

A Valley and Beyond / May 18, 2013

Michael Phoenix

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I have to start with a dedication from the heart:

**For local artists, musicians, business owner, writers, event organizers
You make the areas we live
Unique and different**

**For the everyone
Who made this first issue possible**

Welcome! and Thank You!!!! ☺

I want to welcome to the first issue of "A Valley and Beyond". An e-zine focusing on the local side of cities and towns. Before you read anymore, I want to say a very sincere THANK YOU for checking out this first issue. I promise not to bore the hell out of you.

Before I get too wordy, the first section will give you an idea about what you will find here. You will also have an idea about sections that will be in every issue. Before I forget: here is the information on how to get in touch with me.

Who is in charge:

Michael Phoenix: Founder / Head Editor / Writer / Photographer / Webmaster / Layout
(Welcome to the staff!)

Guest Photographers:

Aloysius Dragovits

John Bedics

Elizabeth Judge Wyant

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Hi!

Here is a quick background / history.

Writing has been my dream since I was about 16. I started as an author. My first book, *A Dream in the Night* is pretty much an autobiography. It includes the following genres: poetry, short stories, quotes. I started checking out self-publishing companies. Couldn't afford their prices. I decided to do it on my own. After learning the hard way, there is a major difference between Word and e-book format; the dream was real.

Author and Journalist:

Around January 2012, I was curious if I could write reviews. I started with my first love: music. While catching local bands, I figured: "Why not give do it? Just for fun. See if I am any good." Writing took on a life of it's own, after that point. I expanded what I wrote about and evolved my style. Started a blog and website. The blog ended up being for full articles. Website: short articles / photos / personal section. Around February 2013, I realized it was time for a second book. I had to prove I was more than a one-shot author.

Second book:

"In a Valley... A Writer's New Beginning" was born. Ok, I admit, it was a fairly quick kill here. I wanted to come out with my second book. I had serious writer's block on all my ideas. So, why not compile the articles I wrote into a book. Add a few sections, no problem! Except that I forgot how to do the formatting. Plus the sections took longer to write. After around 140 drafts for kindle, the book was finished. Hopefully, I still have your interest. I am at the point of *A Valley and Beyond*.

The first issue!

Over the course of 1 year, I made several inquiries to local publications for freelancing. Every one failed. The more I evolved my writing; the more I was convinced I was good enough to get paid for it. After "In a Valley...", I figured: "Screw it! If no one is interested, why not come out with a publication?" I had a lot of ideas for it. Actually, I have been toying around with the idea for almost a year. I had zero cash to pull it off. After realizing I live in 2013 and two books ran me \$0; I was almost pissed how the solution was right in front of me: e-zine! After that realization: If it doesn't cost me anything, why have ads to distract you from the content?

That is the short version, believe me on this one.

Now that you have a quick background, time for what you will find in this magazine. Also, a breakdown of regular sections vs. ones that will vary.

Something Different

For the premiere issue, I want to give you the basics. Most people go all out for the first one. A way to announce they are here. That is really not my style here. I want you to get a feel for it first. Decide if you like the layout / content / sections. Hopefully, say: "Yes, it is worth the \$1 I just spent. I definitely want more!!!" That is the ultimate goal with everything I write.

A Valley and Beyond will evolve with each issue. My mind is non-stop with ideas. Here is the breakdown / quick explanation for this issue.

- **A Valley / Beyond:** Standard. I know, self-explanatory here. The main sections are for what is located in the Lehigh Valley, Pa area. Including guest photographers / columnists. The exact geography is open to your interpretation. Check a map and good luck with this one! Beyond the Lehigh Valley? Mainly guest columnists and photographers. You never know, there may be articles / photos from your local area! You will probably find several sections titles duplicated. Example: You may find 2 band reviews: local and non-local.

- **Music:** Standard. You will find at least one, live music review in each issue. The reviews will be based on my criteria. For the first few zines, it will be local music only. I will be honest: until I can either afford or get the credentials to do major shows. Even if I attend a major concert, there will still be a local music review. What about recorded music? When possible, there will be Cd reviews. Band interviews may be included here or "In Their Own Words."

- **Arts:** Standard. This section will include art galleries and exhibit openings. Artist interviews may be included here or in the section "In Their Own Words".

- **Books:** Standard. At least one book review will be included in each issue. Like other sections, Author interviews may or may be found here.

- **In Their Own Words:** Standard. Here is where things will get real interesting / sometimes unpredictable. You will rarely find the standard question / answer format. Expect more of a conversation. Don't expect me to stay with people / areas you expect. That will get real boring, real fast. This section may be combined with others, depending on what makes sense.

- **Photos:** Standard. Here is the real visual part of your area! There will be guest photographers, myself, guest columnists, almost anyone. Every issue, I will be taking submissions from people. The quality may not be the best on some. It will be reality and the moment that person is in. I am more concerned about placing you in that moment vs. professional / dslr quality. Expect a very wide range here. ☺

That pretty much wraps up the basics. I know there will columns on areas such as politics, sports, etc. Can I give you a definite list / what flexible columns will be in an issue? No. Can I do my best to continue surprising you? Give my very best!!!!

- Before I forget: The Interviews may be really off the mainstream. If several readers want to know about a columnist, I may let them do the interview. I am including myself here. I think it would be fun and interesting. If you ever want to know anything, always feel free to contact me.

