

VCS Alumni Podcast Episode 6 – Bob Potter audio transcript

Bob Dreste

Welcome to another edition of the Victor Alumni Podcast. Today we have traveled to the Finger Lakes Community College in Canandaigua, New York to interview Bob Potter. He is a 1976 graduate of Victor Central. He has served as a studio manager slash technical specialist here at FLCC for nearly 25 years. He is also an instructor at the college, teaching live sound to students pursuing a degree in sound and recording. In his time here at FLCC, he has been instrumental in bringing FLCC to the forefront as a premier college for students seeking a career in the recording industry. He's helped to launch many careers throughout his years here at the college. Outside of his role at the college, Bob also owns a recording studio located in Naples, New York, where he currently resides. He is also very active at many of the live venues throughout the area. You might see Bob doing sound at places like Point of the Bluff, on Keuka Lake, or a local festival. No matter where it is, he usually has a few of his students in tow, gaining invaluable hands-on experience. On top of all this, he is a very accomplished musician in multiple instruments. Joining me today in this podcast are Jenner Davis and Dan Biviano. Jenner is on the board of directors for the VCS Educational Foundation. She, along with Keith Partington and Cam Maves, have helped to make this podcast series a reality. Another guest we're happy to have here today, Who's going to be co-hosting this podcast with me is Dan Biviano. Dan is a 1997 graduate of Victor. After graduating from Victor, he went to FLCC and obtained an associate's degree. Post-FLCC, he attended St. Bonaventure University, and then he came back to FLCC and obtained yet another degree in audio engineering. Many of his classes were with Bob Potter. We're so happy that Dan has agreed to join us on this podcast. If this podcast sounds better than some of the other ones we've done, there's a reason. It's because we're actually in one of FLCC studios here with Bob Potter. So this is going to spoil us. With that, I start every podcast kind of the same. Tell us about where you grew up in Victor and your early life.

Bob Potter

I think I grew up down the street from you folks in a little trailer park over in Farmington called, I think it's still there, Tid's.

Bob Dreste

Tid's trailer park.

Bob Potter

Because our dads worked together at Stromberg Carlson doing installations all over the country. So we got to know each other, and I think you folks lived down the street from us. From there, we moved on up, if you will, to what they called Cigarette Hill in Victor Wood, back when there was literally, I think we were the 5th house built up there out of the 200 that they ended up with. But about 65, I think we moved in there and was there until 92 or 3. I owned the place after my parents passed away, and was there a long time. It was a nice place to grow up, nice to watch all the trees grow and everybody move up and get older and move on.

Bob Dreeste

Have you been through there lately?

Bob Potter

It's been a couple of years. Our old house looks way better than it used to, which is kind of a nice tree. Not all of them do. But yeah, it's nice. Pretty snazzy looking neighborhood now.

Dan Biviano

Big trees now. Yeah. Like you said.

Bob Potter

Exactly. It was all sand and it was all sand is what it was.

Dan Biviano

I had two piano teachers in that neighborhood.

Bob Potter

Yeah.

Dan Biviano

Nice, And you got to see those generations turn over, probably new kids, new families.

Bob Potter

Well, it was all fields. It was the old farmer fields from the Lynaugh farm. And the whole, every field had stakes with like pink tape on it.

Dan Biviano

Well, I grew up in a nice neighborhood over in Quail Ridge and you watched those houses. You watched those houses go up.

Bob Potter

That was the back way to Victor High School from where we were.

Bob Dreste

Talk a little bit about your family. I was good friends with your brother Jack. Your mother, awesome person, your father, great people. Just talk a little bit about what parents did and your brother.

Bob Potter

My dad was a first an installer, spent a lot of time on the road with Stromberg Carlson, a telephone company, responsible for installing switchboards and things like that, new PBX systems and stuff for hospitals and schools, the consoles and stuff that Stromberg designed. Your dad, my dad, went all over the country and installed those. And because of it, I never realized this until I was much older. But in the first year and a half of my life, I lived in pretty much every state this side of the Mississippi because they traveled to all those places.

Bob Dreste

Yeah, and I think our dads traveled together doing this. And I remember my father telling me one time that he'd lived in more than three weeks in every state, but like 2 installing these switching systems. You started school in Victor though, right?

Bob Potter

I did, yeah. We were, yeah, the Presbyterian Church is where we had kindergarten downstairs in the basement. Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Wald. We didn't have, there wasn't even a preschool back then. And we would go for half a day. My mom was a bookkeeper, accountant type money person for the Society of Rochester Prevention and Cruelty to Children.

Bob Dreste

Which is where my mother worked there as well.

Bob Potter

That's true. Your mom worked with her too. It was, yeah, that's exactly right. But she did that for many years and then she went on and got a couple of doctorates and became a Presbyterian minister, lived, was a minister at some churches locally, ended up in Orlando for a number of years, ended up in Louisville at the Presbyterian World Headquarters doing money stuff there too, because that was her background. And all through high school,

junior high school and high school, she was a piano teacher. She had some 40 students, which I think is what helped pay for her to go to Colgate Rochester.

Bob Drete

Wow. Were a lot of Victor students or?

Bob Potter

Yeah, they were all local stuff. Some of them were older, some were young kids, and none of them would practice, myself included. That's just kind of how it was. I could sense the frustration. I'd come home from school and she'd be in a lesson downstairs and I could tell this kid didn't practice again. I thought, well, neither did I. It's.

Dan Biviano

Still on book one after three years.

Bob Potter

That's kind of how it goes, yeah. A lot of excuses, but she was a good player.

Bob Drete

She was also a very accomplished singer.

Bob Potter

She was with the Rochester Oratorical Society with Pearl Strait for a number of years. They went together and her daughter Karen and I used to go to the rehearsals at Eastman, like 6th grade or something, and wander all around Eastman, find all the catacombs and stuff at Eastman's theater, which was really fun. when they would rehearse with the auditorial society. And that was pretty impressive.

Dan Biviano

So as we sit here, you're telling us about how your dad essentially was going around the country as an engineer, working on patch bays as I'm looking at your buses right there. And I've watched you over the years mess around in this particular studio, having the back end open with all these cords running around. But you're also a musician. So you really took both things from mom and dad and put them into a career.

Bob Potter

That's a good point. That's something I actually thought about. I do remember the time, it was several years into it, of when I was traveling and working with some other bands and

staying in different motels every night, thinking like, in a way, this is exactly what my dad did. And I never put it together. He too, you come home after three weeks, be home for a few days and head back home, make money again. And it's like, Both engineers, both technical stuff.

Dan Biviano

To have the engineering capabilities, the tinkerer and the musician.

Bob Potter

Yeah, I hadn't put it together for a long time. And for me, I played in bands and stuff early on, but that didn't go so well for me. I just, long term, I realized that just wasn't my thing, the technical aspect, getting into the sound. part of it was a smarter move, which allowed me to continue in this business, whereas pretending I was doing something effective on stage just wasn't going to. So, you know, there's some folks that shine at that. I wasn't, the reality was it just wasn't going to be me.

Dan Biviano

Well, when you were in bands, what was your instrument of choice?

Bob Potter

Initially, I was the bass player, and I don't remember, well, I know what it was. There was a friend up the street named Neilo who bought a guitar, And so, because we used to play together, and what's the last name? Yes, the family on Road, and then Miles Rugg would play drums.

Dan Biviano

Miles, he's still over in the neighborhood.

Bob Potter

Yeah, exactly. He still is in that. He moved back to that neighborhood years ago. And none of us were very good. I remember somebody calling the police once when we were playing in the garage. And the thing they were complaining about was the horns. And I realized, my God, it's our vocals are that bad.

Dan Biviano

You sound like brass instruments.

Bob Potter

So we started playing with the garage closed, the door closed after that.

Dan Biviano

A simple courtesy in a small neighborhood.

Bob Potter

Yeah, it's just only fair. And fortunately at the time, there were no houses across the street, but still it's transferred around. I started playing bass and I was the first kid in the neighborhood of a microphone, so I sang most of the tunes. But the thing with playing bass and anybody else that plays bass probably would know this. You never get to pick any songs. Like nothing about those songs is about the bass usually. So if you're the guitar player, you pick the tunes, especially if you're playing a cover band. If you're a singer, if you're the keyboard player, you pick the tunes. The bass player, I never, so I never had any say in what it was we were doing. I just sort of went along and did what I could. Anyway, one day I decided I'm going to the house of guitars and buy myself electric guitar. And from then on, I picked all the tunes and got to play in the bands and just made a put myself in a better position for me. And I got to be very much self-taught. I did everything by ear. I learned how to play. I was a Suzuki student from third grade violin. Mrs. Kocher. She was wonderful. She was patient. I was legendary. I never really learned how to read music very well during that time, unfortunately. I faked it a lot, and that became real clear by the time I was late in high school. realized that me being in the orchestra is kind of a bad joke because I'm just winging it. And I could remember all this stuff and play it from memory, but when they'd turn to a certain page and say, let's take it from here, it's like I'd have to wait for everybody else to start to know where we actually were. And I thought, who am I kidding? And so we collectively agreed that maybe I shouldn't do this anymore. I still have my violin, but I just...

