

—Slug:.....COMM-0873.arts.Michael_Veitch
—Contributor.....Robert F. Smith
—Contributor email.....robfs52@yahoo.com
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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Lovely work, Rob. Line 70: Should that be Smith Struthers? That seems to show up in old newspapers. Can't find a reference to Gene.

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Coming home

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####BEGIN SUBHED####

Singer/songwriter Michael Veitch will return to Bellows

Falls to perform on 'hallowed ground'

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

When singer/songwriter Michael Veitch returns to his hometown of Bellows Falls as part of the Saturday, July 18, Folks, Roots & Americana Music Festival held outdoors at in the Robertson Paper Company field on Island Street, the location will have a very special meaning for him.

10 “When I heard that’s where the concert would be I had to
11 adjust the set list to make sure it was also tailored to the event!”
12 Veitch said. “My father managed Robertson Paper Mill for many
13 years, and I grew up running around that place. [It holds] many
14 memories, and of course some of those have ended up in my
15 music.”

16 Veitch, now of Woodstock, New York, will perform with
17 a full band, including “two stellar Woodstock musicians to join
18 me, Kyle Esposito on bass and Paul Duffy on keyboards.”

19 Part of the Next Stage Art’s Bandwagon Summer Series,
20 the festival will include Doozy Jane and headliners The
21 Mammals.

22 The ‘Robbie Paper’ location

23 After years of trying to rehabilitate the old mill building,
24 the Robertson Mill was finally torn down in 2019, and the highly
25 polluted brownfields site was successfully restored, with 18
26 inches of clean topsoil covering any polluted earth that might
27 remain.

28 The restored 1.67-acre site is available for commercial
29 development. In the meantime, the open field has been
30 maintained and used for outdoor concerts for the last few years.

31 Part of a local family well-known for contributing over
32 several generations to the region’s arts and music scene, Veitch
33 grew up in Bellows Falls and graduated high school there in
34 1973.

35 “BF was a great place growing up as a kid,” Veitch said,
36 remembering the sound of steam trains in the background and
37 how he held down both morning and afternoon paper routes.
38 “We had full run of the streets on our bikes. We walked to school
39 and the town pool. Today it would be considered idyllic, I think.”

40 When asked why his family has been so involved with
41 the arts, Veitch laughs.

42 “It must have been that Bellows Falls air and water!” he
43 said. “My father was an artist who almost went to work for Walt
44 Disney before he met our mother in BF.”

45 His brother Rick Veitch, who now lives in West
46 Townshend, has had a long, international career in comics and
47 graphic novels, including working for Marvel’s Epic Comics line,
48 illustrating DC Comics’ *Swamp Thing*, and being named
49 Vermont’s Cartoon Laureate in 2020.

50 Oldest brother Tom Veitch was a novelist, poet, and
51 underground “comix” writer, and he “worked with George Lucas
52 on *Star Wars*.”

53 “My brother Pete is a local master builder specializing is
54 historic renovations,” Veitch said. “My daughter Madeline has art
55 hanging in the Fleming Museum [of Art in Burlington]. My
56 youngest, Flora, is a lifelong horse jumper and a successful
57 Realtor in the Hamptons. [Son] Ollie Veitch and [nephew] Ezra
58 Veitch have held down the Veitch fort here at home. It’s quite a
59 crew and a blessing.”

60 Veitch himself, in addition to his work in music, is also
61 an accomplished painter and photographer. All of these interests
62 and skills came early in his life. He remembers the first he first
63 local musicians he began playing with were Bernie Moss, Bob
64 Huntoon, and Michael Joy, among others.

65 “I was always a few years younger than the other band
66 members it seems,” Veitch said. “We had bands coming to town
67 to play Meatland [a local bar and club], and high school proms.”

68 He said he remembers when band kids played in local
69 bars that he “would talk my way into and sit at the back watching
70 the bands when I was 14 or 15 years old. Bands like Fidgety Feet,
71 Gene Struthers, Better Days — too many to list. Plus, all the big
72 acts that would play Putney College, Franklin Pierce, UVM. It
73 was great fun!”

74 Veitch said he played the local club circuit for a while in
75 cover bands like Teaser, Spanks, and Empire. Then he and Moss
76 joined John Lynch and Gary Spaulding to start The Secrets, “to

77 ride the New Wave fad and started writing our own songs then,”
78 he said.

79 It was after Secrets and the experience of writing his own
80 material that Veitch said he started playing mostly acoustic guitar
81 and got in on the singer-songwriter trend, adding, with a laugh,
82 “once I had written some decent material. It took awhile.”

83 The Greenwich Village folk

84 scene

85 Veitch moved to Brooklyn, New York, for five years and
86 said that “part of that adventure included getting to know Jack
87 Hardy and the *Fast Folk* crowd in Greenwich Village.”