Intro / Preview down! Now for the fun and interesting parts....

[A Valley](#)

[Through the Eyes / Visual Arts](#)

Snow Goose Gallery: The Art of the Miniature XXI



Quick Intro.

May 5 was the first day for this exhibit. I was expecting miniature figurines. At best, small reproductions of original art / photos. I was dead wrong on this one.

The exhibit fits the title, perfectly! First glance: each wall had dozens of art works. I was completely caught off guard. Instead of replications, here you will see originals.

Different from most exhibits

Most exhibits are fairly large paintings, photos, etc. Due to the very small size, there is a challenge here. When you look around, everything may appear to blend together. There also appears to be no organization. Your eyes, literally, do not know where to look first. All of this is very deceptive. You really have to start at one point and look closer.



Details in the variety

When you start looking at each work, the first thing noticed was detail. My first impression: taking a large painting and shrinking it down. A few examples on display: Nature, towns, and sunsets are almost an exact duplicate of reality. The exhibit's layout adds to the detail. With the works very close together, you will not notice everything in one moment.

What I thought about it?

I love art, in all forms. At times, it can get routine. Not for the individual works, the galleries. Paintings spaced so the focus is on one at a time. Hey, it works and is one way of doing it. When I see an exhibit like this one, it really grabs my attention. Adding an extra level of excitement and interest!

Overall recommendation:

Looking for something different to check out? Love art, especially paintings? Looking to relax in a gallery for a while? Place this very high on your list!

Not really a fan of art? Think paintings are boring? Do not really like art galleries? Stop by anyway. This is something really different that you may enjoy.

The exhibit will be on display until 06/16/13. Interested? Check it out online:

<http://www.thesnowgoosegallery.com/>

Alternative Gallery: Live Art



Glancing at the heart of a city....

Buildings and major businesses are required for any city to exist. Want to check out the real heart of Allentown, Pa? Take a walk on Hamilton St. on a Saturday. As you get closer to 9th, there is something a little different (weather permitting).

Live art exhibit!

To begin with, the Alternative Gallery is a little different from most. Even when they are closed, you can walk by see an art exhibit. The owners, Brandon Wunder and Rob Riegel really like to show off what artists can do. One reason for this exhibit. Looking a finished piece of art is one thing. Having the chance to see an artist create it, different / more interesting ballgame.

When you stop and look around, ask the artists questions. From observations, they are happy to discuss projects / works.

Adding to the “Live” part...



Don't be surprised to a free, live music show also. Members of local group, Phoenix Bridge, were performing an acoustic show. I asked Brandon and Rob if the live music will be a regular part. Answer: "It was in the main plan." Like the artists, feel free to have a conversation with the musicians. Try to have a little courtesy and wait until a break in the music. Until that break, enjoy what you hear!!!!

Like what you see / hear?

Stop in the gallery. Check out the different genres on display. Have some extra cash? An empty space on a wall or shelf? Need to expand your music collection? Looking for something new to wear? Buy something. The local artists will appreciate it. Depending on what you buy, it will be an original, never duplicated. With the music, you may find a new song / album you love!

Important Note: Common sense here. The Live Art is outdoors. Weather: sunny? Definitely! Rain? No chance. In between? Check Facebook or call the gallery.

Overall Suggestion: Live Art is for everyone. This exhibit had a face painter. Bring the family with you. Even if you have a packed day, stop by for a few minutes.

Have your interest / curiosity?

<https://www.facebook.com/thealternativegallery?fref=ts>

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePhoenixBridge>

When we close them / Music

Quick note: Depending on the issue, you will find this section divided into 2 parts: live and recorded. The live part will be in every issue. I will try to include a Cd / album / mp3 review when possible. Onto my first victim, I mean band:



Stephen Christopher Nick Fedora Sherry Zimmermann Paul Zimmermann Sheri Bayne

Live and onstage with Kismet!

New band, first time performing

Kismet is a new cover band in the Lehigh Valley, Pa area. Literally, their first show on 05/12/13 at the Lehigh Valley Zoo. Double first for me here. New band / first time at the zoo. I know lead vocalist, Sheri Bayne. She did not give me the slightest hint about the band. Seriously, I had no idea what to expect. In fact, the band is so new, I could not find a website or Facebook page, as of writing this article.

The band took a major chance with this venue. I can think of few others that would be more of a "trial by fire". Here are the main questions: Did they burn hotter than fire? Were they consumed by it? After reading my review, I will let you decide.

Important Note: Any review is the opinion of one person. That's it, period. Some are based on facts / experience / established criteria. Others are nothing but personal opinion. Music reviews I do: Established criteria / facts / experience. The experience: attending shows by a variety of bands at different venues.

The interesting part...

Main reason for going to see a band: Music

The first of many low points. A few high ones as well. Nature and technical had played a part on this one. Nature decided to add fairly high winds to the challenge. That factor came through the mikes. Instruments overpowering vocals was a major setback.