Dan Biviano

Everyone else is turning pages except you.

Bob Potter

Yeah, that's right. It was just not. But that being said, I did teach myself by ear, dropping the needle on the record, learning the parts. And I got, as a guitar player, I got pretty good pretty fast. But then my band at the time started playing all the time. And I slash we got lazy. We stopped practicing. I stopped learning new tunes. I stopped forcing myself to get better.

Bob Dreeste

How old were you at this point?

Bob Potter

20s. It was the mid 70s. Late 70s started playing out a lot. Band never got any better because we, like I said, we got lazy, but we did get popular. Right. Had a lot of friends from Brighton that would drive all over to see us play, drive all over the state to see us play.

Bob Dreeste

What was the name of the band?

Bob Potter

That band was called Sagebrush. It's a country rock band. I learned to just learn the tunes as they were written and...

Dan Biviano

Like a good cover band.

Bob Potter

Yeah, that's clear. It's pretty much.

Bob Dreeste

Which is probably fun at first, right?

Bob Potter

Well, that's the thing. After a while, it becomes tedious. There was a time where one of the club owners commented to our manager. We had a booking agent, actually, Pelican Productions, same label that Duke Jupiter was on. Sorry, same company. Duke Jupiter was managed by but commented that I was up there in a cardigan sweater looking like I was falling asleep and I was bored to tears. And I thought about it. I was like, you know what, he's right. And that was at a time where I was, I remember being more worried about what I was going to wear than what I was going to play. And I thought, this is the end. I need to not do this anymore.

Dan Biviano

There's your sign.

Bob Potter

But at that time, I moved to the other end of the venue. I started doing sound because I own most of the sound system at that time anyway.

Bob Dreeste

Is there a specific point in time when you first exposed to the sound side of it, like, wow, this is something I could do or this was there an event or something that was?

Bob Potter

There was a couple early on and I'd forgotten about this but early on my parents took me to the War Memorial to see the we were there the night it was recorded in May of 70 the Friends in Love concert by Chuck Mangioni.

Dan Biviano

Oh you were there.

Bob Potter

With the we were there I don't know how many nights they recorded it but we were there for one of those nights. And I didn't know about a sound person but We were close enough that I watched what my dad was doing, and he was watching this guy. He was a great big guy. And it turns out it was a fellow that became a famous engineer named Mick Gazowski. He's a local Rochester fellow. But I remember watching him, and I didn't remember that for a long time. It wasn't until an event at Ithaca College that a buddy of mine, Lou Arena, took us down to, he asked if we wanted to go, this band that he was sort of doing lights for and setting up for, named Frisco Express. was opening up for Chubby Checker. And even then, I knew who Chubby Checker was. Nobody had heard that name for years, because in 61, 62, he was a big deal. But in 1975, it's like, Chubby Checker. And most people confuse him with Chuck Berry. But it's like, no, Chubby Checker, you know, the twist guy. He was doing the prom at Ithaca College. And Lou said, do you want to go? And so Nilo and I, and I think it was Jim Clark, went with Lou down to this event. And that's when I accidentally got put in a position to stand at the console pretending to mix chubby checker.

Dan Biviano

How does that happen?

Bob Potter

I was backstage, and I think it was one of those things, my parents used to tell me this, too. I always looked older than I was, but I was backstage because, or side stage, if you will, at the cafeteria at Ithaca College. And the folks that were in charge, I suppose, I could see them coming my way, but I sort of turned away thinking like, well, I don't know anybody here other than people I came with. I don't even really know the band. But they were coming my way. And so finally they got to me and they said, hey, man, where you been? We've been looking all over for you. And I thought, okay, mistaken identity. I'm a junior in high school.

What do I know? But he says, they motioned me to follow them. And I did. And now I'm at the other end of the cafeteria. on this short platform and there's a sound console there and standing up there with them and they walk away and they literally said something along the lines of, let us know if you need anything. And I'm like, I don't even know how to do that. Like, I don't know who they are. I wouldn't know where to find them. And they left. And I'm thinking like, no, I'm like, I'm thrilled to be standing there. But the reality is I haven't a clue what's going on.

Dan Biviano

It's like Fletch with the as a surgeon.

Bob Potter

Yeah, sure. Certainly. Certainly. How did it go? Well, it was pretty awful. The thing is, it was a concrete and glass room with a lot of people all dressed in gowns and tuxes. Really, everybody was really dressed up, not us, because again, I thought we were going to be backstage. I stood there thinking eventually the person that really is supposed to be doing this is going to show up. I don't think anybody ever did. They certainly didn't come up on that platform. And so I pretended to move faders. I pretended to hit switches. I pretended to turn knobs. And the only reason I was pretending was because I thought you need to be doing something all the time. I guess what a sound person does, you listen and you adjust things. But I'm afraid to actually really and truly touch anything for fear that if it shuts off, I wouldn't have a clue how to turn any of it back on because I really have no experience with this stuff.

Dan Biviano

When I was a kid at the Friends of Love concert, that guy was touching things. I'm going to do what that guy was doing.

Bob Potter

And I overdid it. I'm sweating like crazy. And eventually a couple of my friends that came down with us, like made their way, they saw where I was and made their way over and they were trying to get up on the platform with me. And I'm motioning to them like, no, get down, get down. And they're laughing and they're pointing and stuff. Like, yeah, I know it's a big joke to me too, but I'm the one who's up here. So please don't come up here and don't make this worse than it needs to be. The person that was supposed to be doing it never showed up as far as I know. And what I do know is soon after they walked away, the people from the college walked away, Chubby and his band walked out on stage and there's no

getting out of it at that point. And I felt like that's why I felt like I better look like I'm doing something, even though I shouldn't be here and I don't know what I'm doing.

Dan Biviano

As if you're playing one of the instruments on stage.

Bob Potter

Pretty much, yeah. I was clueless. But the whole thing ends and I get off the platform. At the end of the show, they came up with a woman who had a ledger and she opens it up and she's got the pen out and she goes, who do we make the checkout to? And I'm thinking, oh my God, no, I'm an imposter. I just took somebody else's gig and I don't dare take their money too. But I could see it was already made out for \$50. And I thought, well, I'm not stupid. It's like, I guess I did do this. I mean, there was a show. People dance, people did the limbo with Chubby. They did all this stuff and I gave him my name. And anyway, we drove away and got home. I got home about 4:00. I woke up my mom. Begged her for her Instamatic camera, took a picture of the check, because I just thought that this might be a moment I want to remember. Wow, prophetic. For \$50 from Ithaca College. And it was almost about a year and a half. It was like 77 before a local band hired me to actually help them out with moving gear and doing their sound.

Bob Dreeste

Which band was that?

Bob Potter

Was a band called Meridian, which was initially made-up by some seniors at the high school called Ash Cash Jones. It was Chris Dodge, Randy Jones, Don Cash, who his son Tim was a local fellow that played with a lot of people. And then Joel Richter played on keyboards. And eventually they added a drummer and became this band Meridian.

Dan Biviano

All great players.

Bob Potter

And they paid me \$5 a night. They offered to pay me \$5 a night to help them move gear. And I thought, for free, I'll do this. I just want in. At this time I'm 18.

Dan Biviano

Five bucks a night. Back then is not chump change.

Bob Potter

I was just thrilled that they were offering me anything. The reality was that the sound person that they had fell asleep at the console. And so literally, literally, he really was out and he worked like weird hours and he fell asleep. And so they figured that maybe they should look elsewhere. And I got offered a chance and I jumped at it.

Dan Biviano

Yeah, that's great.

Bob Potter

So little by little, Joel, who was pretty knowledgeable, taught me most of what it took to do sound, what all those dials were on their console, what the EQ tone controls were, how to make them work, why to make them work. But I also learned from setting up, helping them set up, like how the system all went together and why certain things were the way they were. And that was the part I was really into, even more than the mixing, but I was learning. And once they realize if they're going to pay me to sit at the console to keep people from putting their beer on it out there, they bump my pay up to 10 bucks a night right away. And I think, well, this is cool. So.

Bob Dreeste

You were still in high school then.

Bob Potter

At that point, I was in, actually in 77, I was a student here in the art program at FLCC. It was CCFL then. Yeah. But I was an art student here when I got the call.

