

NEW AGE NOTES

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AN INTERVIEW WITH
WAYNE BETHANIS

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Wayne, your music is breathtakingly beautiful.

Thank you! That's my aim!

When did you start playing the piano and what is your musical background and training?



I started playing piano at the age of 5. My father bought my mother a piano as a gift; she started taking lessons, but ultimately, I overtook the keys and made the Baldwin Spinet my territory! A couple years later I began study with a serious teacher all the way until the end of high school. I moved the piano into my bedroom, made an audition recording for music schools, and was then air-lifted out of small town in New England with a piano scholarship to study at a conservatory in Los Angeles. The wheels of fate started cranking early, and after that I went all the way to a Ph.D. in music without a break!

Are your parents musical? And is piano the only instrument that you play?

Both my parents loved music, but the real influence came from my grandparents, all of whom I was so very close to. My grandfather was a Country & Western guitarist, and he gave me my first piano lesson. They were from the "Greatest Generation," and to make music was a great privilege and to be celebrated to the utmost.



I minored in Cello and Percussion in music school, but I was definitely meant for the ivories! Yet having studied the other instruments gives me keen insights into the orchestrations of my songs. I wish I could sit down now and play the cello the way I did in my music school days!!

You are of Greek ancestry. Have you visited Greece?

My father is Greek, but we never traveled to Greece. My grandmother went and brought us back all kinds of gifts. I used to bring Greek artifacts to “show & tell” in school. I accidentally broke a Greek vase at school, and my grandmother didn’t talk to me for a month! I don’t blame her. . . I tried to glue it back together so she wouldn’t notice. She noticed. . .



Did this ancestry come into play in any way in your musical background?

Definitely. My Mediterranean background not only exposed me to all kinds of dances, melodies, and rhythms, but also allowed me to believe that music is a very important part of life, just as it is in that region of the world. Musicians and teachers are given very high regards in that culture, and I grew up with that. I am of Greek, Hungarian, and Italian descent. . . with a splash of bagpipes from Scotland! My last name is pure Greek, and I have a wonderful fanbase in that region of the world.

Your music is characterized by its intricate melodies and soaring orchestral arrangements. Where do you find the inspiration for your music?

My inspirations are mostly melodic. I’ll hear someone say a phrase and it turns into a melodic lyric for me. For example, I drove through the border of Maine from New Hampshire, and there is a sign that says “Maine: The Way Life Should Be.” I immediately heard the melody in those words, and the song “The Way Life Should Be” came into being on the piano and was also the first song of mine I’d ever heard played on the radio. Most of the time you can link up the title of my songs with the opening melody because that’s how I hear music. After establishing the melodies, the song naturally unfolds with a beautiful piano arrangement – usually channeled as well. Many reviewers have termed my music as highly detailed and impeccably crafted. I hope that’s true, but usually it just flows out of me in a very organic, spontaneous way.

What is your music writing process?

I complete the piano arrangement, which is usually a self-standing work on its own. I then go into a rerecording studio and lay down the track with an engineer so we can get the best possible piano track. After this, the piano track is sent to the orchestrator who works with me to create the perfect arrangement for the song. Soloists are brought in to make appearances on the song, then the songs are grouped together into an album. My albums generally have a story to tell, one song after the other. It's "song journeys" that combine to make up an "album journey." That's how I usually roll.



You have a new album out, "Sonic Bloom." Tell us about this music. And the cover is quite interesting. Tell us about that too.

"Sonic Bloom" is the culmination of every album I've ever made. Hence the title: "Sonic Bloom." It's as if every attributable element of my musical style reached a peak on this album; the big melodies, the subtle piano arrangements or explosive piano pyrotechnics, the magnificent orchestrations. It's a *magnum opus*. Already the album cover is becoming a topic of conversations. The cover art is meant to depict a combustion

of musical ideas, almost looking like a crown, a crowning moment, and yet you'll see little cracks in my head where the ideas burst out, denoting that expression can be painful at times. For example, there are two songs on the album ("You Know I Will Remember You" and "My Father Never Saw Paris") that describe deeply personal chapters in my life. My album covers have always had a very lovely, elegant photo of me at the piano or a traditional image of me. I felt that the musical content of this album needed a cover that reflected that; album art sets the tone for the listener to enter the musical world of the artist. I love it.

Do you give piano lessons or tutor other artists? Tell us about this and some of your most promising artists.

For years I was the "Beverly Hills" piano teacher. I drove from mansion to mansion teaching just about everyone there! I was even approached by a major network to do a reality show

called “The Beverly Hills Piano Teacher” but, understandably, most of the parents didn’t want their kids on TV. I would have done it. . .

Nowadays, I coach many very accomplished singers and pianists, some of whom you’ve heard of. Teaching has always been a true gift to me, providing me steady income and the ability to share my teaching talent with wonderful people. The one-on-one relationship is different from my relationship with fans of my recordings and radio/TV shows. Both are beautiful and I am so lucky.

Do you tour or perform?

Absolutely! I give a great show with funny and interesting stories about each of my songs. Always a great time. I’ll be performing soon at various venues, and I’ll announce this as soon as it’s programmed.



Is there anything you'd like to add?

Yes. We’re entering an age of expression. Creative freedom will become the new materialism. Every human has the potential for genius, and the voices that persisted in telling us we “couldn’t,” “shouldn’t,” “can’t,” “too old,” “too late”. . .all of that is pure B.S. Get that monkey off your back and know that a higher power is now looking over you to enjoy your time here to the fullest of your creative potential. You don’t have to build a cathedral, but you can certainly follow your dream and know that you deserve it.

Where can people find your music and more about you?

Everywhere. I’m everywhere. www.waynebethanis.com