What about songs??? High points first. Early in the first set, Stephen (keyboards / vocals) and Paul did a tribute to Johnny Cash. Stephen had an almost perfect voice for *"I'm on fire"*. Sheri Bayne (vocals), pulled off an emotional version of Cyndi Lauper's, *"Time after Time."* Sheri and Stephen pulled off a great duet on Johnny Cash's *"Jackson"*. The cover of Jewel's *"You were meant for me"*, not too bad. Low points: Sheri's, slightly above average voice, did not carry the emotion and power of a few songs. On a few songs, including *"The Rose"*, Sheri almost seemed to strain or overpower the notes. The music was way off at points, including: *"Its too late"* (keyboards way off) / *"You were meant for me"*, Nick (guitar / vocals) was flat on the emotion / passion of the song. Music covered the entire range from way off to very good. Too much on the lower side.

One on the plus side: there were a few people singing and dancing on occasion.

How did they interact with the crowd?



Probably the one, overall, high point. The band did have some level of crowd interaction. Some songs were introduced. The wind factor was acknowledged, a few too many times. Sheri did great with the kids. At times, there were a few, young, children dancing. She had no problem singing / talking to them. The band did a good job with thanking people / wishing a Happy Mother's Day. They did not over-promote themselves. Something bands can easily do.

Next on the list: Band Interaction

This part was a very serious joke. Before the first set was over, I was trying to figure something out. Is this a band? Who are the actual members? Is the band trying people out to see if they fit in? The main questions I had. The short version follows.

I swear, at times, they had to check with each other on the set list. It was very easy to tell the band had not played together for very long. What I mean is, there was absolutely zero flow or consistency between members. Normally, even new bands will act and react well off each other. This was not the case here. There was a few moments where tension between members was obvious.

Oh, and the part about actual band members? They switched out several times. I can deal with that part. What had me confused was: Unlike School of Rock, where you have a lot of musicians with different talents. Each one having a chance to show what they can do. Kismet, currently, has 5 members. The switch out lasted longer than one or two songs.

Before you blast me with: "It was there first show, what do you expect???" Answer: Musicians who can at least fake being a band. Not individual performers obviously trying to figure out the concept.

What about the technical problems I mentioned?

This covers several areas. Like I said, music overpowering vocals was a major factor. Not really that big with me. I have been to venues where this was a regular occurrence. Hey, it happens. How the band deals with / covers it. The major point with me. I will give the band credit for trying their best here. They continued to play through the wind, feedback, numerous glitches. On the flip-side: The band had a few extended song breaks to figure them out. I mentioned the wind earlier. Yes, this was a major factor beyond the band's control. Again, they did a good job trying to compensate.

The major downside was Stephen. He relied on the keyboard way too much. Instead of knowing the songs, he actually announced "It's in here somewhere". Maybe not his exact words, but close enough. I really could not believe it!!! If you screw up and not announce it, good chance no one will notice. Announcing your mistakes says: "Hey everyone! I have absolutely no clue what I am doing!" With every band, I can forgive a few of these. Especially with factors a band has no control over. There were way too many technical problems they had control over, to forgive.

The loop: Band / Crowd Energy

This loop is started by a band and continued by the crowd. Band starts off with high energy. Crowd feeds off it. Crowd creates more. Band feeds off it. Loop closed. Simple concept, right? Also the reason I usually skip the first set. Kismet seriously blew this one from the jump. Tammy, who introduced the band, did a great job trying to start it. Unfortunately, Kismet, did not take the hint.

Normally, I can start moving to the music and really get into it. Barely happened here. It was hard to tell they were excited to be doing the first show. I realize the nerves were high. Most of the focus was probably on the music. If a band can not show a high level of excitement and get the crowd interested, the show's difficulty level just greatly increased.

Crowd observations were a good indication here. Most people just walked by or only listened without paying closer attention.

Did people have a good reaction? Did anyone dance at all?

While the energy level was very low, applause was heard at times. Yeah, there were some people moving and dancing, especially kids. Credit to the band for this one.

Last point: Attendance

Even though the show was at a zoo, I did figure out a way for the show's attendance level. How many people were stopping for more than a few moments. How many people, sitting down, were paying attention. The amount of people at the zoo was very high during the day. Was Kismet able to take advantage of this? Not really. Most people just walked by or were more interested in conversation / eating. A good turnout would have been the stage / picnic area crowded with all focus on the stage.

Details down. Time for the rating / summary.

How did they rate for each point?

Combined: Not Bad. Hey, they did not blow it in every area!

Music: Not bad. I can not give my lowest rating for two reasons. 1) This was their first show. 2) A few very high points. Not many, but a few. The band needs to make the choice every cover band makes: duplicate the originals. Screw it! This is our take on it. The combination rarely works.

Crowd Interaction: Not Bad. I have to give them credit for trying. Sheri Bayne did a great job interacting with the kids.

Band Interaction: A Joke. They have a long way to go with this one. Not being cruel, just honest.

Technical: A Joke. Yeah, like every band, Kismet faced problems they had zero control over. In several cases, announcing these problems was their fatal mistake. Stephen really needs to rely less on the keyboard and more on the music.

Band / Crowd Energy: A Joke. For most of the show, the band energy was almost non-existent. The crowd did show some on occasion.

Crowd Response: Not Bad. People did clap and cheer at the end of most songs.

Attendance: Not Bad. No, I am not being nice here. More than a few people stopped and paid attention to not only the music, but also the band.

Stage show: No rating. Nick appeared to be more 'going through the motions' vs. attempting to play with heart. Sherry was only on stage for a few songs. Paul seemed fairly happy just playing the guitar.