Dan Biviano

So if I can digress back a little bit to your Victor years. Great experience, good experience. Victor High School, the community.

Bob Potter

Most of it was. It's kind of what brings us all together. I was an okay student. You know, I wouldn't say aced all the Regents exams and stuff. I struggled through math like a lot of people, loved social studies, anything with history and travels and geography and stuff like that. English I did okay with. Shakespeare, loved that. Was good at that kind of stuff. Algebra I barely got through, but geometry I got 100 on the Regents. It just was night and day. I don't know how that happened. I didn't pretend to be good at it, but it just, whatever they asked, it just fell into place for me. And then the next semester was trigonometry, and I

think I bailed on that one. I don't think I ended up putting it through. I ended up focusing more on arts and things like that at that time, because when you're in 11th and 12th grade at that time, you could pick more of your classes. And so I did, and I started focusing my direction away from things like math that I wasn't all that great at.

Bob Dreste

I mean, you mentioned Tad Holtz. Who were some of the other people that you hung out with in high school?

Bob Potter

There were, like I said, there was Lou Arena, there was Nilo, Jim Clark, fella down around the corner was in my Boy Scout troop, Bud Mulcahy. He moved to Georgia and started working on Mercedes-Benzes or something. I'm trying to think of.

Bob Dreste

Myron Monger.

Bob Potter

Myron was my next door neighbor. He and I used to play football together. And I knew his older sister, Maureen and I. Maureen, she was 18. She and I were real close. We were like really good friends. And I would go over to their house and listen to music with her. And because of her, largely because of her and what she was listening to, I was tuned into most of what was going on with a much older crowd. than the folks that were my age. I knew who these bands were. I knew what these songs were because she was listening to all this stuff that folks my age when I'm 12 and 13 weren't. But we hung out a lot. And until she was killed in a car accident, we were close friends. But they're family for sure. The three friends I had from I was a Cub Scout early on. And then we went through Weeblos and Boy Scouts and all became Eagle Scouts at the same time was Stan Phillips, Dale Power, and Ray Schmelzinger, which became Ray Brake. I hung out with those folks.

Bob Dreste

Teachers, Bob, during your time at Victor, any teachers that stand out or.

Bob Potter

Mrs. Roberts. She was a social studies teacher. And then Mike Goodman, Mr. Goodman.

Dan Biviano

Awesome.

Bob Potter

Very. Turns out my wife ended up working with him a bit over at the Clifton Hospital. He would come in with a dog and volunteer.

Dan Biviano

He had a big heart.

Bob Drete

Recently passed away. Was it last year or April before?

Bob Potter

Last year, I believe.

Bob Drete

Great guy.

Bob Potter

But they got to know each other. They got to, they got to know each other and turns out, yeah, like, yeah, he was one of my favorite teachers.

Bob Drete

And probably Mrs. Kocher, right?

Bob Potter

Mrs. Kocher early on, absolutely, until she, until I kind of blew it with her.

Bob Drete

It's okay, Bob. I took lessons from her too and didn't matriculate.

Bob Potter

It was a disappointment, I'm sure, when after all those years she realized I wasn't reading the music. I could read it, but I couldn't read it to the same degree or to the same speed as the others.

Bob Drete

I went through the book one and I never read one. I memorized every single thing. And like you said, she'd be like, play this. I'm like, no clue.

Dan Biviano

Well, sometimes, sometimes the worst students are the ones with a good ear.

Bob Potter

That was, fortunately I was in the second violin chair, so I didn't have to hold my own too often. We had Karen Strait and Patsy Canning for those two, and they were both really good and they were sweet and wonderful people.

Dan Biviano

You see, you went to FLCC afterwards. You said you did the arts program. You're talking drawing, painting.

Bob Potter

Yeah, sculpture, drawing, and painting. I was pretty good at it in high school. I wasn't as good as Pat Henahan. She was wonderful. Tina Mennett was wonderful. Kathy Wiley was wonderful. They were all really good drawing and painting people. But I was pretty good with some of the details and stuff. Proportions, a little less so, but some of it I was pretty good. I remember they encouraged us to enter some of our work in a couple of shows, maybe at the mall or something. I remember winning something once, or honorable mention, something like that. But those others, especially Pat Henahan, she was just unreal, really, really good, really talented. And I was encouraged by them. And we all got along great. And that was something that I could do. The reason I came to FLCC, again, CCFL at the time, as an art student is because it was the only thing I was really any good at it that they offered. And I had gotten out of Victor 1/2 year early. I graduated in January of 76. I think my guidance counselor, Mrs. Cruikshank, her parents knew that if they didn't get me into college soon, took a gap year or even a gap semester, if you will, I'd never go back. I'd end up doing something. I'd pretend I still had a band or something. I don't know what, but it was just.

Dan Biviano

They need to walk you into a classroom.

Bob Potter

Exactly. And all kidding aside, what was everybody else's midterms were my finals in January. Third week of January, they're taking a test that I'm also taking, but for me, it's my finals for these classes.

Dan Biviano

Interesting.

Bob Potter

Monday morning, I was a college student. I'd never had that summer break. And I always looked a little older, I think I said before, than I maybe was. But I was young. I was 16 or something.

Dan Biviano

But physically, you didn't stand out at a college.

Bob Potter

No, I felt like a little kid at the college. I get there, and even though I'm not that much younger, maybe a year at best than most of them, I felt much younger. I was in the art program here, took painting and drawing. Loved the drawing. The painting instructor was very well recognized in the national scene and locally and regionally, whatever. He didn't like me at all. We never got along. And I eventually dropped the painting and focused more on art history and filmmaking and cinema, stuff like that.

Bob Dreeste

There was no sound recording.

Bob Potter

There was no studios here then. There was nothing. As a matter of fact, it was a few years later, I think it was driving tow truck or something for local gas station, Victor, where there was mobile station became the Pontillos. But anyway, I think somebody mentioned to me that their daughter at the gas station or whatever that I was working at part-time, that their daughter was going to be going to CCFL for the music recording program. And I thought, I don't know what this guy's talking about. I went to that school. There's no music recording program. I took music theory when I was an art student, but I don't, there's no recording anything. And he insists like, well, there is now because she signed up for it. So I think it was that very next day I called the college and asked about this. And at some point soon came to look at what they had studio wise. And I thought, I don't know much about recording studios. I've done some sound at this point, but it's a legitimate program. There's a whole degree plan with this. Somebody started a program here and they have a where the campus police are located now was a studio.

Dan Biviano

What year was this?

Bob Potter

Was before, but I guess the program had started the year before in 83.

Dan Biviano

Didn't know it was that early.

Bob Potter

83 I think is, from what I understood. But now it's like 84 and I'm, it's going to be January of 84. And I was like, I'm in and I'm saying I'm doing this. And for the next, I milked it pretty good, 2 1/2 years. I knew that if I continued to take things like independent studies and stuff, I could milk the studio time as much as possible and work with some local bands and things. And so I did that.

Dan Biviano

It was a win-win.

Bob Potter

Did very well with it and because of it. But 84 through 86 is when that happened. The other thing was, at that same time, I was introduced to a fellow named Gary Zefting who worked over at Music Lovers on Monroe Avenue. It was a big music store for a lot of years. Great shop, yeah. Gary worked there. Everybody said, if you're working in the sound business, which I had been along with driving tow truck, they must know Gary. I was like, I don't know who you're talking about. So you should meet Gary. So somebody actually took me to Music Lovers to go meet Gary. And Gary, I didn't realize the conversation we were having, he was offering me a chance to do sound for something. And I thought, okay, and I'm trying to make sense of what he's asking me, but I'm just meeting this guy for the first time. And I remember saying to you, well, do you want me to bring my gear? And he goes, do you want me to bring anything? And he goes, no, we have everything. And he gives me the address of the place up on East Avenue. And I don't know what he's talking about. I think I'm going to do sound for some gig. I don't know what I'm getting to. Turns out Gary is like the chief engineer at a studio. called Music America. And when I walk down the stairs at Music America, I see a big console, big cool rooms and all these things. And I'm like, oh, this is why I don't need gear. I'm not doing sound for anybody. Over the course of a couple of days, I realized I'm the new intern at Music America. I was like, wow, lucky me. Like, I don't know how that just happened, but just ignorance on my part. And then, as you maybe know, Music America, among other things that they did that were very cool over the course of the

few years they were open, their big claim to fame in 83 was the chance to record the first Metallica album.

Dan Biviano Oh, wow.

Bob Potter

So I wasn't there for all of the sessions or anything in May of 83.

Dan Biviano

So as an intern, what were you doing? Technically?

