears tuned to the man behind the band, I caught the syncopation in his speech, the rhythm of someone who has truly lived his story on stage. (No exaggeration, he's taken the stage in more ways than one.)

Kipper's voice reflects the sound of the New Primitives: inviting, playful, and impossible to ignore. A 2020 promo for the band on YouTube opens with a fan's quote: "At one point I was convinced they were going to levitate off the stage and take the audience with them. The audience was in a total trance."

I believe it. That energy comes through in recordings of live shows, and I can only imagine how much more powerful it is to be near the music as it's created.

That opportunity is coming soon to Silver Bay as part of Rocky Wall Entertainment's Music in the Park Concert Series. The *New Primitives* will perform Friday, August 1, at the City Center Park Stage from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., a free event open to the public. They will play again the following night in the Rocky Wall Benefit House Concert Series, with tickets starting at \$25. Proceeds help bring more live music to Silver Bay.

"I'm really excited about it. We're so looking forward to coming up. Nelson and his friends put on this great thing," said Kipper. "We're going to have a great time. We're going to throw down."

Nelson French, president of Rocky Wall Entertainment's non-profit organization, has been friends with Kipper for years. They first worked together on benefit concerts to restore the historic Armory in Duluth.

When I spoke to French after the summer lineup announcement, he said, "The *New Primitives* are a great band and they're going to be a lot of fun."

The fun began for the New Primitives in Minneapolis when Kipper co-founded the band with Mark "Chico" Perez. Their name reflects their music, a blend of old and new. Their performances often kick off with rhythmic grooves that draw from the deep roots of percussion, setting the tone for a sound that honors the past while pushing forward.

As Kipper explains, "We generally start every show with some kind of drum grooves. A lot of these beats that Chico and I are playing, we used to laugh because some of these beats are so old. They were there before us, they're gonna be there well after we're gone."

Perez and Kipper have been collaborators for a long time. They share deep roots in the band *Gypsy*, which was inducted into the St. Louis Classic Rock Hall of Fame. But they didn't start out on the best foot when they met around age 14 or 15.

When I asked if the initial animosity was due to competition amongst drummers Kipper laughed.

"We were punk kids," he explained. "Couple of knuckleheads. The only people of color in the building, in the middle of the afternoon, and we're sizing each other up."



By the end of the day, Kipper had tuned up Perez's new drum set and even played it in a show before Perez himself debuted it. That beat was strong then, and it hasn't skipped since, despite times in their lives when the musicians and friends have lived far away from each other.

"We have this language between us. We said the other night when we were playing, we're the only ones who can do it like that. We finish each other's sentences," Kipper said.

By the mid-1970s, Stan's musical path led him to *Gypsy*. Originally formed in the late '60s from the ashes of Minneapolis groups like *The Underbeats* and *The Escapades*, *Gypsy* had evolved into a progressive rock outfit with a soulful edge. When Stan joined as drummer and vocalist alongside Perez, the band was entering a new phase, leaning into groove, grit, and rhythmic complexity.

Over the next decade, Kipper remained deeply embedded in the *Gypsy* fold. From electrifying stadium shows, like the 1977 concert at Busch Stadium, to studio sessions blending soul, rock, and storytelling, he helped guide the band through its reinvention.

Kipper recalls that Busch Stadium show with particular fondness, a highlight amid the band's ups and downs.

"The band was kind of broken up, but we were still doing an occasional show around Los Angeles. Then we got this offer to come to St. Louis," he recounted. "We played in front of 65,000 people at Busch Stadium. We were blown away. People had banners in the audience saying to get back together. That's the kind of history that *Gypsy* had."

As *Gypsy* continued to evolve over the years, Kipper and Perez found themselves craving a new sound less tied to any one genre. In the early 2000s, they channeled their energy into forming *New Primitives*.

Their first, self-titled album came out in 2003, followed by *American Nomad* in 2012. Their third album, *Live at A440 Studios* (2018), captured the energy of their live performances, while *Primitive Road*, their latest release, came out just last year. The band has won the Minnesota Music Academy Award for Best Reggae Artist/Group four times.

Kipper is also a successful playwright. His autobiographical play *Behind the Sun* tells the story of his family's move from 38th Street to 45th Street in Minneapolis when he was in third grade.

"It's less than two miles away," Kipper explained. "We were the first Black family up on 45th. Think about the geography and how different it was racially during that time. That's what the play is about."

He has additional plays in the works and finds there are similarities in writing plays and writing songs.



“Writing plays is a whole other thing. Playwriting is so different, it took me a while to get to that common ground between the plays and the songs in terms of the language and writing part of it,” he said. “There’s a lot of common ground about it, especially when we were making records. I’ve learned there’s some similarities in terms of the beginning, the middle, and the ending.”

Just as Kipper found rhythm and structure in playwriting, his musical stage with the *New Primitives* supports a cast of characters from all walks of life.

The band’s saxophonist, Brian “Snowman” Powers, hails from Louisiana. Powers has played with *Blues Traveler* and *Dave Matthews*, among other headlining acts. On lead guitar is Andrew Wozniak, a musician from Michigan who brings Americana and rock influences. Joseph “Lightnin” Peterson plays the B3 organ and harmonica; he’s from New Mexico and has a background in blues and gospel soul. Rounding out the sound on bass is Wisconsinite Tom Peterson.

“We come from such different things, but we have that common ground,” said Kipper. “We all connect, and I think that’s what makes the chemistry of it.”

Kipper encourages everyone to come and experience the chemistry and sound of *New Primitives* in Silver Bay.

“It’s going to be heavy. The shows are intense and super cool,” he said. “Everybody really plays their hearts out.”

Just as Kipper’s voice lifted my spirits that morning, the *New Primitives* are set to levitate Silver Bay and throw down beats that will have everyone rising to the occasion. Get ready for a show that’s truly uplifting and can’t be beat.

Learn more about *New Primitives* at newprimitives.com. For more information about Silver Bay’s Music in the Park Series, including purchasing tickets for the Benefit House Concert, visit rockywallentertainment.org.

THE NORTH SHORE JOURNAL

Serving all residents, businesses and visitors in Lake County, MN.