Would I recommend Kismet?

Honestly, place them on your "Watch List". Very low for right now. This band has a long way to go before they are ready to be taken seriously. They have not come together as band. It is more individual performers than a band that plays well with and off each other. Due to how new they are; I will not say Kismet flat out sucked (close, but not quite there). I will say they should have taken more time to come together and rehearse before going live. Overall, the show was bad, to say the least. Like every band, I will do a second review in a few months.

When I know of the band's Facebook page / website, links will be posted on the ezines site.

In case you are interested in my criteria:

<http://nightsdream.hubpages.com/hub/Live-music-reviews-criteria>

And from the studio: MindMaze / Mask of Lies



I will not be going into heavy detail about the physical Cd here. Just in case you bought the mp3 version. On thing I really love about the inside cover: lyrics are included. A nice bonus!

If you are looking for a track - by track breakdown, sorry. Not going to spoil the surprises for you.

The Cd starts off hard and fast with a great track: Never Look Back. A great way to introduce the band and disc. The song lets you know that MindMaze is a serious band. The lyrics: There is only one direction the see and will move in.

Never Look Back is followed by Breaking the Chains. Continuing the story started with Never look Back.

This Holy War is one of the songs that prevents all songs sounding the same.

The song Destiny Calls: What more can I say?

Last song I want to mention: Remember. Like Never Look Back, a song everyone can easily relate to. Listen to both and then look at your own life. Am I wrong?

The change is not only between both songs. It also happens in Breaking the Chains.

Thanks for the quick summary. What about the instruments / vocals?



Sarah's voice carries all the passion and power that any rock / metal should have. Not only singing but feeling each song is easily noticeable on every track. Jeff and Rich on guitars? They know what the genre really is. Not the watered down / commercial version it has become. The true hard rock / metal of the 70's era. They bring the guitar and bass to life. Making the instruments have a voice and sing. Kalin on the drums? More than hitting them at the right times. Without Jeff's keyboarding on Remember, the song would be missing a major component.

The combination of hard beats and softer taps help give each song meaning and emotion. Passion / Power / Emotion in rock is something forgotten by today's commercial music industry. A memory they really should retrieve.

More than music

One thing I look for in every album. Is there a story and reason for each song? Are they organized for a reason or just what sounds good at that point? Mask of Lies not only has great music. It also tells an excellent story. The individual titles give you that idea. Listen to each song and then as part of a story. The lyrics tell that story. The music sets

the moods / brings it to life. I did close my eyes while listening. Curious if I could visualize the story. It was not that hard.

Quick Summary:

Major point: there is a good variety between the hard / fast and slower music. Not only in different songs. You will also find the pace changes during one song. Some bands can pull this off, some can not. MindMaze pulled it off perfectly! Listen to tracks 3 - 5 to really prove my point. Huge surprise here.

Major point: Storyline. Yes, there is one. It does make sense.

Minor Low point: Even though I stated there is a great variety, I did find myself slightly zoning out at one point. This occurred on the second straight playing. It was around the halfway mark. A few of the songs did start sounding the same. Again, while listening to it back to back, without a break in between.

Major point: I did not get bored or find myself thinking: "Ok, can we get to the next track? Is it over yet?"

Honestly, I could not think of one major thing wrong / did not like about Mask of Lies.

Recommendation: Buy It! Listen to it! Close your eyes. Listen to it again!

Mask of Lies is one of those rare albums that tells a story throughout with each track continuing that story. Does each song stand on it's own? Hell yes!!! With the arrangement, they have even more meaning. Best way to describe the Cd: High energy / Passion / Power / True Rock and Metal. Do not be surprised for Mask of Lies to make your all-time favorite list. Or a least one track off it. Mask of Lies is more than just digitized music. It has life and a true heart / spirit.



Between their live performances / Mask of Lies. MindMaze is ready for their break into the major leagues. If you think I am wrong, let me know.

Notes: 1) Yes, I did listen to the Cd more than one time for this review. Do I have any favorite tracks? I loved the each one. Ok, Never Look Back and Remember. I have one rule with local bands: I will not review recorded music before I do a live review. MindMaze is not an exception. I went to 3 full rock / metal shows. I also saw a rare acoustic performance. Yes, I would love to hear a full, acoustic, version of this Cd.

I had very high expectations for the recorded version. The reviews are in my book: "In a Valley... A Writer's New Beginning".

Important Note: The Cd was not provided in exchange for a good review. I will never do that. The review is honest and neutral. Like all reviews, a person's opinion. You may or may not agree with it.

Credits: A Serious thanks to Sarah MindMaze for providing the album cover / band promo shot! Live band photo: original.

Now that I really have your attention!!!!

<http://www.mindmazeband.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/mindmazeband?fref=ts>

Quick mentions...

Endzone

Tuesday 05/14/13

Maingate / Allentown, Pa



Any song, speeded up, with a punk edge to it!!!!

Attitude: Yeah. And then some.

Photos do not come close with this band. You really have to experience them.

Endzone was my second introduction to the Lehigh Valley, Pa scene in 2010. It was one Hell of an introduction. Their show at Maingate's Bike Night was no exception. I arrived during the second set.

I was not joking, they turned songs like "Every Rose has it's Thorn" into a fast / punk version. It really worked!