Bob Potter

Well, once I understood that that's what they were having me do or asking me to do when they needed me to do it, I was not unwilling to get a broom out or run a vacuum on the rugs or any of that other stuff. But I remember zeroing the console. I thought it was stupid. I'm like, oh, yeah, okay, whatever. But I didn't realize how much I learned by looking at what was, what every knob, switch, and button on that console were. It's a little different than live sound. And the things that I was not familiar with. And it helped me familiarize myself with the routing and everything for how it got to and from the tape machine. Fortunately, This place had a janitor, so I didn't have to clean the bathrooms. But the rest of it was, if they needed me to do something, then I learned to just say yes or nod and help and whatever. And keep my mouth shut. That was the other thing. I learned to listen and keep my mouth shut. I had questions. There were things that I thought could have been better on a session or this or that. But unless I thought it was truly warranted, I learned to just sit back and wait for somebody to ask me. That's something that's Not so common anymore. Everybody that gets brought into a studio, if they're sitting there, they think like, well, somebody must want their opinion. And nobody does. They're not paying for your opinion if you're in the back. I tried to be easy to get along with. I mean, as a sound person and eventually a sound company owner, the gigs that you do, are you a good sound person is only part of it. Were you a jerk to work with? That's what they remember too.

Dan Biviano

And if I recall correctly, that is a key characteristic of you that helped you kind of do your first big Rd. gig when you were working at Red Creek?

Bob Potter

Yeah, as a matter of fact, as a local sound person, I was one of many people that probably came through those doors and worked there. All the cool bands played Red Creek. I mean, all the cool up-and-comers, the people that were huge on the circuit, the people that used

to be huge on the circuit, they all played Red Creek. There was almost always a tour bus out front or some big van and trailer combination or something of somebody of some real caliber playing at Red Creek. The place only held 200 people and it was all cabaret style seating at different levels and stuff, but they had all the cool artists, but the pay was insulting. And you either overlooked that because you're getting to work with cool people.

Bob Drete

Chalk it up to experience.

Bob Potter

Well, that's kind of what it was. I mean, it was it was awful and there was no even a bump in pay still would have made it insulting. You know, it just was, but Literally, the first week I was there, it was the Neville Brothers' bus broke down about a mile from the venue, and they were running a little late anyway, because of, I think, because of bus trouble, and as the house sound engineer... I don't necessarily know that I'm going to get to mix the show or just help them bring stuff and help their engineer get everything ready so that he knows how to mix the show in there, whatever.

Dan Biviano

What are their resources versus what you're bringing?

Bob Potter

Certainly, but all I know is they're not there and they were supposed to be like 45 minutes ago. And it's because it's like a supper club. Their doors open and they want to serve dinner and they want the soundcheck over. And so everything's running late and they get the call that the buses broke down like a mile from the venue. And I happen to have a pickup truck with a cab. So I made three trips from the bus to the venue.

Dan Biviano

Shuttling gear.

Bob Potter

And what they remembered was they, as in the band, that I helped make that happen. Long story, I end up a couple of days later on one of my first tours with them. Because of that situation, Kenny hired me. Kenny was their guy. Hired me to work with them early on, and that was in 85. It wasn't like I was a first call go-to guy. Most people didn't know who I was. But word of mouth occasionally, and working at some of the local venues that brought in national acts, like Red Creek. There were a couple others that had that. Or there were events at places like RIT that had, they have their own tech crew, but they had big shows on

campus. U of R, the Palestra. So I'm getting involved in some of these other shows like that put me in touch with other bigger bands. And then little by little, I started doing some pretty cool things on and off.

Dan Biviano

Like what? Can you tell us a few?

Bob Potter

I guess it was the early 90s. I was doing like all the girl fronted bands. All the women run. Cyndi Lauper came. The girls just want to have fun. Second leg of the girls just want to have fun tour. The Pat Benatar, the not the Bengals, but bands like that. Belinda Carlisle. You know, some of those. And it just seemed like one after another. If there was a woman fronting the band, I don't know who gave my name, but I was thrilled to be working. It was cool. Most of them were really cool. Yeah. There was a time where I was new on the crew with Belinda, but had done a couple of shows, I guess. She comes in, she's all happy. She gives everybody a hug. I get a peck on the cheek, and she walks out there and she starts doing a rehearsal. And within two minutes, I got a shoe being thrown at me that hit me in the face. And because she was mad about something, and I looked up just in time to see this thing coming and like scooted off my face. And I thought, she just kissed me and gave me a hug. What just happened here? I don't, something, whatever was happening sound-wise, she assumed was my fault. And I didn't know there wasn't, because I didn't know what was happening. I didn't know why I had a shoe coming at me. Nothing was feeding back, but there was a problem. And eventually got worked out to the point, and it wasn't my fault, but that was, and this is well documented, she's even written a book about it, but she had a bit of a substance abuse problem for a lot of years. And so she was hot and cold, as talented as she was, and as wonderful as she was. She was pretty hot and cold, but this was the first time that I had experienced anything like that. And They'll learn to learn to duck kind of thing. Like, are you kidding me?

Dan Biviano

Keep your eyes open.

Bob Potter

I just got clobbered with a shoe in my face from across the stage. It's a good aim.

Dan Biviano

Good aim.

Bob Potter

But I don't know.

Dan Biviano

So you also started working some well-known festivals, Newport Folk Festival.

Bob Potter

That happened starting in the late 90s. I had been out in the mid-90s, I moved to Ithaca and started, I was the house sound guy at the historic State Theater with my sound system, which was an amazing venue, but the people that were running at the time had no money at all. If they made any money at all, it went into the building. And I was thrilled to be a part of that. I remember a lot of the bands coming through had their own sound engineer, but I did monitors on stage for the bands most of the time. So I had a decent working relationship. I remember thinking, this is the greatest gig in the world. Even in the mid 90s, I always saw, already saw myself thinking like I could retire doing this right here, except for the fact that they didn't, they never paid me. And it was because if they made any money at all, the city made them put the money into a new sprinkler system and they're going to shut them down. You got to put a new roof down or a roof on or we're going to shut you down. But I love the gig. I loved Ithaca. And I started working with some bands from down there. I got connected with Donna the Buffalo in the early stages and the festival scene down there. Started doing some smaller tours, starting doing the cool gigs in and around Ithaca. It was a part of the grassroots festival.

Bob Dreeste

That's my next question. So you did sound there.

Bob Potter

For a few years. The second year through 1996, I was the, I did set up this sound system, provided system for two of the stages and recorded the festival with my remote recording truck. So for several years I was a part of that. I started working with a band that one of Tara's other bands had opened for. That band opened for Tara's band, and they were from New England. So I got tied into the New England scene. And their record, this other band was a band called The Neils. Their record company paid tour support for me to be out on tour with them. I got hooked up with the New England scene because I was working with them a lot, working with the people that they knew from Boston to Austin and all over the country. And their company, which was EMI, world's biggest record company at the time, folded. Now, people like Garth Brooks are on EMI. Garth Brooks isn't going to have a hard time finding a new label to go to because he's a moneymaker. The Neils, on the other hand, nobody cares. Many artists, everybody got sort of left out in the cold. So they ended up with

some subsidiary of Rounder Records. But I ended up with no gig is what it came down to. And there was a club in Northampton, which is where they were from.

Dan Biviano

Massachusetts.

Bob Potter

Yeah, it's a huge hotbed of music.

Dan Biviano

Central Massachusetts.

Bob Potter

It really, because there's all these colleges within like a handful of miles of downtown Northampton.

Dan Biviano

It's 20 minutes off of the Mass.

Bob Potter

91 on the way up to it. It's 90 and 91. It's the intersection. As a matter of fact, it's just, it's unbelievable how many musicians are from that area. But there was a huge music scene there because it's a huge college town, small college town, very much like Ithaca with more money. There was a club that I had worked at a couple of times because that was that band's hometown venue that offered me a full-time gig. And I thought, well, geez, I'm not working. So I'm moving to New England. I'm not living in Ithaca anymore. There's no gig down there anyway. As a matter of fact, the feds came through and chained up the State Theater like the day after I went and got my sound system out.

Dan Biviano

The State Theater, which is now open and operational, would great.

Bob Potter

Yeah, absolutely. I think Cornell got some money behind it or something. I moved out of the town by then.

Dan Biviano

So which club in Northampton did you start working at?

Bob Potter

The Iron Horse. And the Iron Horse Entertainment Group owned Pearl Street, which Iron Horse was about 200 seats, very much like Red Creek, Supper Club, cabaret style seating, little balcony. They owned Pearl Street, which was about 700 or 800 people, had a lot of alternative and more hard rock bands. And they owned the Calvin Theater, which was very much like the State Theater, maybe 1,400 seats. But basically, that sews up short of the Mullins Center over at UMass that holds 30,000, because that's where the basketball team plays. They pretty much had the town sewn up as far as music venues, this one fella owned them all.