Home › Community › Martin Zellar & The Hardways Return to Silver Bay

Community | Silver Bay | Entertainment | Music

Martin Zellar & The Hardways Return to Silver Bay

By Sarah Simon July 31, 2025

1458 0



Friday, August 8th, Martin Zellar & The Hardways will grace the City Center Park Stage for Rocky Wall Entertainment's Music in the Park free concert in Silver Bay at 7:30 p.m. (Photo by Davin Brandt)

Before speaking with Minnesota musician Martin Zellar, I had a few assumptions. I imagined him sitting in a beautiful Mexican home with a view of the ocean. In reality, he lives high in the mountains of San Miguel de Allende. I also assumed we were in the same time zone. Technically we are, but San Miguel de Allende doesn't observe Daylight Saving Time, which

left our clocks an hour apart. Finally, I pictured Zellar as a lifelong, die-hard Neil Diamond fan. He is a fan, but not quite the lifelong devotee I expected.



What didn't surprise me was that Zellar was just as warm and open-hearted as his songs. Whether he was reminiscing about the Midwest or reflecting on life in Mexico, he spoke with the same quiet sincerity that has long defined his music. That sincerity runs through the rough-edged honesty of *Gear Daddies*, the twang of *The Hardways*, the sparkle of *NEILL*, and most recently, an album created with the help of his entire family.

Moving to Mexico has been an adventure full of surprises for Zellar's family. It was meant to be a temporary detour for the couple originally from Austin, Minnesota and their two sons.

"It started out as an adventure we thought we'd do for a year," Zellar said. "We wanted to give our boys a chance to gain some perspective on the world and learn another language. But that one year turned into two, and two turned into three..."

Then came the biggest surprise of all, a medical miracle and late-in-life baby for the Zellar family. Their daughter is now sixteen and was recently accepted into a college-level art program in Mexico. According to Zellar, she is a "fabulous" artist who is also musically inclined.

Zellar's sons are also talented musicians. The eldest currently plays in two popular Twin Cities bands and tours with his dad and *The Hardways*.

"He's been playing circles around me on guitar since he was in seventh grade," Zellar laughed. "It's been great to just watch him zoom past me."

All that musical talent proved especially useful during the pandemic, when the family found themselves spending more time together than ever before.

"We were kind of cloistered together and we built a nice little studio in our back garden," Zellar recalled. The family went to work, each contributing their individual talents, to create an album.

His oldest son took the lead on engineering and played guitar for the album. His younger son handled the vocal track engineering. Zellar's daughter contributed percussion, and his wife, a talented photographer, shot the album cover.

"It was just an amazing thing to all be together and create this album," said Zellar and further explained that he recorded the basics in Mexico and brought the tracks up to Minnesota to add his drummer and bass player, the latter of whom has been playing with Zellar for 47 years.

Creating an album, especially one like *Head West*, was yet another pleasant surprise for the musician.

"I probably never would have made another album, and I probably wouldn't continue to make albums if I didn't have my studio here now," he said.



Having a home studio turned out to be a game changer for producing the album.

"I could take my time, sit right up there, and redo something without worrying about it," he explained. "When you're renting a studio, time is money, and you're watching the clock tick. Every album I've ever made in the studio, there are things that I wish I would have gone back and redone. But you made decisions based on a budget."

For Zellar, the studio clock has ticked through more than a dozen albums. His music career began in 1984 with the *Gear Daddies*, a band that still sells out shows today even though they haven't recorded together since 1992. In 1995, he shifted gears with *Martin Zellar & The Hardways*, a roots-rock band with deep Americana and alt-country influences. They've released multiple records while Zellar continued to explore solo work and the family-driven album *Head West*.

In addition, he plays in a tribute band called *NEIL!*, which had me convinced he was a lifelong Neil Diamond devotee. The origin of *NEIL!* was actually quite different than I expected.

"I didn't grow up in a Neil Diamond family," he admitted. "It started out as a joke. We decided to put together a Neil Diamond tribute to open for our friends *Soul Asylum* years and years ago."

Zellar explained that this was before *Soul Asylum* became *Soul Asylum* and was still called *Loud Fast Rules*, a scrappy post-punk energy band.

"They're very hard-edged punk," he laughed. "So we thought it would be this really funny Andy Kaufman-style experience and we would be objects of scorn."

To his surprise, the young punk rockers responded oppositely.

"They loved it," he said. "I started learning all the stuff and I was like, oh my God, this is master class level songwriting. So, it started out as this joke and I just fell in love with his music. I had to buy his catalog and just sit and listen to it. It just blew me away. And now I'm a big fan of his music and him personally."

Having met him in the past, Zellar can attest that Diamond is a "lovely human being."

Zellar shares more than just admiration for Diamond. Both are great storytellers and musicians. There is another similarity I couldn't help but notice. They both have pretty big stadium songs.

"I'd rather have *his* stadium song," Zellar laughed, referring to Diamond's *Sweet Caroline*. (BA BA BA!)

Zellar's (*I wanna drive the*) *Zamboni*, a beloved hockey fan favorite, was a hidden track on the *Gear Daddies'* second album, *Billy's Live Bait*. As one might imagine, having a "novelty" song can be both a blessing and a curse.

I asked Zellar when he realized the song had taken on a life of its own.

"One of the first times was when I got a letter from Frank J. Zamboni company on their company letterhead, thanking us for the song and the attention we were drawing to their product," he said. "The lyrics were a clue on *Jeopardy* some years ago. That might have been the coolest thing that's happened to me. You're part of that cultural fabric."

Though he appreciates that the song holds a special place in arenas, movies, and many hockey fans' hearts, Zellar has mixed feelings about it.

"Mostly it's the fact that it's just not representative of what I do in general. It's far from representative of what I do," he said. "So, to have a lot of people only associate you with that song, kind of a novelty song, it's a kids' song, basically, in a lot of ways. It's frustrating."

But overall, Zellar says he is "grateful for it."

Zellar is also grateful to be returning to Silver Bay this summer for Rocky Wall Entertainment's Music in the Park series.

"I love it up there," he said. "It's just beautiful. I love the lakes and the Great Lakes. Unfortunately, last year we had really bad weather. We played later in the season and it was cold, cold, cold, and rain so we ended up playing indoors, which I know was not ideal for us or the crowd. So, knock on wood, we're going to have good weather this year."

At the time of this writing, August 8th, the evening *Martin Zellar & The Hardways* will grace the City Center Park Stage beginning at 7:30 p.m., has potential to be perfect for a concert on the shore. The event is free to attend.