Nothing, I mean nothing is sacred with the band. "Ring of Fire"? No problem for them. Jody (lead vocals) is a serious trip on the hard breaks. Joking with the band and crowd.

There was one, major, technical problem. An amp blew out. The band did their best without it. And it worked!

There will be a full review in a future issue. For now, a preview of your experience:

<http://www.reverbnation.com/theoriginalendzone>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/ENDZONE/346396087808>

School of Rock Lollapalooza



On Saturday, May 11 I stopped by Rivals in Easton. Reason: I had to check out School of Rock's Lollapalooza show. I have been to several shows by School of Rock. Not regretted one so far.

Well, add Lollapalooza to the list of shows that rocked a crowd! From the jump, these students proved they know the rock music genre. Driving beats and well sung lyrics really had the crowd going.

The stage show and energy level improves with each show. The students were not afraid to show their understanding by moving around and letting the music take over.

Crowd interaction / Hard Breaks are improving. They stage switches out every song. Every student rotates out. There were a few, extended, hard breaks due to technical issues. One one, the lead singer covered it perfectly! Pulling off a joke that has me still laughing ☺ The hard breaks are due to rotating out the stage. Most are around 1 minute. School of Rock has this one down to an exact science.

Crowd Response: Almost everyone at Rivals was focused on the stage. I am not only talking about parents / students / staff. I am including people who just stopped by for a drink / food. A serious compliment to the the students and show.

I will be doing a full review in an future issue. I will be looking at it the same way I do Feel free to jump ahead to the “In Their Own Words” section.

Greater Lehigh Valley Music Association announcement



Place: Artsquest / Bethlehem, Pa

Date: 05/17/13

Nature co-operated for this one: Sunny with occasional breeze and temps in the low 70s. The event went off as planned, outside. ☺

The Greater Lehigh Valley Music Association has been around since 1998. Artsquest: 1984.

Gino Barron (GLVMA Chairperson) had a few, major, announcements to make.

- 1) After 2 years of having the awards at Artsquest. The partnership between the Music Association and Artsquest. The purpose is to take the music awards to a higher level.
- 2) The awards ceremony has been in December. New date starting in 2014: March 9! So much for Santa bringing early Christmas presents. So much for trying to fit into your, crazy, holiday schedule.
- 3) The awards ceremony will be televised on Service Electric Cable TV for the first time. Adding an additional experience.

The event ended with a, one song, performance by LVMA winners: Sarah Ayers, James Supra and Lou Franco.

<http://www.lehighvalleymusicawards.org/>

Lehigh Valley Steelhawks

Place: Stabler Arena

Date: 5/5/13

Team: Columbus Lions

Before the game



I wrote an article on their home opener. This one is a little later in the season with a little twist: my first tailgate party! Yes, I am no longer a tailgating virgin. When I walking into Stabler Arena, figured “get some fan photos in the parking lot.” Walking past a tailgate party, perfect! Thanks to an invitation by Rick Reinhardt and friend, I spent a little time getting to know a few fans.

The game



I am not a sports writer. So much for the play by play. The reason for this follow up article is to see if the fan interaction / involvement continued past the home opener. In my interview with Michael Clark (VP / GM) and the first home game, the Steelhawks proved they really cared about the fans. I figured they would in the first game. Yeah, they do in every game. Bringing fans onto field for games during breaks. Talon (mascot) going into the stands. The post game celebration with everyone on the field talking to players / cheerleaders and getting autographs. The Lehigh Valley Steelhawks are an organization that has no problem showing

Yeah, they won a very exciting game: 60-51

<http://www.lvsteelhawks.com/>

Hungry? / Where to eat



Sam and Julia's Pizzeria

Location: 535 N. 7th St. Allentown, Pa

More than pizza / Italian

I walked past this place several times. Finally, I could not resist stopping by for a quick bite. What really caught my attention about Sam and Julia's was a full breakfast menu. Talk about being different!

What comes to mind when you think of a pizza place? Pizza (really?), Stromboli, calzone, etc.; not grabbing breakfast there. Well, I had to be difficult when I walked in.

A few weeks before my visit, I joked with a friend about a 'breakfast pizza'. I started talking to the owner and cook. Mentioning about the breakfast menu and pizza. They said: 'Yeah, we can do a breakfast pizza.' I seriously thought it was only because we were joking around about it. I was dead wrong.

Conversation went something like this: "What do you want on it?" "I was only joking." "Seriously, eggs, bacon..." "Ok, how about sausage and eggs, scrambled?" "No problem! We do that." Now, for the waiting game....



A few minutes later, I had a slice of 'Breakfast in front of me. Of course, I had to ask what it was called. Take a guess!!!! 'Breakfast Pizza', no joke.

After one slice, it was in top 5 favorite pizzas.

I think you can pretty much figure out by now, the service was friendly and top notch!

There are a few more surprises on their menu. I will let you check their website and menu for those. I don't like to spoil anything.

<http://samandjulias.com/>

Time to move beyond the Lehigh Valley with other realities.

[And Beyond....](#)

[Realities Created / Books](#)

Charmeine (Book 1 of the Light-Bearer series) By Emily Guido



Quick note: I did not read any previews or really have a clue what Charmeine is about.

