

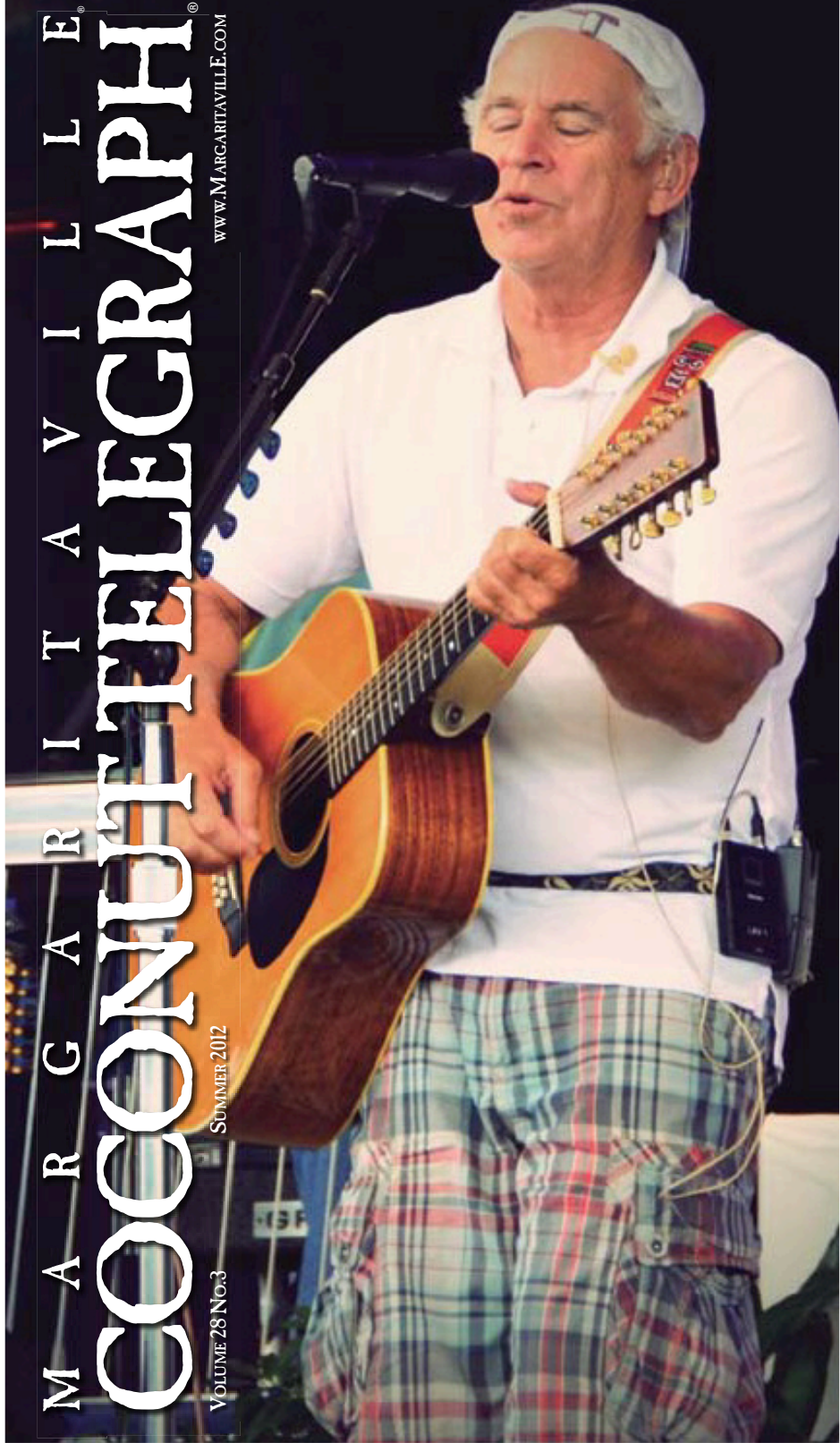
M A R G A R I T A V I L L E

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that there were any safety concerns, but a front entrance by the band may have delayed the show, if you know what I mean. And with the Big Guy in town for the 20th Anniversary MOTM performance the feeding frenzy was on. And they were just beginning to chum the waters here in Cigar City as well.

“You’ve got to go see the pool!”