Zellar is also performing at a Rocky Wall Benefit House Concert on Thursday, August 7th, with all proceeds going to help bring more music to Silver Bay. Though the living room seating is sold out, deck seating is still available.

Deck seating offers an excellent outdoor setting overlooking a "million-dollar view of Lake Superior and the Palisade Valley of Tettegouche State Park," according to rockywalentertainment.org, where you can find more information about summer concerts and purchase tickets.

Sure, my assumptions sent the interview in a few unexpected directions, but Zellar didn't seem to mind. He rolled with it, patient, funny, and full of stories that stretched far beyond the questions I had prepared. If there's one thing I learned, it's that Martin Zellar is full of surprises. Catch him live and see for yourself when he plays the North Shore.

To learn more about Martin Zellar and sign up for his newsletter to stay updated on all things Martin Zellar, visit martinzellar.com.



THE NORTH SHORE JOURNAL

Serving all residents, businesses and visitors in Lake County, MN.

[Home](#) › [Lifestyle](#) › [Entertainment](#) › [Silver Bay set to 'Party like it's 1999' with Chase & Ovation](#)

[Lifestyle](#) [Entertainment](#) [Music](#)

Silver Bay set to 'Party like it's 1999' with Chase & Ovation

 By **Sarah Simon** August 7, 2025

 1204  0



*Chase & Ovation, a Prince tribute band, will perform at Silver Bay's Music in the Park Concert Series on Friday, August 15th.
(Submitted Photo)*

Some artists leave a mark so deep that their passing becomes a permanent memory. I can count on one hand the musicians whose deaths I remember vividly. David Bowie is one of them. I was driving to pick up a puppy from a dairy farm the day he died, January 10, 2016, and I tried, unsuccessfully, to rename our soon-to-be Loki, "Bowie."

Just a few months later, on April 21, 2016, the world lost Prince. I was at work when the news broke. I remember at least two coworkers quietly excusing themselves for the day. The grief caught them off guard, as it does when a figure so deeply woven into the soundtrack of our lives suddenly disappears.

That loss hit hard for many, especially musicians shaped by Prince's sound and spirit. One of them is Tommy Chase, a Minneapolis-based artist who has spent nearly two decades

honoring Prince's music and legacy.



"When he crossed over, it felt as if the rotation of the earth slowed down," said Chase. "It's not tangible to try to quantify what happened to the world when we all learned that Prince had crossed over."

Chase has deep ties to the artist, not just in sound and spirit, but in personal history. Over time, his striking resemblance to Prince, paired with a lifelong admiration, led to the creation of Chase & Ovation, reportedly the only Prince-approved tribute band. It wasn't part of his original plan, but watching his career unfold, it seems clear: all paths led to purple.

"Regardless of what I did in the music world, people would always say, 'That was a great show but has anybody ever told you you look like Prince?'" Chase recalled. "If I played an hour's worth of Ozzy Osbourne music, people would say, 'Hey man, you sound like Prince.' So what are you going to do?"

Though the comparisons were flattering, they became a source of frustration when Chase was trying to find his own voice. Eventually, he had a moment of clarity and chose to lean into the likeness rather than resist it.

"I was jolted out of bed at 3:30 or 4 in the morning back in early 2006," Chase explained. "And when I say jolted, I literally mean I went from lying flat on my back to standing on my feet in the blink of an eye."

By that time, Chase had already worked twice under what he calls the "Prince Umbrella." He appeared in the 1990 film *Graffiti Bridge*, where he was pulled from the pool of extras to stand in for Prince (did I mention there's a striking likeness?). He also spent a year playing in Cryptic, the band led by BrownMark, Prince's longtime bassist and a member of The Revolution.

That early morning wake-up call jolted Chase into a new mindset, planting the seed of an idea that had long been lingering at the edges of his mind: a tribute show dedicated to Prince.

"Why keep fighting this?" he said. "The more I heard it in my life, the more I tried to stay away from it and go in the opposite direction. Being compared to him isn't just daunting; it's impossible. There is only one him. Nonetheless, perhaps idiotically, I thought I'd like to do a tribute show and see what happens."

Chase knew that if he was going to do the tribute justice, he had to approach it with respect and care, starting by seeking Prince's personal permission.

"Everyone with radio, media, TV, and everyone at Paisley Park kept saying, 'Chase, you know he's never going to let you do this. He does not let anyone perform his music. You're insane. This is never going to happen.'"

Undeterred, Chase made countless phone calls but couldn't reach who he called "the Boss," AKA Prince. When he finally decided to move forward without Prince's approval, he chose to hold the first show at First Avenue, the legendary Minneapolis venue where *Purple Rain* was filmed.

The "Boss" made an unexpected appearance that evening. Just before the show, three large, clean-shaven men in impeccable suits stopped by to ask what time the performance would start.

"I said, 'I believe we're starting at 8 p.m.,' and one of them replied, 'The Boss is across the street and will be here at 7:55,'" Chase recalled. "I forgot how to breathe."

Though Chase and Ovation feared Prince might come to shut the show down, they pressed on. Three or four songs into the set, Prince gave the band a literal thumbs up before quietly leaving the venue.

"I am not embarrassed to say that I cried while I was on stage performing that song," said Chase.

Now, nearly 20 years later, Chase and Ovation continue to perform. He admitted that without Prince's approval, he likely would have returned to performing original music instead of continuing the tribute.

"I would without question be performing some sort of music," Chase said. "But without his say so or his go ahead? From 2006 until his passing, that's a 10-year span where he allowed me to perform his music from border to border and coast to coast. That's unheard of for him."

Prince had seen Chase perform before and was familiar with his music. Chase also shared a personal connection: his mother used to babysit Prince when he was between four and six years old. These ties, along with other key factors, likely contributed to Prince's approval of Chase & Ovation.

"I know one of the things he appreciated is that I didn't come out and gimmick the show up," Chase said. "I didn't put on constant costume changes with wigs to fit the era. I didn't wear all of the clothing he wore. It was always about the music."

Chase also shared that he's had one rule for Chase & Ovation since the beginning and has stuck to it to this day: always perform as if the boss is standing at the back of the room watching.

The tribute band has also earned approval from Prince's family members and former bandmates, some of whom have even joined Chase & Ovation on stage from time to time.