88 Hardy was a central figure in the post-Bob Dylan folk
89 revival, mentoring a whole new generation of singer/songwriters.
90 He edited the *Fast Folk Musical Magazine*.

91 Veitch said he honed his songwriting craftsmanship as
92 part of Hardy’s legendary Monday night songwriting workshops
93 in the village.

94 Among the talented songwriters nurtured through that
95 workshop and magazine were Suzanne Vega, Lyle Lovett, Tracy
96 Chapman, Shawn Colvin, John Gorka, Christine Lavin, Richard
97 Shindell, and Lucy Kaplansky.

98 The gatherings “really helped me evolve as a songwriter,”
99 Veitch said.

100 He also went to college in New York City, and one of his
101 professors knew Murray Krugman, who, ironically, had a small
102 record label in Vermont.

103 “Murray believed in me at a time I really needed
104 believing in,” Veitch said. “He produced my first two official
105 releases on his Silver Wolf label. I haven’t stopped since.”

106 One of the most important connections Veitch made
107 through the songwriting workshops was with Shawn Colvin. She
108 would encourage him in his songwriting, and eventually he

109 developed as a writer and performer to the point where Veitch
110 has toured with her many times over the years.

111 Touring with Colvin and his solo performances allowed
112 Veitch to meet many of his musical heroes, including Ed Sanders,
113 Jackson Browne, James Taylor, Lucinda Williams, David Crosby,
114 Richard Thompson, John Sebastian, Happy and Artie Traum, Jules
115 Shear, and Leo Kottke.

116 “I’ve been honored truly to have spent time with all of
117 them,” Veitch continued. “I even got to be a bit actor in a Ringo
118 [Starr] music video.”

119 He also does not want to forget Saxtons River’s Chris
120 Whitley, who died in 2005. “We were talking about doing a
121 show together in BF before he passed,” Veitch said.

122 He has also collaborated with “the great Judy Collins,
123 who I got to open for here in BF.” Collins would record a Veitch
124 song, “Veteran’s Day,” on her *Bohemian* album, and Colvin has
125 provided vocals for some of Veitch’s recordings.

126 From music to politics

127 Music has opened some other unusual doors as well.

128 While performing with Colvin at a well-known venue in
129 Washington, D.C. in 1994, George Stephanopoulos, senior
130 advisor to President Bill Clinton, attended the show and invited
131 the two musicians to a special tour of the White House, where
132 they got to meet the president in the Oval Office.

133 Veitch said he always had an interest in participating in
134 civic life beginning when he lived in Bellows Falls. With
135 Westminster’s Waldo and Alma Beals, he helped start the first
136 town recycling committee and helped create the Rockingham-
137 Westminster recycling center.

138 Later he became the Southern Office director for the
139 Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG), the state’s
140 largest consumer and environmental organization, and he ran for
141 state Senate.

142 "I've stayed politically active all through the years," says
143 Veitch, who now chairs his town's Tree Committee.

144 In recent years, Veitch has also been creating videos for
145 his [YouTube channel](#) about budget guitars in a series he calls
146 "Woodstock Guitar Guy."

147 "It started during Covid when my luthier stopped seeing
148 customers," he said. "She told me 'You can do it yourself!'

149 "So I went on YouTube and started teaching myself,"
150 Veitch said. "It's been very rewarding and therapeutic. I've saved
151 a lot of money, too!"

152 Germany and a Holocaust 153 project

154 Veitch lived in Munich, Germany, for two years and
155 studied the Holocaust from the German side while he was there.

156 "In Munich, I went looking for where the local
157 songwriters hung out and found them at a real bagel shop run by
158 a German and an American. The first question they asked was,
159 "Did I know Jack Hardy from *Fast Folk*?"

160 When Veitch helped them start a songwriters weekly
161 meeting at the Bagel place, "it was the beginning of many
162 lifelong friendships," he said.

163 Veitch would also become involved with a program that
164 paired Hudson Valley songwriters writing music with Holocaust
165 survivors. That project became a PBS documentary, [We](#)
166 [Remember: Songs of Survivors](#), which is still available for viewing
167 via the [PBS Video Portal](#).

168 Looking back at six decades of playing and writing
169 music, Veitch said that he most appreciates "those long-lasting
170 friendships."

171 He credits "people who have given their talents to
172 helping me achieve what I had started with a concept, an
173 acoustic guitar, and a pad and pen," he said. "It's been a group

174 effort all these years even though I am mostly a solo act. Mentors,
175 partners, kids. Life is a group effort, after all.”

176 Veitch said he’s “very excited” to offer *Discovered*, a
177 brand-new 13th CD at his Bellows Falls performance: “all cover
178 songs by people I know or have known.”

179 “Bellows Falls is in my DNA and coming around to sing
180 my songs here is always a thrill for me,” he said. “I’m looking
181 forward to standing on that hallowed ground of Robertsons and
182 the Island House that I’ve known so well.”

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