Best place to start:

The cover: I mainly focused on the art. The main aspect that will grab your attention. The graphics and artwork give you an idea of what the book may be about. My take on it? The male is Charmeine and the female is a ghost / someone from his past. Let's find out if I am right.

Right off, Emily does not screw around. She takes right into the action without any backstory. I was wrong: Charmeine is the woman. Tabbris the guy. What follows is the detailed review. No, not a chance of details or spoilers here.

Chapter One is a brief and attention grabbing introduction. Sorry, other than character names, no clues other than they are together.

Chapter 2: Talk about a sling shot! And Keeping your attention. Compared to chapter 1, two really takes you off guard. Emily really does a great job here. With the change of storyline, I completely forgot about what was happening in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3: Again, jumping around and keeping you off guard. Sometimes it works, others: no chance! For Charmaine, it does.

Before I seriously bore the hell out of you!!!!

Main review:

Emily does a great job of getting you interested in the story right off. From the start of Chapter 2, she takes you to a completely different scenario. It is, literally, a slingshot!

The main setting for Charmaine is modern day. Emily uses current and past events to help set up the story. In chapter 4, I was sitting in a limo, enjoying the conversation between Shane and Tab. Not literally, but the story was that visual and consuming.

The character believability factor is very high. At points in the story, you forget Tab is an immortal. Charmaine: One hot female who is vulnerable with an invincible side you really do not want to mess with. Shane and Dmitri, even though they are supporting characters become essential to the storyline shortly after they are introduced. Shane is pretty much your best friend.

Conflict: Internal / External. Emily does a very good job of separating and then combining the two. Each character has morals and real life, emotional, struggles. The external part? One, main, source is calling the shots. With a serious pain in the ass to Charmaine / Tab / Shane thrown in.

What I really loved about the book? The overall story. The way Emily kept me off guard by switching up without any warning. Honestly, I think Shane is my favorite character. With the setting in actual places and true events, every moment became more real. When I was reading it, I was so into the story I jumped when my phone went off. No joke here! The way Emily showed how light and darkness exist in each person.

What didn't I really like? You know I have to give the low points. At times, Emily dragged the story out by being a little too descriptive. Especially in some of the interactions between Charmaine and Tab. I am talking about some physical descriptions that are repeated. Technical: Not being able to go right to a specific chapter from main page / side navigation.

Overall Recommendation: Definitely read this one! Charmaine is a combination of romance / suspense / historical and fantasy. High believability factors combined with excellent character development and a "not knowing what to expect next" factor. The way Emily ends part 1 will leave you saying "What the hell??? I need to find out what happens!"

Have your interest about Emily and the “Light-Bearer” series? Let her know! Better yet, buy a copy of Charmaine.

<http://emilyguido.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/emily.guido?ref=ts&fref=ts>

<https://www.facebook.com/thelightbearernovelist?fref=ts>

Now, to keep things interesting. Next is an interview With Ray Thierrin. Co-owner of School of Rock in Easton and Allentown, Pa.

In Their Own Words / Interviews

School of Rock



Ray is on the Left, introducing the Lollapollza show.

The future of music...

I first heard of School of Rock in August 2011 at Coplay Community Days. In May, 2012, at the Fullerton Fair, I did my first write up of a performance. Performafest at Musikfest really impressed me! Instead of covers, these were original songs. Several

shows and articles later. I had a chance to interview Ray. I was really curious about how the local schools were started among other things.

Inspiration from their son

How did School of Rock, in the Lehigh Valley, start? Ray: Our son (Ray and Sue), Travis, was taking lessons at Dave Phillips Music and Sound, in Phillipsburg (New Jersey). It started when he was 13, playing bass. By the time he was 15, he really didn't practice. A friend turned him to a School of Rock in Chatham, New Jersey. He went there and within the first week, a light switch went on. He would come home. Practice a lot more. Spend 8 hours in the basement. He, immediately, got entrenched in doing shows at School of Rock. You could tell that environment was better than taking pure lessons. He was engaged with other kids. Feeding off the energy of other people in the band. He was always playing with different kids. I think that was in June or July of 2008. By September, we bought the franchise. This was something we had to bring to the Lehigh Valley. **Especially, now, schools are always cutting their arts programs.**

Ray: A lot of schools, they try.

I remember, back in high school, being in chorus. Chorus and band, they teach you the classics. If I was going to learn an instrument, I wanted to learn Rock music. Ray: School of Rock is more of a 'performance based' school. We do lessons and stuff like that. At our core, we are a performance based program. Because of that, we are able to bring kids into the mix that may be good at sports or really sociable. When they come to School of Rock, they get plugged into a community. Because it's a community, they start making friends they may have never met before. Kids who have the same interests. It may not be the same kind of music they like. They kind of trade off between each other. **I noticed that with the first rehearsal of 'Perfomafest' last year. I watching the students "I have this idea. This could work here."**

If you are not good at one thing!