"The newness of it never wears off," Chase said. "In fact, a number of them were quite instrumental in my early endeavors, starting back in 2006. They were very hands-on in guiding me, opening doors, introducing me to the right people, and pointing me in the right

direction because they knew I approached this endeavor with tremendous reverence and wanted to do the right thing.”



Chase & Ovation are doing many things right, one of which is staying as authentic as possible to Prince’s versions. They do not stray from how Prince recorded the music or how he performed it live. Watching one of their concerts online, it feels more like an experience than a typical tribute show.

“We’ve been overwhelmed for 19 years with the response that we’ve been getting from people that come out to the show,” said Chase. “I owe all of that to the work the band puts in, the work we spent making it happen, just pouring over his music and his performances. I go back to just keeping it note for note, which is impossible, but we do the best we can to get to note for note and that translates.”

Having spent time with Prince, I couldn’t help but try to coax Chase into sharing some little-known Prince stories. He politely declined, charmingly and humorously, much like I imagine Prince himself might. But he did share this nugget:

“I will share with you this,” he said. “That dude, if he wanted to be, he could have been a household name as a stand-up comic.”

Not the first thing I think of when I think of Prince!

Chase & Ovation are looking forward to bringing the show to Silver Bay’s Music in the Park Free Live Music Concert Series at City Center Park on Friday, August 15 at 7:30 PM. The event is produced by Rocky Wall Entertainment, a nonprofit group with a mission to bring good music to Silver Bay.

“We’re absolutely excited,” said Chase. “I have worked with some of the crew that’s going to be up there and they’re amazing.”

Chase promises to bring not just his music but also good weather, ensuring that everyone at the show will have a “phenomenal time.”

THE NORTH SHORE JOURNAL

Serving all residents, businesses and visitors in Lake County, MN.

Home › Community › Silver Bay Welcomes Sherwin and Pam Linton and the Cotton Kings for...

Community Silver Bay Music

Silver Bay Welcomes Sherwin and Pam Linton and the Cotton Kings for a Night of Americana

 By **Sarah Simon** August 14, 2025

 1899  0



Photo: Michael Haug - Blue Ox

SHERWIN & PAM LINTON

Sherwin Linton Entertainment
P.O. Box 48100
Minneapolis, MN 55448
763-786-8535 cell 612-251-4877

Lintonent@aol.com
www.sherwinlinton.com
www.thejohnnycashstory.com

Though music has always been what Sherwin Linton calls his "central focal point," the spark that nudged him toward a career may have come during a high school football practice. "I was playing right guard, and we were scrimmaging when the fullback said, 'You've got to get in there and block or I can't get through,'" Sherwin recalled. He had to explain that he couldn't hold onto his opponent because he had sprained his little finger. The fullback was incredulous and, according to Sherwin, replied, "Little finger? I'd break my leg to win a game." It was then that Sherwin decided, "I would have to find something I would devote myself to with the same kind of attitude." He realized he needed to have the same energy for something that the fullback had for football. After hanging up his uniform, Sherwin grabbed his guitar and headed to the KWAT radio station in his hometown where he knew the manager. There, he pitched the idea of a radio show featuring his own band along with other high school musicians. "He said, 'I'll give you a show on Sunday, and if it goes well, we'll do another one on Saturday,'" Sherwin said. "Within a few weeks, I had two radio shows and also had a job at the station filing all the records." Sherwin was just sixteen at the time, and part of his role at the station involved communicating with national record labels. "That was the launching pad for me," said Sherwin, who at the time led a band called Sherwin Linton and the Rocketeers. That launching pad propelled Sherwin's career from small-town radio shows to stages across the country. Over the decades, he has recorded hit songs, toured extensively, and has made a name in country and folk music. His journey reflects a lifelong dedication to his craft and a deep love for music that shows no signs of slowing down. After high school, Sherwin formed a band called the Fender Benders, a name inspired by someone in the crowd yelling, "Bend that