Dan Biviano

Which is good for you because then you can jump around.

Bob Potter

I literally worked every night of the week is what it came down to.

Dan Biviano

And meet great people, see great acts.

Bob Potter

And those turned into more tours is what it comes down to because they rarely hired local acts because it didn't make sense to do those. So it wasn't profitable for them to do that. So whether it was, once again, whether it was an up-and-comer or somebody on their way back down the ladder of success or somebody that was a premier talent, but playing solo just to pay the bills in the middle of the week so that they could keep the rest of the band on tour or something like the David Crosby's and some of those people. Exactly. Jackson Browns. Those kind of folks would play the Iron Horse. Or they would play the Kelvin.

Dan Biviano

We played the Kelvin together.

Bob Potter

Those were the venues. Those were the places if you came through New England and you weren't playing Boston, you played in Northampton, one of those places. But many of those tours turned into tours for me as well. And the other thing was, is the local sound company who did all the festivals in New England and through the Northeast, Klondike Sound, they offered me a gig to do festivals with them for the summer. And so I got to do some of the bigger festivals. I was the front of house engineer at the Newport Folk Fest and the Newport

Jazz Fest, which ran back-to-back weekends from 98 through to 2015, I think was my last year. Maybe it was 2014. All those years I was front of house at on one of the stages at that festival. And those are all, top-notch acts. The Jazz Fest was amazing. The Folk Fest was amazing. For me, largely, honest to God, Klondike Sound owned one of the best sounding sound systems in the world. And I brought the faders up and it was just amazing. And it was outdoors, so there's no reflections.

Dan Biviano

I see you're driving a Porsche.

Bob Potter

Yes, it's just it was easy, but I got the credit for it and I got a several, not a lot, but several tours from it. Got to work with some really name brand people.

Dan Biviano

Feel free to name drop for the podcast.

Bob Potter

The Dave Brubecks, the Chick Coreas, the Herbie Hancocks, the Brad Meldaz. These people were people that if I wasn't necessarily touring with them, I would get asked, could you do the next three or four dates with us?

Bob Drete

If you had to put an approximation on the number of bands slash artists all the years you've been in this, how many different bands slash artists have you worked with?

Bob Potter

I actually started trying to do it once. Most of them are on my website. It got to the point where, okay, this is just silly because there's so many people, some of which I work with very little, but I legitimately worked with. Others I actually toured with or I would work with every time they would come through certain venues or something or, but it's well into the hundreds.

Bob Drete

I think for people that don't know, Bob, that may be listening to this and don't know, I mean, there's you can almost like name any band. And he has in one way or another worked with them.

Bob Potter

Well, that's the thing. I get the who have you worked with thing question a lot. And every time I draw a blank, it's like, who would know half of these people? You know, if you're into the jazz fusion thing, everybody knows. If you're into the heavy metal thing, these people know. If you're into the folk thing, these people know. But the rest of the world doesn't necessarily know. I remember telling somebody once, I've never worked with the Who, the Stones, the Beatles, the Grateful Dead or Aerosmith or blah, blah, blah, and a handful of those kind of artists. But I have worked with members of all those groups, legitimately. And that's enough for me. I don't care. Dave Matthews, even. I've never worked with Dave Matthews, but I work with Tim Reynolds a bunch, his guitar player. I work with Jeff Coffin, his sax player a lot. especially back when I used to play with Bela Fleck and stuff. John Entwistle of The Who, Ringo, Steve Gadden worked with a lot.

Dan Biviano

So we touched on something a little bit ago, how our relationship, I went to FLCC and I worked in this program and you were a big part of that. I did a live sound class with you. And one of the things that people understand is what you do here and opportunities that you offer students here at FLCC. the ability to do live sound with really great acts. So I will tell the listeners that Bob gave me the opportunity to go work with Jackson Brown in Northampton at the Calvin Theater back in 2008. That entailed me moving a lot of equipment and a lot of guitars. And it was 12 guitars. And what was interesting is Bob said, hey guys, class, if you I have this opportunity and look around the website and see who's playing. And if you'd like to work one of these gigs, I'll see if I can arrange it. And you did that for me. And you do that for a lot of students here.

Bob Potter

I still try and do that. We don't have, officially we don't have internships in this program. And although folks are coming to learn audio, they're learning recording engineering, the recording engineering jobs are without a doubt hard to get. Very, very hard to get.

Bob Drester

Switching gears just a little bit, bring us up to date like today, like your family, your wife, Naples, everything. I mean, what, obviously you live in Naples.

Bob Potter

I moved back to the area when my mom got sick. She retired and moved back up here from being down south in 20, 2000 and something, two, one. And was living and working in New England, but I gave all that up. And that was very successful in a way that it was a huge career move for me when I moved to New England. I don't know what it was, but it's like

being the new kid in school. They may not like you or they may love you, but everybody knows your name because you're just one new kid in school. Well, I was the new sound person in New England. And so I started making friends and connections real, real quick. Got recommended for stuff real, real quick. She, my mom, she knew when I moved back here, that I was moving back to an industry that I hadn't been a part of in a lot of years in this area. And most of the people that I knew that were doing this weren't people that I knew from years before. So making the connection again was not so easy. So basically for a year I kind of helped take care of her and I didn't work. And I was just part of the deal. I just didn't see myself doing audio anymore. I wasn't sure. And she kept insisting that I, you should check in over at the college. You should put your name in over at the college. Because she knew they had a recording program. I had been a part of it at one point. And I said, mom, there's nothing available for me over there. I would know about it. I'm not sure how I thought I would know about it, but I would have thought I would have heard about it. And then my wife's girlfriend at the time, but my wife's son, was having dinner with us one night. He came over for dinner. And as he's leaving, he goes, oh, Bob, I don't know if you heard, but did you know about this position that's available in the music audio department at FLCC? And of course, I'm like, you've got to be kidding me. No, I didn't know. So it's like, yeah, please, it was in the paper, blah, blah, blah. So now I'm calling everybody I know that night, like 8 o'clock at night, or sorry, me and Lisa trying to find somebody with the local daily messenger, thinking if the ad's going to be anywhere, it's going to be in the daily messenger. I'm trying to find somebody who's got this paper. Well, he had left the paper yesterday. The ad had been taken out of the paper yesterday. It had been posted for three weeks before that. So now I'm trying to find people that have old daily messengers that might still be around. People that have wood stoves will have newspapers. There's a small window there though. We're calling and you know, finally I see the ad and it's like, you've got to be kidding me. My mom was right all this time and I didn't know. So that night I'm tailoring a resume, like literally that night, because the closing on this, the deadline is tomorrow. The reason it had been out of the paper is because it's tomorrow. And so now I'm writing, I'm writing a resume. I've never had a resume before. I've never needed one for anything because everything was word of mouth. Every audio gig, every sound gig, every band gig that I played in was all word of mouth. I never needed a resume, but now I need one big time. And I don't have one. And I'm thinking of, don't be an idiot. You've got to tailor it to what it is they're looking for here. I have most of these credentials. I can do this, but I've got to show them because they don't know me from anybody. I haven't been a part of the school in how many years. So we're writing this thing up, but I also have to include three letters of recommendation all by tomorrow morning. I'm literally on the phone to people, waking them up at midnight and 1 A.m. begging And not just begging like, can you do this

for me? Most of the friends that I asked the three people, I actually asked five people, but only three of them were able to do this.

Dan Biviano

It's a numbers game.

Bob Potter

But the truth was, I've got to talk them into doing this like right now. Like I know it's one in the morning. I know it's 1130 at night, whatever it is. I need this right now. Can you do this for me? And they all came through and I was able to present this. And after like, I think it was like a week or 10 days, I got a call, got an interview, got the gig here.

Dan Biviano

And what was the actual gig? What was the job?

Bob Potter

The title was Recording Studio Manager, Technical Specialist. It was basically they were looking for a tech specialist, which was for this department, all the stuff that nobody knew how to do or wanted to do. The program was growing, but the faculty members here were getting stuck doing things that they didn't know how to do or just plain didn't want to do. They didn't want to have to do. They're busy doing faculty stuff. They need a person that can do all the other stuff. And literally, a lot of it is like stuff that nobody else wants to do or knows how. And I was like, that's me, that's my gig. I can do that. I can do that with a smile. So it's a technical specialist gig with the recording studio manager title, but the management thing is very much a part of it too.

Dan Biviano

And since then, you've been able to, you know, with some nice budgets and some nice know-how, make this place state-of-the-art.