If a student comes in for the first time. They don't know what they want to play or would be good at. Do you encourage them to figure out what they may be good at? Try different things? Ray: I think a lot of it is personal interest. Most people, who come to us, have at least a first sense of what instrument they want to try. We found, with the younger kids, Keyboards and drums are better. When they start playing guitar, "My fingers hurt". The drums is straight forward. Pounding the sticks in a certain rhythm. Keyboard, teaches you chords and how the scales work. You look at a guitar fret board and "Uhhh... it's French." **The six strings are a lot more complicated than they seem.**

Ray: There are lots of different positions, ways to do octaves, etc. It seems like, by far, we have more guitar students than anyone else. We have had students come in: "I want to try guitar." 3 months later: "Guitar isn't it." A lot of cases, our instructors teach multiple instruments. In many cases, they don't have to switch instructor. They might switch to a different instructor because the timing was better, and so on. We don't discourage them from switching instruments. If that is the way they want to go.

One, main, genre

Ray: We stick with rock instrumentation: Guitars, drums, keys and vocals. A lot of kids will bring instruments in. The 'Women of Rock' show, one of the girls played flute.

Teachers with experience

Ray: Most of our teachers have bands. That is one question I was going to ask: Experience? **Ray:** One of the great experiences for the kids is going out and seeing their teachers play. We had a couple of instructors from Easton and one from Rosland. They knew each other. They were playing some really complicated stuff like Zappa! You walked out and wonder: "Why is Justin Bieber popular? These guys kick ass!" We are trying to teach the kids, it is possible to be a working musician. Do what you love and make money at it.

Ray: Our instructors are all working musicians. Our son is a working musician. He teaches and plays. Will that big break come? Yeah! If you are so obsessed with chasing that big break, it's not going to happen. You have to focus on what you are working on. Improving yourself as a musician. Improving yourself as a performer. You have to be flexible.

Going Back to the School's history...

Which one was first, Easton or Allentown? **Ray:** We opened up Easton in 2009. We opened up Allentown in 2012. What was the first show? **Ray:** The first show, for each school, was Pink Floyd The Wall.

Ray: Back in the day, when we bought into the franchise, there was a guy: Paul Green. It was called: The Paul Green, School of Rock Music. They made a documentary about him called '*Rock School*'. His thing was, if you open up a school, you do The Wall. It's challenging and you can find out what the kids are made of. There is parts in there where you have guitarists doing Gilmore licks. There is also songs that kids can do who are beginners. We, purposely, don't have the kids watch the movie. We try to build segueways where the kids change out while the song is going. There are only a few breaks on the album.

More than the Rock genre

It's not just rock. I know the school has done a blues show. **Ray:** Yeah. We've done blues, punk shows, Michael Jackson / Prince, Motown. We try not to do constant barrage of metal shows. We try to mix it up. We don't do a lot of metal shows. It helps the kids form a solid foundation of music. We did a progressive rock show. We did a heavy dose of Zappa. Zappa is jazz. It's real good to give the kids a broad foundation of different types of music. **It also might introduce them to something they never liked.**

Very high qualifications...

Ray: Our music director, Duane Beller, is a graduate of Berkley. He is director at both Allentown and Easton. He has a degree in classical composition. He not only has roots in the classic rock. He brings the modern composition as well. He will ask the students what they like. He will go home and listen to it! It's good for the kids, because Duane is good about capturing that in his head. They will be doing a rehearsal and the kid will be playing a song that he loves!

More than just one band...

Ray: The way School of Rock shows work, you are always, constantly, switching different lineups. It gives you a variety. Always trying something different.

On that note (pun intended), Part 1 ends. I caught Ray in between a 4 week, 8 show stretch. I really, really want to thank him for the time!!!! Thanks Ray!!!

Another, main, question I had was: Student Interaction? Does the school have a strict criteria? Are students encouraged to give instructors ideas? Any hints about upcoming show? Guess you will have to wait until the next issue to find out! Hope you enjoyed part 1.

Guest Photographers

Time for you to see through the eyes of others.