Fender!" in reference to the way Sherwin sometimes played with his guitar bent over his leg. In 1966, Sherwin recorded "Cotton King" in Nashville, a hit that launched his band, the Cotton Kings, and cemented his place in country music. Their sound blended tradition with rockabilly, and they toured for decades. Sherwin has a special connection with Johnny Cash, whom he met after a show in Minneapolis in 1958. Over the years, they developed a friendship. Sherwin's 1971 tribute album *Hello, I'm Not Johnny Cash*, recorded at the Sioux Falls penitentiary, became a bestseller. Cash called it the nicest tribute he'd ever received and invited Sherwin onto his show many times. "He was a super wonderful person who did a lot for a lot of people," said Sherwin. "He was a very giving person, both he and June, his wife. He was very kind to me and invited me to his home and to be on his show. I rode on his bus several times. He was a really great person to help other people." In the 1980s, Sherwin went solo after struggling to find musicians willing to follow his rules against drugs and excessive alcohol use. "It was hard to find musicians that I could put together a band where I didn't have to deal with that," he said. "I decided to work as a single for a while." Fans who had seen Sherwin perform at Mr. Nibs in Minneapolis later moved to St. Stephen to take over the family bar and invited him to perform there. It was at this bar that his life took a new turn when the owners asked if a couple of young singers could join him for a night. "I met Patti and Pam, who were maybe sixteen and seventeen at the time, and they came up and sang," Sherwin said. "I remember they sang 'Delta Dawn' and other songs that were really popular then, and they were really good." Sherwin told the sisters that when they were out of school, and if they would like to join him on the road, he would put a band together again. A year or so later, that's just what they did. "We took a house job at a Best Western motel in my hometown of Watertown, South Dakota, playing six nights a week," Sherwin said. "I had a band I put together, and they were really popular. People really loved them, so that was our show together." By chance, the motel's bar needed a bartender, so Sherwin told his son about the opening. His son took the job, fell in love with Patti, and they eventually married. Patti went on to perform with country legends like Lorrie Morgan, Toby Keith, and George Jones. "At the time, there was no romance between me and Pam, but a few years later, there was," Sherwin said. Sherwin and Pam will celebrate their 38th anniversary on August 15. "As we progressed through those early years, I learned a huge amount about the music industry from Sherwin," Pam said. "I was young, straight out of high school, but had been playing and working in music since the age of twelve. When we married, I took over the business end of our work." There is a lot to managing a music career, and Pam found herself taking on the roles of accountant, secretary, valet, bearer of bad news, and all things band manager. "We've managed to navigate the good, the bad, and the ugly very comfortably as husband and wife," Pam said. "Pam's amazing," Sherwin said. "She does everything, except sing my songs, and she does that sometimes, too." Though Pam has always been comfortable as the "sideman," she received a surprise phone call in the fall of 2023 that led to a recording deal with New Folk Records and a 15-song project titled Pam Linton's *Songs of the Carter Family*. Released in January of this year, the album remains on the Americana Music Charts as of August. "We've gotten some phenomenal reviews and acceptance in the world of country music and folk music," said Pam. Sherwin encouraged Pam to use the Cotton Kings in the project and was with her every step of the way, flying with her to Lincolnton, North Carolina, to record the album, a special tribute to the musicians considered the "first family" of folk and country music. At 86, Sherwin is still recording and recently released a Grammy-nominated album titled *Sunday Drives with Mom and Dad*. The project took a year to complete and features 42 songs his parents used to sing in the car as they drove down gravel roads in South Dakota, where there was no radio. "It's quite a historical collection of songs," Sherwin said of the tunes popular during his dad's younger years. "I still love those songs, and they're still applicable in my shows today." Sherwin's parents had a massive record collection and a beautiful phonograph. Their eclectic taste in music inspired Sherwin to love all kinds of music. Kenny Wilson, the Cotton Kings' steel guitarist, helped produce the album. Pam described Wilson as a "very gifted musician who truly appreciates the traditional music forms." The Cotton Kings also include Norton Lawellin, who plays the keys while covering the bass with his left hand. Lawellin had worked in a recording studio before meeting Sherwin, adding a B3 organ to a track for the band. "He's a wonderful person," said Sherwin. "A tremendous talent and a great asset." Their drummer, Don Nustad, lives in Fargo and once worked at the famous Marguerite's Music in Fargo, North Dakota. He is heavily involved in church, as are the other members of the Cotton Kings. Pam said, "We could not have a better group of people around us." Sherwin and Pam Linton and the Cotton Kings will be performing on the North Shore for the Music in the Park free live concert series in Silver Bay on Friday, August 22, with the show starting at 7:30 p.m. Both Sherwin and Pam are excited to make the trip. Pam said, "We spend a lot of time in the Dakotas, Iowa, Nebraska, much more in the South and the West side of the state. I feel like we're almost going to a whole different environment. We're always out on the prairie." They promise an entertaining night with a mix of original music, Johnny Cash songs, and oldies. Pam said they love to get to know the audience and tell stories, and there will be a few laughs along the way. "We'll never be rich folks but we do what we love every day," said Pam. "But in the end, all the driving, all the things that can be a challenge are worth it, because you look out at the audience and you see mom and dad and grandma and grandpa and all the kids, and you see everybody together having a good time. You get that interaction with all walks of life. That's the best part of the business." From a sprained finger on the football field to a lifetime of standing center stage, Sherwin Linton found the thing worth devoting himself to and never looked back. With Pam by his side and the Cotton Kings behind him, he's still chasing the music, still telling stories, and still bringing generations together one song at a time.

Though music has always been what Sherwin Linton calls his "central focal point," the spark that nudged him toward a career may have come during a high school football practice.

"I was playing right guard, and we were scrimmaging when the fullback said, 'You've got to get in there and block or I can't get through,'" Sherwin recalled. He had to explain that he couldn't hold onto his opponent because he had sprained his little finger.

The fullback was incredulous and, according to Sherwin, replied, "Little finger? I'd break my leg to win a game."

It was then that Sherwin decided, "I would have to find something I would devote myself to with the same kind of attitude." He realized he needed to have the same energy for something that the fullback had for football.



After hanging up his uniform, Sherwin grabbed his guitar and headed to the KWAT radio station in his hometown where he knew the manager. There, he pitched the idea of a radio show featuring his own band along with other high school musicians.

"He said, 'I'll give you a show on Sunday, and if it goes well, we'll do another one on Saturday,'" Sherwin said. "Within a few weeks, I had two radio shows and also had a job at the station filing all the records."

Sherwin was just sixteen at the time, and part of his role at the station involved communicating with national record labels.

"That was the launching pad for me," said Sherwin, who at the time led a band called Sherwin Linton and the Rocketeers.

That launching pad propelled Sherwin's career from small-town radio shows to stages across the country. Over the decades, he has recorded hit songs, toured extensively, and has made a name in country and folk music. His journey reflects a lifelong dedication to his craft and a deep love for music that shows no signs of slowing down.

After high school, Sherwin formed a band called the Fender Benders, a name inspired by someone in the crowd yelling, "Bend that Fender!" in reference to the way Sherwin sometimes played with his guitar bent over his leg.

In 1966, Sherwin recorded "Cotton King" in Nashville, a hit that launched his band, the Cotton Kings, and cemented his place in country music. Their sound blended tradition with rockabilly, and they toured for decades.

Sherwin has a special connection with Johnny Cash, whom he met after a show in Minneapolis in 1958. Over the years, they developed a friendship.

Sherwin's 1971 tribute album *Hello, I'm Not Johnny Cash*, recorded at the Sioux Falls penitentiary, became a bestseller. Cash called it the nicest tribute he'd ever received and invited Sherwin onto his show many times.



“He was a super wonderful person who did a lot for a lot of people,” said Sherwin. “He was a very giving person, both he and June, his wife. He was very kind to me and invited me to his home and to be on his show. I rode on his bus several times. He was a really great person to help other people.”

In the 1980s, Sherwin went solo after struggling to find musicians willing to follow his rules against drugs and excessive alcohol use.

“It was hard to find musicians that I could put together a band where I didn’t have to deal with that,” he said. “I decided to work as a single for a while.”

Fans who had seen Sherwin perform at Mr. Nibs in Minneapolis later moved to St. Stephen to take over the family bar and invited him to perform there. It was at this bar that his life took a new turn when the owners asked if a couple of young singers could join him for a night.

“I met Patti and Pam, who were maybe sixteen and seventeen at the time, and they came up and sang,” Sherwin said. “I remember they sang ‘Delta Dawn’ and other songs that were really popular then, and they were really good.”

Sherwin told the sisters that when they were out of school, and if they would like to join him on the road, he would put a band together again. A year or so later, that's just what they did.

"We took a house job at a Best Western motel in my hometown of Watertown, South Dakota, playing six nights a week," Sherwin said. "I had a band I put together, and they were really popular. People really loved them, so that was our show together."

