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ART

ICONIC ROCK

*Images celebrate some of the idiom's
most resonant personalities*

BY MICHELLE TRAURING

For decades, Steve Joester regularly woke up in strange towns where most of his downtime was split between overwhelming boredom and extreme relaxation.

But sandwiched between them lived the emotion he breathed for — the “intense, high energy” dripping from the likes of Mick Jagger, Bob Marley, Neil Young and Sting, to name a few of the musicians he captured through his lens in the 1970s and 1980s.

“It was all feel, an instrument,” the British-born photographer said of his camera during a recent interview, noting he plays a bad guitar — and not in the good way. “I followed the music to get the peak shots. I watched the whole show through the viewfinder to get the special moments.”

These days, he transforms his iconic images — which cemented his place in rock photography royalty — into mixed media works, which are currently on view in “The Golden Age of Rock ‘n’ Roll,” an exhibit split between the White Room Gallery in Bridgehampton and Karyn Mannix’s new East Hampton gallery, The Studio.

Mr. Joester said he considers himself lucky to have lived through the golden age. For those who didn’t, they are left with classic photos to help them imagine what that time was like and, in some cases, create derivative art from them.

For Amagansett native Valerie Suter, her inspiration almost always starts with a black-and-white image she finds online and the feeling it awakens within her.

Then, she grabs a canvas, or masonite, or paper, and gets to work.

“I’m usually moved to paint someone based on what I know of what he or she has given to the world, which in many cases happens to have caused the person to become famous,” she said. “I do also paint people who are not well-known, so choosing someone as a subject has much more to do with a personal feeling of wanting to know someone better because of his or her work, rather than because they’re a public figure.”

“Many of my subjects became famous because of what they’ve expressed — whether through music, writing, or another medium — and, in a very real way, self-expression often literally begins with your face,” she continued. “I’m fascinated by the way one’s face can express a vast range of feelings in extremely subtle ways.”

She was moved to paint David Bowie shortly after he died in January, and her portrait of Bob

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JIMI, by
Adoni Astrinakis

Rock art

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Dylan preceded that after she read his memoir, "Chronicles" — both of which are on view in East Hampton. Australia-based artist Adoni Astrinakis, who has made his American debut in Bridgehampton, also found himself drawn to Dylan, who was his first-ever portrait, excluding his earliest work.

"Well, when I was really little I used to pause Disney cartoons and draw my favorite characters from the TV screen," he said. "I guess that was my first introduction to portraiture. I might even have those drawings lying around somewhere."

He took an art hiatus from age 14 to 30, picking up a brush again just three years ago for none other than Dylan — "He's seemed to have lived his life according to his own rules and we've all been touched by it in some way," he said. "It's a very powerful thing."

"I'm drawn to timelessness," he added. "Obviously that's a relative term, but I just feel that some subjects and images have a certain unexplainable x-factor. I'll be captured by it and just have the instinct to want to capture it back. It's as simple as that. I actually like that it's difficult to define."

His three works on view at White Room are part of his "27 Club" series, which highlights musicians who died at age 27, among them Amy Winehouse, Kurt Cobain and Jimi Hendrix.

And each portrait has a secret behind it — quite literally. On the back of every canvas, Mr. Astrinakis wrote a quote pertaining to the fallen musician. "It's funny the way most people love the dead," the back of the Hendrix portrait reads. "Once you are dead you are made for life."

"I think rock 'n' roll was born as a natural reaction to the political and social climate of the time," Mr. Astrinakis said. "It was something that couldn't be contained. There was no gatekeeper, no rules and that's why it had so much impact. Now, there are so many avenues for people to express themselves regarding political and social issues, and with great reach. So the landscape has changed."

"I love hip hop and when it came up in the '80s and '90s, I think in many ways it followed in the footsteps of rock 'n' roll, in terms of where it was coming from emotionally," he continued. "There's a lot of cookie-cutter music out there now in all genres, but there's also some really exciting innovators that are challenging not only the industry but opening our minds



DAVID BOWIE by Valerie Suter.



PRINCE by Jason Poremba.

to issues that many of us are cushioned from."

Throughout the ages, music has always tightly intertwined with art, according to Southampton native Jason Poremba, whose line drawings of Prince and Bowie, as well as a duct-tape portrait of Madonna and broken record rendition of Elvis Presley, are on view in Bridgehampton.

"Ground-breaking music and art seem to be side by side through his-

tory," he said. "Recent years have brought street art to the forefront — in particular, street art-inspired pop imagery is pretty massive currently. Banksy and similar, well-known street artists have now catapulted street art into an acceptable art form by the masses."

In his own mixed-media pieces, Mr. Joester has welcomed the evolution of both art and music. In fact, he said he doesn't miss the rock scene of the



MICK by Steve Joester.

1970s and 1980s one bit.

"Been there," he said. "And at the time, it was right. It was pretty 'effin crazy! Enough said."

Receptions for "The Golden Age of Rock 'n' Roll" will be held on Saturday, May 28, from 5 to 7 p.m. at The Studio in East Hampton and Sunday, May 29, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the White Room Gallery in Bridgehampton. For more information, visit manix.studio and thewhiteroom.gallery.