Bob Potter

Well, not me alone, by any means, because the money came from grants and it came from the state and the county. But Eleanor and I, with the blessings of the department, we have helped guided what makes the most sense to purchase for the department based on the funds that we get each year, how to spend that money so that the program, again, we're a little school in this big pond of audio recording degrees. How do we stand out? How do we do what we can do the best we can without just being another school that's cheap and in

the neighborhood or whatever? So buying world-class gear, learning how to spend the money wisely, learning to buy stuff that lasts for years, not is obsolete in three years.

Bob Dreeste

What would you say, Bob, to somebody right now, maybe So a younger person still in high school listening to this podcast, what advice would you give them? Like if they're thinking about, maybe they're into music, maybe they're just like Bob Potter back in the day, kind of dabbling around bands and stuff.

Dan Biviano

Could I have a career in this? How would I do it?

Bob Dreeste

Yeah, how could they get exposed to it even in high school? Could they? I don't know. Did they ever have open houses here where people can come and just kind of look around?

Bob Potter

They have a fall one and a spring one. Usually the fall one's in, I want to say November, and it's posted. I don't know. It's not always the same. It's A Saturday, making it as convenient as they can for everybody. And then the spring one is, I think, in April.

Bob Dreeste

Right.

Bob Potter

Again, I don't know if specific dates or anything changes every year, but at least folks can come see what it is we have here, what we do, why we do what we do. how we're doing it.

Bob Dreeste

I know, Jenner, you did take some pictures of some of the gear that's here. And it truly is amazing gear. And I've named some of the bands that have recorded here, maybe coming through at CMAC. I think you told me a story. Go ahead and tell the story.

Bob Potter

Briefly, the bunch of years ago, I got a call from a guy. I was one of the rare times I was actually in my office. I pick up the phone and there's this 615 area code. I recognize that as being Nashville for all the years of doing this. I knew right away. And so I pick up the phone and it turns out this guy named Matt, I don't know him from anybody. He says he's got an

artist coming through our area, was given my number by the friend of a friend, somebody that is in the music, sound business, something, recommended me because I live up in this area. I might be able to point them in the right direction. They're trying to find a place. for their artists to record because they're going to be playing up there. While they're on tour. They need to get to a studio and they need to get, the tour's going really well. The last album went platinum. They need to do their sophomore album, but they need to do it while they're on tour. And so they need to find studios other than Home, Home Nashville, along the way. And because they're going to be up in the Finger Lakes, somebody recommended me. I didn't even know who at that time. Gave them my name and number and said, talk to this guy. And I'm honest to God thinking, what studio can I point them in the direction of? Who in the city could do who this is? And then it finally hits me. It's like, What am I an idiot? We've got studios here, but I don't know who the artist is. I don't know where they're, I don't know if they're playing the bug jar or they're playing the Con Center in Syracuse. So I finally said, where's the band playing? So I know what area I'm looking for a studio for you in so I can recommend. And they said, it's a place called the Constellation something, and I'm like, I've never heard it called that name, right? And I think, you mean CMAC? And he goes, no, it's the Sands something, sand lot, sand. It's like, Constellation Brands, Sands, yeah, that's it. So anyway, we get to the point where I'm explaining to him, I said, that is literally a stone's throw from where I'm talking to you from right now. And I'm trying to explain to him, our college campus has this performing arts center that his artist is playing at on the same chunk of grass. And he thinks that's cool as can be. I said, we also happen to have some pretty decent studios here.

Dan Biviano

Yeah, real lucky.

Bob Potter

Can you tell me a little bit more about your artist? What are we looking to do? I'm not asking specifically who, because I sense if he didn't open with that line, maybe he doesn't want me to know. I don't know. what's going on here. And then we find out it's this country fellow named Zach Brown and his band. And I don't know, you know, I know the name. I know that he's getting to be a big deal. I know he's playing next door in two nights or one night, basically. And so I recommend, like, well, we have some pretty decent studios here. Now, often when you think of college studios, you think recording studios, you think of college radio stations. It's not exactly well-equipped. And so I didn't want them to think like an AV room. Exactly, an AV room, some foam on the walls, a couple of mics, and so I don't want them to think that that's what this was. And they said, can you send me some photos so that I can send them to the producer? Turns out this producer is also the guy who produces

all of Alan Jackson, Reba McIntyre stuff. So I'm thinking, this guy's a pretty big deal. Producer, I don't know, producer. So I send them to our website. I said, you find all the photos in the web. Literally 4 minutes later, I've not even left my office, even though I had something I was going to do. I was a little close to walking out the door. He calls me back. He goes, that looks perfect. How do we book it? And I'm thinking, geez, I don't know. We've never had anybody like this in here before. And he says, what do we need to secure it? And what I'm getting from him is how much? And I'm thinking, we're a community college. We don't do how much. We don't operate commercially. It's like we don't sell studio time. We're not taking money out of the pocket of the other studios locally. We just, we teach. We have nice studios. They're nicest studios in the area, but we teach. How much? I don't know how to do how much. So it got to a point I said, would you be willing to make a donation to the school? Oh, yeah, absolutely, whatever. So we kind of left it at that. And the idea that we were going to get like a signed album or something and photos of the session. And it's like, that all sounds perfect. Because I'm thinking, all that is pretty good press. I still haven't told my department that this is happening. because I know that the more people I tell, the more people are going to be here. And I do not need that. And they don't want this. Discretancy at that level is like huge. So myself and my current, my intern at the time, Cody, basically got the studios together, got everything ready, and we've got literally a day to do this, to make this happen. And they offer us is pretty much as many tickets as we want to go see the show. We get down there and hospitality, we're having dinner with the band. The band, honest to God, is actually sitting with us at the table. That's great. And they're all asking, what do you do? How do you know? How are you involved in this? And finally, one of the people at the table said, well, Bob here invited us because he's going to be recording Zach and blah, blah, blah. And he goes, oh, that's you. And they couldn't, they were so gracious.

Dan Biviano

Nice.

Bob Potter

Because they were getting the chance to record after their performance at CMAC. They were going to be coming in probably 11 at night to record. This is how this is going to work. So they're very, very kind and stuff. The meal wasn't anything I could eat because there's a lot of pulled pork and stuff like that. That's what they're into, but it was fine. We go sit in our seats. The show is literally the opening act walks out on stage and I get a phone call from the campus police. saying that the producer is at the back door. He wants to get into the studio and get everything ready for the session tonight. And I'm thinking, no, the show's starting here. Like, no, this is my gig. I'm the one who put this together. How is it that I'm

going to miss the show? So now I've got to come up and babysit the producer while he looks over the console, sets up a couple of things, and then takes a nap on the couch. I can't just leave him in here. And so I missed the whole show because of that. But at 11 at night, Zach and the personal security, he's standing outside the door. He's making sure nobody else is getting in. And the session goes on and finally took some photos. How long did it go? Well, at 4 A.m., there's a photo of us standing in front of that clock. Me, the producer.

Bob Drete

Was it right here?

Bob Potter

My intern, right? Like literally right in front of that clock. They had their own photographers in that. They didn't want to take shots during the session. But their own photographers took, two of them, took photos all through and they gave us all the photos on a stick. I still have that of the session of them recording. And the thing is that the album was mostly done when they came here. We needed to record some guitar parts and some vocals and some things like that. And there was going to be another studio involved as well a couple of nights later at some other venue in Pennsylvania. But we did as much as we could until it was like 4 A.m. that we took that photo. But we've had Zach in here. So we got some credit on that album, his second album. I think that too went platinum. We had Molly Hatchet in here, a Southern rock band.

Bob Drete

Oh yeah.

Bob Potter

Pat Monahan from Train and Goo Goo Dolls were in here doing a couple of things once. Had Lady A in here, not in the studio necessarily, doing like a meet and greet kind of a thing.

Bob Drete

A lot of the burgeoning local bands too.

Bob Potter

We would, we would, certainly we've done a lot of, sorry, our students, matter of fact, some of the faculty, but our students have done some of the local talent, some really good ones. We do encourage them to, you know, when they're going to be working on their capstone project, you're spending your whole semester recording some artist's album for free. Find

the best artist you can, because that's your portfolio too. Don't just find some friend who wants to do something. if you go to church, grab the gospel band. those guys know how to play together. They know their instruments. They know how to make good sounds. They know how to make you sound good. It's your portfolio. This is your resume for being there.

Bob Dreeste

Like Dirty Blanket, was that just the band, was that just mixed here or was it?

Bob Potter

No, it's actually tracked here. I didn't end up mixing it because we ran out of time. Classes were starting again last winter. We might do something again this fall.

Bob Dreeste

Such an awesome band. They're taking off.