By chance, the motel's bar needed a bartender, so Sherwin told his son about the opening. His son took the job, fell in love with Patti, and they eventually married. Patti went on to perform with country legends like Lorrie Morgan, Toby Keith, and George Jones.

"At the time, there was no romance between me and Pam, but a few years later, there was," Sherwin said.

Sherwin and Pam will celebrate their 38th anniversary on August 15.

"As we progressed through those early years, I learned a huge amount about the music industry from Sherwin," Pam said. "I was young, straight out of high school, but had been playing and working in music since the age of twelve. When we married, I took over the business end of our work."

There is a lot to managing a music career, and Pam found herself taking on the roles of accountant, secretary, valet, bearer of bad news, and all things band manager.

"We've managed to navigate the good, the bad, and the ugly very comfortably as husband and wife," Pam said.

"Pam's amazing," Sherwin said. "She does everything, except sing my songs, and she does that sometimes, too."

Though Pam has always been comfortable as the "sideman," she received a surprise phone call in the fall of 2023 that led to a recording deal with New Folk Records and a 15-song project titled *Pam Linton's Songs of the Carter Family*. Released in January of this year, the album remains on the Americana Music Charts as of August.

"We've gotten some phenomenal reviews and acceptance in the world of country music and folk music," said Pam.

Sherwin encouraged Pam to use the Cotton Kings in the project and was with her every step of the way, flying with her to Lincolnton, North Carolina, to record the album, a special tribute to the musicians considered the "first family" of folk and country music.

At 86, Sherwin is still recording and recently released a Grammy-nominated album titled *Sunday Drives with Mom and Dad*. The project took a year to complete and features 42 songs his parents used to sing in the car as they drove down gravel roads in South Dakota, where there was no radio.

"It's quite a historical collection of songs," Sherwin said of the tunes popular during his dad's younger years. "I still love those songs, and they're still applicable in my shows today."



Sherwin's parents had a massive record collection and a beautiful phonograph. Their eclectic taste in music inspired Sherwin to love all kinds of music.

Kenny Wilson, the Cotton Kings' steel guitarist, helped produce the album. Pam described Wilson as a "very gifted musician who truly appreciates the traditional music forms."

The Cotton Kings also include Norton Lawellin, who plays the keys while covering the bass with his left hand. Lawellin had worked in a recording studio before meeting Sherwin, adding a B3 organ to a track for the band.

"He's a wonderful person," said Sherwin. "A tremendous talent and a great asset."

Their drummer, Don Nustad, lives in Fargo and once worked at the famous Marguerite's Music in Fargo, North Dakota. He is heavily involved in church, as are the other members of the Cotton Kings. Pam said, "We could not have a better group of people around us."

Sherwin and Pam Linton and the Cotton Kings will be performing on the North Shore for the Music in the Park free live concert series in Silver Bay on Friday, August 22, with the show starting at 7:30 p.m. Both Sherwin and Pam are excited to make the trip.

Pam said, "We spend a lot of time in the Dakotas, Iowa, Nebraska, much more in the South and the West side of the state. I feel like we're almost going to a whole different environment. We're always out on the prairie."

They promise an entertaining night with a mix of original music, Johnny Cash songs, and oldies. Pam said they love to get to know the audience and tell stories, and there will be a few laughs along the way.

"We'll never be rich folks but we do what we love every day," said Pam. "But in the end, all the driving, all the things that can be a challenge are worth it, because you look out at the audience and you see mom and dad and grandma and grandpa and all the kids, and you see everybody together having a good time. You get that interaction with all walks of life. That's the best part of the business."

From a sprained finger on the football field to a lifetime of standing center stage, Sherwin Linton found the thing worth devoting himself to and never looked back. With Pam by his side and the Cotton Kings behind him, he's still chasing the music, still telling stories, and still bringing generations together one song at a time.

THE NORTH SHORE JOURNAL

Serving all residents, businesses and visitors in Lake County, MN.

Home › Community › Flip to the B-Side: Tina & the B-Sides Bring Their Hits to...

Community Lifestyle Entertainment

Flip to the B-Side: Tina & the B-Sides Bring Their Hits to Silver Bay

By Sarah Simon August 21, 2025


923 0



Tina & the B-Sides. (Photo by Shelly Mosman)

Though Tina Schlieske of Tina & the B-Sides has lived in California for the past 25 years, with some time there even earlier, she said her Minnesota roots still give her away.

“My sister Laura lives out here too, and when the two of us get together our Minnesota accents really come out,” said the Chicago-born, Minneapolis-raised musician. “They definitely know we’re not from California, especially when Laura starts talking about the Minnesota Vikings.”

Schlieske still spends plenty of time in Minnesota, whether performing solo, playing with one of her many bands, or retreating to the family cabin tucked into the woods near Ely. 

“We spent every summer there since I was five or six,” she recalled. “So much of my childhood was up north in northern Minnesota. Whenever I go back, it’s always nostalgic, and I love it. The North Shore is so beautiful.”

She will bring Tina & the B-Sides to Silver Bay on Friday, August 29, for the Rocky Wall Entertainment Free Music in the Park series. The band will stay for the Rocky Wall Benefit House Concert the next evening, with all proceeds supporting music in Silver Bay.

She has played shows locally over the years, but her upcoming performance will be her first in Silver Bay, and she is eager to finally experience it for herself, saying, “I can’t wait. A lot of people have talked about how beautiful it is. I’m really looking forward to it.”

Schlieske’s musical life extends far beyond The B-Sides. Over the years, she has fronted the feminist-punk band Genital Panic, explored jazz standards in her Sinatra to Simone project, and formed Graceland Exiles with her sister Laura in California. She has also performed with Minneapolis all-stars in Lola and the Red Hots.

“Too many band names,” she joked in our interview when I asked about the origin of the name “B-Sides,” but each band tends to reflect a different shade of her voice.

The name B-Sides came together on the fly when Schlieske’s band landed their first gig in the 1980s, opening for the Urban Guerrillas, a gritty Minneapolis post-punk group. At the time, her band was inspired by Adam and the Ants, whose early lineup had a side project called the B-Sides. They borrowed the name temporarily and it ended up sticking.

Schlieske joked that for a time, some of her audience didn’t know what a B-side was. (For younger readers: B-sides are the flip side of a vinyl record, often home to the weird, the raw, and the wonderful. And please, stop making me feel old.)

