

THE TWO RIVER TIMES

SCENE

THE WEEK OF JULY 20 - 27, 2017



LIFESTYLES

Summer If For
Bird Feeding!

Page 16

BUSINESS

Weichert Names
New Manager,
Top Producers

Page 21

Stormin' Norman Seldin

The Man, The Music, The Legend

Like most parents, Helen and Paul Seldin of Fair Haven, both classically trained musicians, wanted the best for their son Norman. They got him started on the piano at age 3.

"Mom pushed me pretty hard," Seldin recalls.

Days of four-hour rehearsals by age 12 were not uncommon. Little did they know at the time that their actions would lead to a 50-year career in all phases of the music business for Stormin' Norman Seldin.

And when it came to business, perhaps the experience of working in his parents' jewelry store on Broad Street in Red Bank in the late 1950s piqued Seldin's interest in the business world; in his teen years he began booking local bands in local venues.

"Mom would drive me to the gigs," he says

DANNY SANCHEZ

proudly, "and she would sign the contracts and checks for me because I was too young."

Seldin was quite astute as a teenager, and noticed that young people in the 1960s were gravitating to the soul and rhythm and blues music of artists like Little Richard and Fats Domino. At the jewelry store, Seldin and store employee Horner Williams became friends, and once Williams introduced him to this music, Seldin was hooked.

He remembers "sneaking R&B LPs into the house and playing them when mom and dad weren't home."

At age 13 he became the youngest member of the American Federation of Musicians and performed with his first band, The Naturals, at his 8th grade graduation dance. His studies at the Manhattan School of Music allowed him to visit a few big studios in New York

City. Here he would befriend acclaimed R&B drummer Bernard Purdie and learn much from him.

Seldin established himself as a top-notch promoter, booking regional and national acts in Monmouth County. Harry Ray, The Duprees, R&B singer Johnny Thunder and Bobby Lewis were just a few of the names Seldin worked with, along with The Motifs, a hugely popular band from Howell. One notable show occurred at the Matawan-Keyport Roller Drome in 1965, where he booked The Young Rascals right after they opened for The Beatles at Shea Stadium.

"I was 18 years old with a Jaguar XKE," recalls Seldin. "Some people hated me!"

With his name now firmly entrenched at the Jersey Shore and the money flowing, Stormin' Norman set out to entertain people

from the stage and not just from behind the scenes. He began in 1969 with the band Soul Set, but then quickly formed Joyful Noyze in 1970, with guitarists Hal Hollander and Billy Ryan, drummer Barry Lynn and vocalist Karen Cassidy. One fateful night at John Barleycorn's in Ocean Township in 1970 would have a profound impact on the shore music scene. It seemed that a certain young man was having car trouble and walked into the club to use the phone.

After the call, he approached the band. "Do you want to sit in?" Seldin asked, and Clarence Clemons said, "Sure."

This was the beginning of an amazing year for the band, working six and seven night a week. Unfortunately for Joyful Noyze, Clemons met Bruce Springsteen in late 1971. After Springsteen sat in with Joyful Noyze a few times in 1972, he asked Clemons to join him for his first tour and Seldin was not happy. Being the consummate professional, Seldin let it go and continued his successful career touring throughout the Northeast.

"You wouldn't believe how cold it is in Messina, New York, in the wintertime!" he said.

With Joyful Noyze eventually morphing into Steel Breeze, Seldin didn't slow down until a catastrophic event in 2002. During a performance, his aorta ruptured and he was rushed to the hospital for several hours of surgery. "The doctors gave me a less than 5 percent chance of survival," says Seldin.

Miraculously, he survived, but "my doctors insisted that I take it easy for six months. How could I do that? I've got to be back onstage!"

Returning in only five weeks, he realized that a change was needed.

"I had to put a resume together and I said, 'What's a resume?' I never needed one before!"

As fate would have it, Jacobs Music Company was looking for a salesperson in their Lawrenceville store in 2005. The Rinaldi family, owners of Jacobs Music, saw intrinsic value in this lifelong entertainer and he was quickly hired. Now selling products by Steinway & Sons, one of the most prestigious makers of pianos in the world, Seldin has recently been awarded the esteemed title of Spirio recording artist for Steinway's new high-tech Spirio player pianos.

He also released a double CD in 2008 entitled "Asbury Park, Then and Now," with music recorded as far back as the mid-'60s. A highlight is several tracks from 1980 with E-Streeters Roy Bittan, Clarence Clemons, Garry Tallent, Max Weinberg and Danny Federici playing alongside Seldin in the studio. These 45 songs clearly define the group known as "The Sound of Asbury Park." It is no wonder that Stormin' Norman is part of that special 35-member club whose names are spelled out on the S.O.A.P. plaque situated outside Convention Hall in Asbury Park.

In 2017, Seldin is still busy with regular gigs at venues like the Bay Pointe Inn in Highlands, as well as with his philanthropic endeavors for the annual Light Of Day concerts in Asbury Park, and donating his time and expertise for other big shows such as the benefit for the Humane Society of Tinton Falls, held at Monmouth University last summer. With help from performers Pam McCoy, Jillian McCoy, Mary McCrink, Ronnie Brandt and others, this concert raised over \$10,000 to assist the society in their mission to help pets in desperate need of attention.

Stormin' Norman Seldin has led an incredibly full life: a successful singer, songwriter, promoter, husband and father. In August he's off to Nashville to record a new song at Sony studios with famed producer Doc Holiday, proving that Norman is not done stormin' anytime soon.

BY CHRIS SPIEWAK