Bob Potter

I just talked to Max a couple of weeks ago and. And he said, we were really proud of that project. I'm glad because I had to let it go. I was, I wanted to mix it, but there was no more time left. We just started late and just ran out of time. I think it would have been even, excuse me, better than it was. But I said, if ever you want to do it again, let me know. And he looked at me kind of like, really? So I said, but let's not start the week before school starts in January. Let's start like Christmas. So we have some time to actually spend on this to the rushing thing is kind of nice because otherwise you second-guess everything and well we'll do that tomorrow we'll fix that later and you just start fixing everything. The fact that we, yeah, exactly. It's like make it make it work in the time you have and That was actually a benefit, I think, for them doing it to some degree, but I didn't get to mix it. I really wanted to, and I hope to be able to the next one or something. At the very least, I want to try and help them track another one. They're talented as can be the right good material. And again, regardless of the genres, you know, we'll do anything here. Our students will bring through hip hop projects. They'll bring in spacey new age stuff. They'll bring in something that'll sound like it's a, you know, a video game soundtrack. They'll do, you know, Deathcore or whatever, Speedmount, like whatever they're into, that's, what they're allowed to record for.

Dan Biviano

I remember sitting here listening to everyone's projects and audio for, and it was so diverse and we had to do different types of projects and one of them had to be a live thing, and but it was really cool to see everyone and everyone being so supportive and be like, Oh my gosh, that sounded great! How did you do that? And this and that is so collaborative.

Bob Potter

That's the thing. We have a showcase where they all get to present, bits and pieces of the songs they recorded for the project that they, whatever artist they work with. At the end of the semester, this is what I used to do this, is why we did this, is you'll hear this here, this is a mistake I made, this is what I learned from it. But also, but the students will all ask, like, what mic did you use on this? How did you get that reverb sound? What's with that backward such and such? I thought that was really cool. You know, just They all want to learn from each other at that point.

Dan Biviano

Or come in here while I'm mixing and give me your ear because maybe I'm ear dead to this and you have freshies on it and I can hear that weird thing.

Bob Potter

That's really important and we try and encourage them to do that. Don't just get so married to it that you're convinced that you're right. Your client should have a say in that. I mean, bottom line. But also, if there's somebody else that's in your class that you, know, trust, ask them to give a listen. They may hear something that you've already tuned out. You may have started working with the bass and drums because you wanted to get the solid foundation. And as you add every guitar part after that, now the thing is real guitar heavy and you don't even realize it sounds anemic. There's no more bass and drums.

Dan Biviano

You become deaf to it.

Bob Potter

And it takes somebody else to like, well, where's all the oomph to it? It's gone.

Dan Biviano

There's a low end.

Bob Potter

And I was like, oh yeah, maybe bury that a little bit or bring this back a little. So you still have some of the power that you had to start with.

Dan Biviano

And do it while you're recording.

Bob Potter

That all happens to all of us.

Dan Biviano

Do it while you're recording. Don't do it in post if you can't.

Bob Potter

That's right. That's right. It's like they all think they're going to fix it. As they say, fix it in the mix. It's like that's not what mixing is for. It's

Dan Biviano

You got a great room, great resources.

Bob Potter

If you don't capture it in the 1st place, then you got nothing to work with. It's not worth the time. And you're wasting your time and theirs unnecessarily trying to do all that. It's unfortunate. But that's how they learn. It really is. And hopefully, I mean, again, that's not up to us, but we encourage them to go on and get a bachelor's degree somewhere, another audio school. It's more studio time for them. It's more connections that they get to make. Every bachelor program around the country from an audio school has an official internship. So there's at least one semester where they get to get their foot in the door somewhere doing something. And that's the foot in the door that they really need. Again, we try to do that to some degree, but it's not as official as SUNY won't let us have any more credits than we already do. They've actually whittled us down a little bit. But the four-year schools can do that. So we say, you know, you really should. It's really, you know, the bachelor's looks even better if there's more opportunities.

Dan Biviano

When you get a bigger portfolio.

Bob Potter

Absolutely. And all of that matters. And you start, you may think you're good because you did a couple of years here, but it happens quickly. You start to realize, my God, it's all over already. More studio time can only hone your skills. And that's what we want.

Dan Biviano

And when you leave here in the technology wraps, you're looking at those things. You're just like, well, I'm, I don't know if I'm, I don't know if I know what this even means now. I better be in a studio and learn.

Bob Potter

Yeah, that happens. That happens. It happens very much so.

Dan Biviano

So, Bob, what do you think? Got to have the story of meeting his wife. Oh, that's a good story. Talk about, can you tell us the story about how you went on a date with Lisa, then you met again years later. Oh, yeah, we Lisa Bigwood, a phenomenal artist, by the way.

Bob Potter

My wife, I met her. I was the sound engineer at a club in Rochester called Milestones. Milestones was initially Jazzberries, but it was at East Avenue. where there's a big federal courthouse or something there now. they knocked it down and put up this big courthouse, which, it happens. But it was a cool little club. It was one of those clubs similar to Red Creek, although they heard a lot of local bands. They also heard a lot of national acts. But, and so we got to meet a lot of cool people and I got some touring by connecting with some of those folks. I ended up actually saying no at the time. And RBQ was one of them. RBQ was one of them. Some others would come through. We had some really great bands come through. playing there. But there was an acoustic, they called it Big Drum, I believe, which I didn't get why. There's 4 singer-songwriters with acoustic guitars, once a month, playing on the stage, hosted by this fellow named Tim Clark. And Tim had asked Lisa to play. I didn't know who she was. I'd never seen her or heard her. She played one night, and I did sound. And as soon as their performance was over, the place was pretty full, if I remember right. They all have friends that come and see them play and stuff. She came to the booth, the sound booth at the Milestones was up some stairs in a overlook with an open area so you could see and hear through it. She came to the door and let her in and she goes, that was the best sound I ever had. She hadn't been playing a long time, but as a singer-songwriter, you get stuck at some coffee houses that the stuff should have been thrown away, let alone be used for, and well-meaning people are running it and stuff. So it's not always great. It's pretty rough sometimes. I've seen it, I've dealt with it too, so I know. But she just kind of went on for a little bit about how great the sound was. I was so appreciative. And she really shined that night. I could tell that she was having a great night, having never met her. And she said it was because the sound was so good. It was just so perfect.

Dan Biviano

She was inspired.

Bob Potter

Exactly, I guess. So I gave her my business card. Bingo. And specifically, she had some song about the Adirondacks. We started talking about the mountains and the fact that we both love it up there. Anyway, we started meeting for lunch and stuff after that. And she had a fella at the time. So it never went too far. But I had a couple of festivals that I was going to be doing sound at, one of which was called, initially called the Merle Watson Festival. Doc Watson is a festival in honor of his son, Merle. It became Merle Fest. It's still on. It's huge down in North Carolina. And I was going to be doing sound there. And I just sort of threw it out there, like, because I can see she wants to be a singer-songwriter, and she's a nurse full-time. It's like, would you be interested in coming and seeing what they do there? Thinking like, hey, do you want to go for a ride? Like, let's go. So I brought her with me to this festival. I can't imagine that went over real well at home for her, but we went to the festival together and she was eating up the fact that all these famous people in the singer-songwriter, bluegrass, country, Americana world are all playing this huge event. All really big, big names. And so she got to see it from that aspect. And I was thrilled to have some company for the drive down, for the, to be able to do that. So we're there all weekend. We kept in touch. And then the next one was, I was going to be working in the Winnipeg Folk Festival. Winnipeg Folk Festival draws maybe 50,000 people in Winnipeg, Canada. And right after that festival was supposed to end, I was supposed to fill in for two weeks with the Indigo Girls. This is 94, the Swamp Ophelia Tour. But I'm supposed to start in Traverse City, Michigan. That's a hike. From Winnipeg. It's a bit of a hike from here. It's a long way. So I figured I'll drive up to Traverse, to Winnipeg, knowing it's going to be two days of driving, but it's more time to spend with her. And then I'll put her on a plane or something and I'll make my way down. And for the next two weeks, I'll be on the bus with them, get flown back to Interlochen or Interlake, whatever the school, whatever it is, the first gig. and then make my way home and blah, blah, blah, whatever. somehow the boyfriend gets involved in this and he decides he's going on this weekend in Winnipeg too. And so now he's in the car with two days. Anyway, nothing went as I hoped it would. The friendship sort of tanked. It was just, it was a big ugly mess. And we lost touch for many years, many, many years. No contact whatsoever. I still went off and did my tour and she and he had to take a 40-hour bus drive back to Rochester, which I'm still so thrilled by because I feel like they deserve it. serves them right. 40 hours on a bus, like on that kind of a bus. So anyway, now it's 2000, I'm living and working in Northampton, Massachusetts, and I'm driving home every week to see my dad. He's getting older, he's sick, and I want to get home every week to see him. So I make the 5 1/2 hour trip home to Farmington, go visit with my dad. But eventually he ends up in the hospital and he's been in for a while now. And I go see him and I walk in. My dad is like

on the decline. He's literally like almost not there when I'm when I'm visiting, but I'm still like, I want to see him, you know, when I do come there once a week. But, you know, the trip is sort of like not much is happening anymore. I get there this one time in July, early July. I walk into his room and he is up and he is awake and he is speaking and he is as alive as I've seen him in weeks. And I can't believe it. And I thought, what's going on here? And the first words out of his mouth, I literally just have driven 5 1/2 hours. I'm exhausted. It's the middle of the night is when I drove. It's dawn or something. And he says to me, did you get that note from your friend? Now, Now, I understand my dad's oxygen level has gone downhill big time. So I'm thinking he's delusional and none of this is going to make any sense. But dad, I just walked in. I don't know what you're talking about, but I'm thrilled that he's talking. I can't believe that's happening. And he goes, well, it's here somewhere. And I'm like, okay, so there's this post-it note and it says, I thought maybe this was your dad. He had the same name. He was my patient last night. I'm working down in an emergency room tomorrow. Come visit Lisa. And I have no idea who it is. Absolutely no idea at all. I can't even put it together. How many years has passed? Six or seven?