Whether fronting a punk band or crooning jazz standards, Schlieske brings a raw, magnetic energy to the stage. Her voice, equal parts grit and grace, has been described as soulful, powerful, and precise. At the Silver Bay show, she said fans can expect a mix of B-Sides originals and older covers, delivered with the chemistry that only decades of playing together can create.

“Playing with the B-Sides, it’s like putting on your favorite sweater or your favorite pair of socks,” said Schlieske. “It’s that ease and how everybody feels so comfortable. We just get together and we just laugh. We’ve got so much time that we spent with each other that when we get together it’s like no time has passed.”

With Schlieske’s sister lending vocals, Jeremy Plumb on bass, Troy Norton on guitar and vocals, Ron Caron on drums, and Brian Ziemniak on keys, the B-Sides’ current lineup is full of talent. The band released three albums in the 1990s, took a hiatus, and returned with another album in 2014.

"I love playing with these guys so much," Schlieske said. "They know where I'm going, no matter what— mid-song or whatever. They anticipate everything. It's just all the best parts of being in a band when you play with them."



Over the years, they have won multiple Minnesota Music Awards, earned a coveted First Avenue Star on the exterior wall of Minneapolis's legendary venue, and had their music featured in several motion pictures.

Through it all, the band members have remained close friends, a bond that has helped them navigate the challenges of the music world. Their friendship shows on stage, creating a natural chemistry that makes every performance feel effortless and full of life.

"There are a lot of bands that get together and they're all talented but that's all they have is talent. They don't really like each other as people," Schlieske explained. "For this band, I just feel like we've been so fortunate. We all love each other as people and as humans and respect each other so much as musicians and artists. It's a very special thing that we have and I'm very grateful and thankful for it."

Schlieske also expressed gratitude for the Minneapolis music scene. When asked about a mentor, she pointed to the scene itself, describing it as a kind of family.

"I've watched and been a part of that scene and it's almost like being with an older brother or older sister. Of course there's bickering here and there and fighting here and there but, as a whole, how they take care of their own and in the depth of talent it's just incredible," she explained. "The Minneapolis music scene is the best thing. It's how I mentored, got mentored, cut my teeth, and learned so many things from so many musicians. Being part of that scene was just incredible."

Throughout her career, Schlieske has collaborated with many talented artists. When asked if it ever felt surreal, she replied, "Yes, I don't think I could say that fast enough. It felt very surreal."

Some of the artists she has worked with include Rose Stone of Sly and the Family Stone, Benmont Tench, Tom Petty's longtime keyboardist, and James Burton, Elvis Presley's guitarist.

"When you hear Elvis Presley songs, that particular guitar line and sound? That's James Burton," Schlieske said. "Getting the chance to be in the same studio and have him play on a couple of my songs was pretty incredible."

For Schlieske, these experiences were proof that she was headed in the right direction.

"It's crazy, but when you just keep your head down and you're just working towards a goal, and if you're doing it right, of course you should be crossing paths with people that you admire and aspire to be or aspire to play with," she said. "That's when you know you're doing something right."

The musician is also doing something right with her most recent release, *The Good Life*, which consists of jazz standards.



“As an artist, you get bored, and the best way to grow is to keep learning new things,” she said. “[Jazz] was a style I loved but never had the courage to tackle as a singer. Right before COVID, I was feeling restless and thought, ‘You know what? I’m just going to do this.’ It was petrifying, but I’m so thankful I did because I learned so much and met incredible musicians I’m still close with in the jazz world.”

Jazz can be a different animal in the world of music. Schlieske explained that rock and blues are largely emotion-driven, with simpler chord progressions where the focus is on feeling. Jazz, however, requires a different kind of balance.

“A three-chord blues song can be so moving and so amazing,” she said. “But with jazz, there’s a complication. It’s that you almost need to temper your emotion, because there’s a technique. You’re the vocalist and just another instrument in there. There’s no note bending in the sense of blues where you can kind of get away with that. You can get away with a lot in blues and rock n’ roll as a singer, I think.”

She continued, “But with jazz there’s a melody you need to follow that is an unspoken thing. Then if you are good enough, you can jump around and dance around that melody. But it needs to be in tune. You’re just another instrument within the ensemble and there’s something exciting to me about that because it’s all equal form.”

Schlieske credits her family for her love of all kinds of music. Her mom played everything from Janis Joplin to Kris Kristofferson, Joni Mitchell, The Beatles, classical music, and opera. Her dad enjoyed Tammy Wynette and George Jones, while her sister brought home Aretha Franklin and jazz from college.

“I feel like I was just like a sponge, absorbing it all,” she said. “I truly just love music so much. I feel that you can live on this earth for 100 years and still not come close to listening to all the different genres and artists that are out there interpreting different genres.”

Whether it’s punk, jazz, or a lakeside concert in Silver Bay, Tina Schlieske keeps proving that the good life is wherever the music takes her.

Mark your calendars to come listen to Tina & the B-Sides play some original rock and blues as well as some older covers. Don’t worry, I asked Schlieske to be sure to bring some California sunshine to the show in Silver Bay to allow for the concert to be outdoors.

Find out more about Tina’s music at tinaschlieske.com. For tickets to the benefit concert and other event details, visit rockywallentertainment.org.

THE NORTH SHORE **JOURNAL**

Serving all residents, businesses and visitors in Lake County, MN.

Home › Community › Scarlet Rivera & Chris Mulkey to Headline Silver Bay's Music in the...

[Community](#) [Silver Bay](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Entertainment](#) [Visitors & Tourists](#)

Scarlet Rivera & Chris Mulkey to Headline Silver Bay's Music in the Park Series Finale

By [Sarah Simon](#) August 28, 2025

1218 0



Chris Mulkey wasn't surprised when I mentioned the recent frost warnings in the area. From his Los Angeles home, just eight blocks from the Pacific, the Wisconsin-born, Minnesota-raised actor had already asked Siri for the Silver Bay forecast in preparation for his visit.

He'll bring a jacket when he heads north to play with Scarlet Rivera in Rocky Wall Entertainment's Music in the Park series finale. But more than that, he says, he'll bring a little California sunshine.

"I pack it every time I go," he said. "I'm excited about coming up and playing with Scarlet. We're going to rock out. It's going to be great."