Aloysius Dragovits / Artografix

<https://www.facebook.com/ArtografixByAloysius?fref=ts>





John Bedics / Showgun Photography

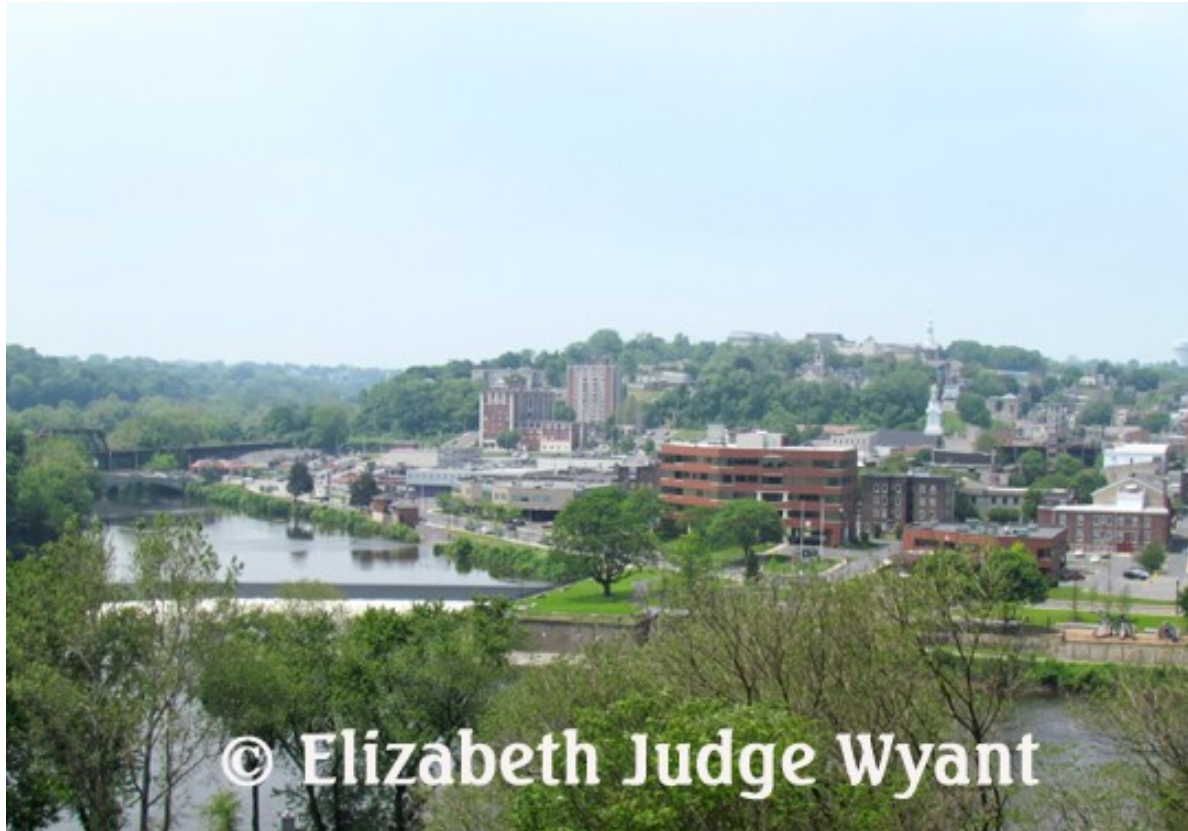
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Elizabeth Judge Wyant

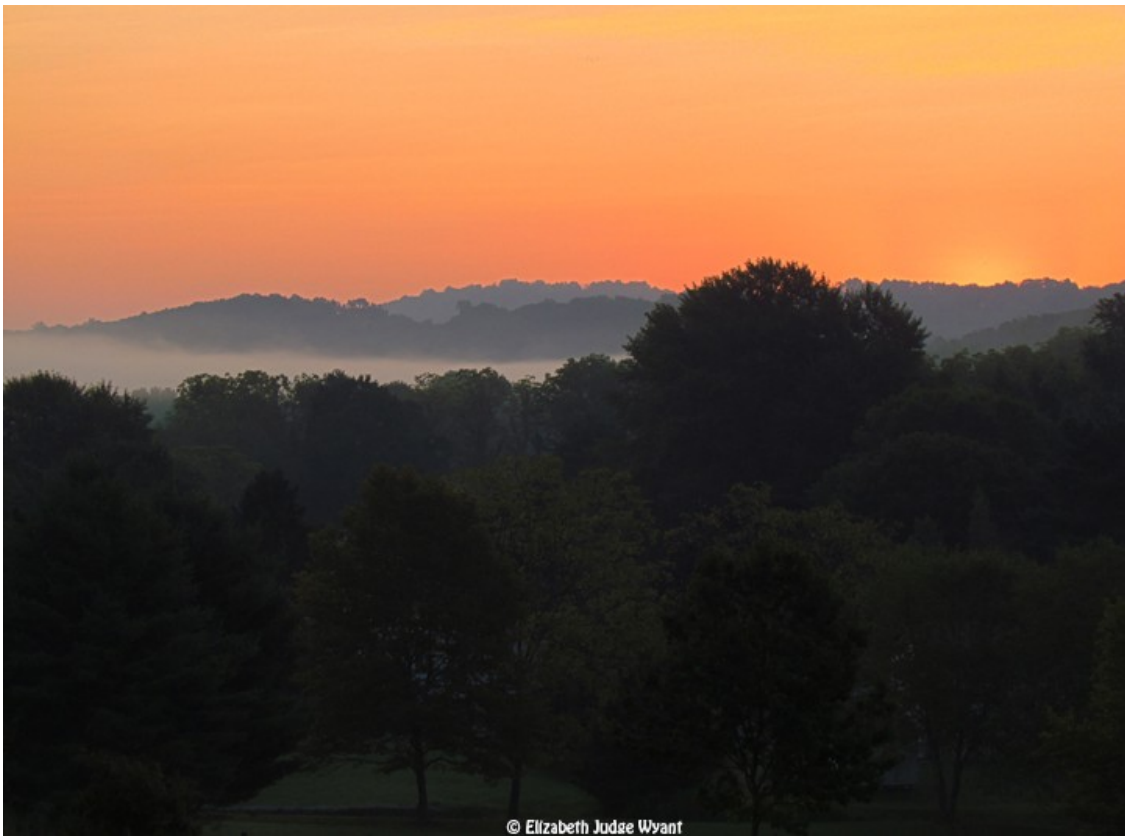
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What a better to start winding down the first issue...

What is left to say?

Thanks for reading the first issue of A Valley and Beyond. Hope you found it interesting and fun! Honestly, I gave it my best. Issue 2 will have more from the interview with Ray Thierrin / guest columnists / more music, arts, reviews. A few surprises! I hope you enjoy the next 2 weeks. Until then: Never be afraid to go after your dreams.

Feel free to contact me with questions or comments:
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