Dan Biviano

Yeah, maybe.

Bob Potter

Anyway, I'm dumbfounded. So I visit with him a little bit, blah, blah, blah. And I make my way down in the emergency room area. You know, there's a waiting room and stuff. I don't know who I'm looking for. I really don't have any idea. And I see this woman go by with really long curly hair in one of those maroon trauma center outfits. And he goes, that Lisa. I get it right away. Like, oh, now I know who.

Dan Biviano

The Lisa.

Bob Potter

The Lisa, right. And literally, that was the first inkling I had. Eventually, she sees me and we chat for a bit and blah, blah, blah. It turns out the fella that she had been with for all, walked out the month before, so she's conveniently single. Here I am visiting my dad. She was his nurse the night before up in the third floor. Anyway, my dad passes away the next day. That's what it comes down to. This is like the last little gift that he could give me was this whole, I mean, he was gone. He went from being as alive as I'd ever seen to being gone in less than a day. And she came with me to the funeral, which I thought was nice because I had nobody. And I hadn't lived in the area, so I hadn't been in touch with a lot of friends or

anything. And she helped me clean out his house, sorry, his apartment. And we just started hanging out together and eventually I moved back here. And we got at the place in Naples.

Dan Biviano

What year was that?

Bob Potter

2000.

Bob Dreste

Wow.

Bob Potter

2000. And I was commuting still back and forth from Northampton, but in 2000, 2001, I was moving into Naples.

Dan Biviano

But the neat thing is your dad really liked her.

Bob Potter

He thought she was wonderful. He thought everything about her was, and he said so. I forget how he said it. It's like, you need to go find her. And I'm like, okay. But again, I was reluctant only because I didn't know who I was looking for. I was like, wander around. I was down there maybe 2 minutes just sort of standing, looking at the waiting room. And then again, she kind of passed by. I was like, oh, oh yeah.

Dan Biviano

It's pretty incredible.

Bob Potter

It worked out. It was a serendipitous job. And then, we married a few years later and been together ever since.

Bob Dreste

I'll bet she wrote a song about something about that, right?

Bob Potter

Yeah, there's a couple of them. She even wrote a song about the Winnipeg trip, which is a really good song. It hasn't been recorded. Oh, really?

Dan Biviano

What's the name of it? I don't know. It hasn't.

Bob Potter

It hasn't.

Dan Biviano

40 hours to Rochester.

Bob Potter

Yeah, something like that. It's a really good song. It just hasn't been recorded yet, but. Anyway, so that's why I live in Naples now, as opposed to moving back to Victor or anything. It just worked out that we ended up down there.

Dan Biviano

Well, it's a beautiful place. It really is. And your studio is there. Can you tell us the name of your website?

Bob Potter

Cabinfeverrecording.com. Early on, late 70, no, maybe about 1980, I had a friend who lived in a cabin in the woods in Fishers, New York, one of the last dirt roads in Ontario County, way back in the woods. And what was it called? Lower Fishers Road. It was this cool little cabin. And he moved out and I, as soon as I saw it, like I moved in. From there, I started my sound company, Cabin Systems, Cabin Sound Systems, but Cabin Systems, and started doing remote recording, on-location recording. Didn't have a studio necessarily, but was doing on-location recording soon after. And that's where our Cabin Fever recording came from. I literally lived in a cabin in the woods. In Fishers.

Bob Drester

Did you ever do sound at the jailhouse? Remember that.

Bob Potter

No, I used to go to the jailhouse. That's how I knew all those people from Fishers. That's how I knew that cabin was available. It was Ted Holtz's cabin, the cabin that he lived in first.

But we were on Ted and I and Chris and Joel and Lou, Bill Harris, Cheryl, you know, a bunch of us were on the committee there, all helping out at the jailhouse.

Dan Biviano

What's the jailhouse?

Bob Potter

Jailhouse was an old, I believe it was a school in Fishers. It's still there. It's still there. It got turned into an office building. It was empty for whatever reason. And it was an old school, kind of two floors, small, but had an area for a stage or something at the end. On the upstairs and downstairs were pool tables and stuff. It was a place for kids to go to see music and things that Ivan Schuler basically got with the town of Victor about and sort of Steve and Cindy's dad. I got with Got with Victor to put together a place for young folks to go.

Bob Dreste

Think high school dance. Not at the school, right?

Bob Potter

There was no alcohol served or anything, but... I think most of the local sheriffs knew that there's probably pot in the parking lot and a lot of Volkswagen bugs and things like that.

Bob Dreste

I feel like my parents were like, they did chaperones for some of that stuff.

Bob Potter

Yeah, for sure. There was always chaperones because Ivan was involved and the town was kind of a sponsor. So they were trying.

Dan Biviano

To keep it all up and up.

Bob Potter

I played there with my first band, but the first band that played out. But the jailhouse, eventually they got kind of run out of there because of the cops would come occasionally. Again, there's always smoking, pot smoking, probably a beer or two in the parking lot. I don't remember. I didn't partake, so I don't know. I wasn't out there. I was inside working. But there was a crack or something in the wall, and they found a reason to shut the place

down. Sure enough, they fixed the crack and turned it into offices so that the place could be valuable for the last 20 or 30 years or 40 years or whatever. Yeah, that's kind of it. But it was a chance to chase that whole scene away from there. And so that after a couple of years, it closed. But all the best bands locally played there. So it's really, really amazing.

Dan Biviano

Well, thank you for your time.

Bob Dreste

Yeah, definitely.

Dan Biviano

This is for those who don't know, this is the second time we've done this podcast. The first one was amazing, and this one was awesome as well.

Bob Potter

Yeah, sadly, the first one had some technical problems. I'm kind of embarrassed about that, but.

Bob Dreste

We don't talk about that.

Bob Potter

We don't talk about that.

Dan Biviano

But it was stuff happens. Good opportunity to have a couple of great conversations with Bob Potter, alumnus of Victor Central Schools, and FLCC.

Bob Potter

I love my time at Victor, at the high school. Most of the time at the high school, definitely Victor itself. Downtown has changed to Northrup's, the ice cream store is gone. Margrove's, the ice cream store is gone. Riccio's was there. The bank was actually on the corner across the street. The sweet shop, I'm in the sweet shop. They do, Riccio's, I think it was or something.

Dan Biviano

A lot of good things.

Bob Potter

Bob and Bob's Diner or something was the restaurant. I think it's the village something or something. I don't know. Just the Gulf Station is where the little phone building is now. I mean, just everything is changed as it does. But great memories from some really cool stuff that was a great place to grow up. It certainly was.

Bob Dreeste

Well, if you're listening to this and you are out at either like Point of the Bluff or somewhere, definitely you can't miss Bob. Look him up. Tell him you're from Victor. I know he'll love it.

Bob Potter

I'd love to hear other people's Victor stories, too. It was a cool place for many years.

Dan Biviano

Well, thank you for your experience. Thank you for all the things you've done for me personally, and thanks for the Alumni Association. Thanks you for what you've offered for our listeners.

Bob Potter

Awesome. I'm glad there is a school, a Victor School Alumni Association. I just found that out not too long ago. I'm embarrassed by that, but.

Dan Biviano

Well, now you're a big part of it.

Bob Potter

I'm happy to help in some way, I hope. But I do appreciate being asked. Thank you. Thank you.

Dan Biviano

Thank you. Thank you.

Bob Potter

Enjoy your day.

Dan Biviano

You too.

Bob Drester

These are yours, Bob. It's like, I need to get some.

Bob Potter

Make a heck of a difference.