

motown *eagles*

An Open Letter Regarding TRIBUTESVILLE by Carl Cafagna, Band Leader & Proud Tributesville Citizen

Greetings, fellow musicians and music lovers,

Many of us have been excited about the launch of TRIBUTESVILLE, the brainchild of Todd Stoney, leader of Lookin' Back, the highly successful Bob Seger Tribute. I think we can all agree it's an inspired idea, to form a collective organization, in which many of Michigan's great Tribute acts can support each other, and help each other to thrive in this very difficult time in the music industry. It's also a wonderful opportunity for fans of many of the great bands of the last 50 years (including The Eagles, Pink Floyd, Alice Cooper, The Beatles, Motley, Ozzy, and more) to connect with the music they love, AND great local artists and music venues! Win-Win-Win!

I've long felt that the single biggest problem (among many) in our business is that (nearly always) the people who hold the keys to our success as artists are themselves NON-Artists, and often have NO CLUE what our lives and careers are like. Musicians are almost never willing to assume the roles of presenters, agents, publicists, sound engineers or venue owners, and therefore we're never in a position to influence our own fortunes in any direct way. I'm impressed that Todd Stoney has made a substantial investment and personal sacrifice, in forming an organization that benefits others, like me, more than himself. His own tribute act is quite successful, and doesn't need 'help', but many of the rest of us do, and Todd's willingness to divert time and resources away from his own career to help us with ours, without charging us a dime upfront, is a rare thing indeed.

Also, the job opportunities Todd is trying to produce will feature guaranteed dollar-figures, quality sound services and professional-level publicity, plus the opportunity to check out, network with, and support each other's bands. If all of our jobs had all these elements built in, I think we can all agree that our careers would be better off! Collective-ism has been made a dirty concept in our country these days, but musicians, more than anyone else, should be able to see that the "free market" has NOT worked to our advantage, in fact quite the contrary. Our business is the only one I can name where median wages haven't increased since the 1980's (yes, sad and true). The goal of TRIBUTESVILLE, as I understand it, is to marry the best aspects of both 'regulation' and 'free market,' by creating a wage Floor, but Not a Ceiling; genius! Unfortunately, the opening events will not contain the Floor we'd all like to have, but this is not what was intended, and merely serves to illustrate how important it is to continue to push for it. Our collective strength as artists always exceeds that of the individual, even as the individuals make the collective deeper and richer; that's the whole premise on which Group Art is built.

Many of us are frustrated by the difficulty encountered in the startup of this new business; as musicians, we're frustrated by having gigs booked which have been cancelled, and fans are frustrated by having to wait to see bands playing their favorite music. We're all confused by changing venues, cities, and a sense of turmoil. These feelings are real, and legitimate. But, if we're honest, we've all experienced these things before, many times, in this business. None of us should be surprised by the adversity that's happened so far. I'm not surprised, in fact I'd have been more surprised had everything gone off without a hitch.

My band, Motown Eagles, is a 'start-up,' as of Sept. 2015, and 'starting up' the band took me 11 months, and much consternation, and more than one time where I figured it maybe just wasn't in the cards. Went through 15 different musicians to finally get the 5 I needed, 5 potential gigs to get the 1st gig we actually played, etc..... you know the drill. Starting something new takes WORK, and it usually isn't pretty. We all know this to be true, so why should TRIBUTESVILLE be any different? In my 25 years of experience, I've found that things which are easy and painless never really work out, or if they do, they don't last; it's the things that are HARD, challenging and may seem downright hopeless which sometimes end up bearing sustainable fruit. Who knows what will happen with TRIBUTESVILLE, it's impossible to predict, however the fact that it's encountered some roadblocks in the early going is not unusual, and not in any way conclusive as to the quality of the concept, or its chances for success.

Here's my final thought: improvement of things is better accomplished through increased involvement, rather than decreased. Any of us who would like to see TRIBUTESVILLE succeed (and count me among their number), need to do all we can to help make it succeed, including making suggestions for its improvement, volunteering our time or our brain-power, supporting each-others gigs, to the extent we can (several of us from Motown Eagles have purchased tickets for the opening shows), and most importantly, being as flexible and patient as we can, keeping our eyes on the prize. In the meanwhile, I think we should all take advantage of the opportunity to meet and network with each other; I personally plan to reach out to members of the other bands, and eager to see my colleagues perform.

It's a good opportunity for us to be a part of something bigger, especially if it's been manufactured to include each of us, where we are NOT in competition with each other, but where our individual strength and appeal is multiplied, and benefits us all similarly, and potentially substantially; beautiful!

Let's all take advantage of this as much as we can, and do what we can to make sure this concept succeeds, for all of us!

In solidarity, and with hope and optimism,

Carl Cafagna (Motown Eagles)