You may know Chris Mulkey as Hank Jennings on *Twin Peaks*, Boss Hague on *Boardwalk Empire*, or John Cronan in *Captain Phillips*. My husband knows him as "that guy from *Rambo*." He also played a key role in *North Country*, a film based on a true story about sexual harassment in the mining industry, much of which was filmed in the Iron Range.

"I like doing movies because I like being in the world, on location somewhere. You're really in the iron mines in Minnesota for *North Country*, on a ship in the Mediterranean for *Captain Phillips*, in the jungles of the Philippines for *Behind Enemy Lines*, or in Hawaii for *Lost*," he said. "It's really cool."

It's a long way from the University of Minnesota, where Mulkey reluctantly signed up for acting classes as an elective at a friend's suggestion. He had been involved in wrestling and had a full scholarship to the University of North Dakota, but he felt the U of M was a better fit. To pay for school, he had to give up wrestling and get a job.

"My friend George Finley said, 'If you're looking for an elective, take an acting class. You love movies and music, and it'd be great!' So I said okay, and I took it. I really found my niche. It's been great," Mulkey recalled.

One of Mulkey's earliest gigs was with the Minneapolis Children's Theater Company, where he took on a variety of roles. He played the wolf in *Peter and the Wolf*, performing alongside the Minneapolis Orchestra. He got a taste of what it's like to be a bad guy in *Huck Finn*. As the romantic lead in *He Who Gets Slapped*, he rode a white horse on stage. He also played the Mother Duck in *The Ugly Duckling*.

Mulkey's love for performance didn't stop at the stage. Having learned guitar at 17, he also immersed himself in the vibrant Twin Cities music scene of the 1960s.

"It was so great. We had all these rock 'n' roll teen clubs, and people would dance their rear ends off," Mulkey recalled. As a blues harpist, he started playing in African-American clubs with his friend Bobby Lyle, a talented St. Paul pianist who later recorded for Capitol Records.

A fake ID may have been involved. "It said I was 21 and I was from La Crosse," Mulkey admitted. "I would go to these clubs, step up, play my harp, play the blues — that's kind of how my start at the clubs began."

Since those early days, Mulkey has recorded numerous albums both as a solo artist and with bands including Deluxe, Mulkey & Shockley, and Blue Highway to name a few. His discography spans decades and genres, blending blues, rock, and Americana, and showcases his skills as a vocalist, guitarist, and harmonica player.

From early releases like *It's About the Heart* (2000) to recent work such as *True Blue Avenue* (2025), Mulkey has consistently brought his love of live performance and storytelling into the studio, building a musical career as rich and varied as his acting work. He has also written songs for television and movies, including some featured on the soundtrack to *North Country*.

Mulkey's creativity doesn't stop at music, he's also deeply involved in film and theater. He's currently working on a sequel to *Patti Rocks*, an indie movie he collaborated on with his late wife, actress and artist Karen Landry, who was also from Minnesota. Plans are underway to shoot the film in St. Paul and along the North Shore.

During his upcoming trip to Minnesota, he'll meet with director and friend David Burton Morris in Minneapolis to work on the project before heading to Silver Bay for performances: the Music in the Park series finale on September 5, a Benefit House Concert on September 6, and then back to Minneapolis for a show at the Aster Café on September 7. Additionally, *Patti Rocks* will be featured at the Main Cinema by the Minnesota Film Society as part of their Minnesota Made series, with Mulkey staying for a Q&A on September 8.

It'll be a busy start to September for Mulkey, who thrives on staying active. He's especially looking forward to his Minnesota visit, though he admits he's disappointed to miss the State Fair this year.

"I'm missing the State Fair because it closes the day I get in," he said. "I like to go see the livestock. I grew up in Northern Wisconsin and lived in Spirit Lake, Iowa, which is a farm town. All my friends were farmers, so I like being around all that stuff."

He also enjoys checking out the art in the Arts Building, grabbing a brat, and listening to live bands. Mulkey has even taken the stage at the venue himself a few times, once performing with Jack Knife and the Sharps, a rockabilly band from Minneapolis.



Mulkey will take the stage in Silver Bay with Scarlet Rivera, a Grammy-nominated musician who, according to Rocky Wall Entertainment in a press release for the event, “burned a hole in the fabric of rock history as a pioneer of the electric violin.”

Rivera was discovered by Bob Dylan in the mid- '70s, and it is her violin on songs like *The Hurricane* that leaves listeners with chills. Since then, she has worked with many critically acclaimed musicians in the studio and on stage and has released solo albums including *All of Me* and *Dylan Dreams*, with her third album *Full Circle* coming soon.

Mulkey met Rivera through his wife, actress Dana Sparks, who had worked as Rivera’s assistant. One year, when Mulkey’s blues band was set to play a stadium show in Santa Monica called *Celebrate America*, an event he’s been part of for the past six years, he asked if Rivera would be interested in joining them on stage.

“Scarlet said, ‘That’d be fun,’ and showed up,” he recalled. “We just hit it off. It was great, and we’ve been friends ever since.”

The friends also participate in the Angel Force Band, a collective of musicians who raise awareness for mental health and provide support to military families affected by suicide. Mulkey, Rivera, and their bandmates perform to help fund programs and initiatives that assist families coping with these difficult losses.

Scarlet Rivera will perform with the Chris Mulkey Band on the City Center Park Stage from 7:30 to 9 p.m., playing a mix of original blues and Americana, along with beloved cover songs. They will be joined by Mulkey’s longtime friends and bandmates: drummer Greg Davis, known for his dynamic performances, and bassist Ed White, a master of the instrument who has performed with a wide range of artists.

Neither Davis nor White has been to Minnesota before, and Mulkey says he’s looking forward to sharing the experience with them.

“I really am excited to take them up there because I’ve been going up north for a long time,” he said. “It’ll be really fun.”

Mulkey encourages fans to stop by after the show to purchase CDs, get an autograph, or chat about his upcoming film *Long Shadows*, set to hit theaters on November 7. For him, it’s all part of sharing the music, stories, and experiences that have shaped his decades-long career and connecting with the people who make it all worthwhile.

For more information about Chris Mulkey’s music, visit chrismulkeymusic.com. Scarlet Rivera’s work can be explored at scarletriveramusic.com. For event details or tickets to the Benefit House Concert, visit rockywallentertainment.org.