It’s around 4 o’clock in the afternoon on a Friday, a time when I’m typically searching for a lost salt shaker or at the very least a couple of cold beers. Today however I was just clocking in, having gone through nearly half of my per diem on a cab ride across Tampa en route to the peculiarly named **1.800.ASK GARY** Amphitheater. Turns out it’s on the Florida State Fairgrounds not too far from “Cracker Country.” I’m beginning to wonder if I should have joined the tour at the, wait for it... **KFC Yum! Center** in Louisville, KY. Amphitheater naming rights are getting out of control. What’s next, Landshark Stadium...oh...they did?

**“You’ve got to go see the pool!
There are paddleboards all set up.”**

I’ve just arrived backstage at the venue and am chatting with the always affable Mr. Utley. Michael has seen it all; flying high while staying rooted at the same time. I last saw him in Key West in November, appearing at the annual Meeting of the Minds. He was coming around the corner from the parking lot, Mayer brothers in tow, blithely heading directly into a throng of laminate lassooed Parrot Heads. We made a quick U-turn around the back of the La Concha and onto Duval Street behind the stage. Not



**“You’ve got to go see the pool,”
Jimmy said. “I’ll get a golf cart for
you, someone will take you over.”**

Unshaven in a white polo shirt with pocket jammed cargo shorts Jimmy looks more like a Keys fishing guide than the reigning reefer, but with a twist of the rally cap, freshly tuned guitar and a wink in my direction sound check begins, *“Tuesday on the island, not much goin’ on...”*

Hours before Jimmy and the band arrive, the crew goes through their routine - literally lights, camera, action, and lots of it. These guys have been together for years, living, eating, sleeping on tour bus bunks together. There’s tons of lighting trusses and speaker towers. Miles of cables, and dozens of cases of gear deftly hoisted, joisted and lifted into place during the nightly backstage ballet. When the band appears their instruments are set up, guitars are tuned, percussion is in place and the confident crew calmly waits for dinner.

Typically the group covers several songs during this mini rehearsal. Lighting guys mark their cues, video guys have the backdrop dancing with images, and Jimmy, always the last to leave the stage, reworking song lyrics to fit the occasion, city and current events. An hour or so later everything is in place and I head out to the parking lot to check out the tailgaters, Cracker Country, and, oh yeah...the pool.



Who needs a stinking golf cart when there's a Landshark Cruiser with my name on it? Although unaccustomed to single speed and coaster brakes, riding a bike is well, just like riding a bike. This is an excellent tail gating venue and the Florida fans take full advantage. It looks more like a campground than a preconcert party. Coolers and grills abound and the smells are inviting. The coveted Cruiser and a backstage pass are my entry to anywhere and I don't know what I'm eating or with whom I'm eating, but it's delicious, and a twist of lime with that drink if you would please.

At last I find the paddleboard pool. And alongside it the stilt walking, balloon blowing, wise cracking duo of Wally & C.C. Jimmy had been in the pool earlier in the day, but now 3 very attractive yoga instructors are making a ripple in the pool as well as in the hearts of many Margaritaville males. It also explains why the aforementioned talented team chose this spot to entertain the crowd. The ladies are with **Fitness OnBoard**, a physical fitness service that offers classes in paddle boarding, yoga and Pilates, conveniently located on Pensacola Beach across the street from the Margaritaville Hotel. And now I remember why I exercise in the dark.

Next to the pool stands the Meet & Greet Tent and for want of a better word, a flock of CD bearing Parrot Heads queued for the Coral Reefers who will take time to chat, sign autographs and pose for fan photos. They have yet to show and I have plans with friends so I pedal back toward the stage and along come Nadirah, Doyle, Roger, Mac, et al riding in what is presumably my golf cart. A wave and a *What The!* from the band members - enjoy the ride guys, I've got some meeting and greeting of my own to do.



I'm looking for Radio Margaritaville's Steve Huntington and am pleasantly surprised to find his Sirius sidekicks Carson Cooper and JD Spradlin enjoying cocktails in the VIP Tent as well. The DJ's are recognized and offered drinks and compliments while I bask in anonymity and stand peacefully in line...these Skinny Margaritas aren't bad. We're outdoors at a Buffett concert in Florida in shorts in March in a VIP tent in a Margaritaville state of mind. In-deed.

Just minutes before most, if not all shows, Jimmy and Mr. Utley muscle in on Radio Margaritaville and put on their own version of an "on the road" review. Their banter is built on a 40 year friendship and, depending on one's generation, is likened to Hope & Crosby, Martin & Lewis or Cheech & Chong. Radio Margaritaville listeners are treated to this exchange that has replaced the more structured interview with Jimmy and other band members. This free form approach is much more fun – for the performers and fans alike. I was lurking in the corner listening and forgot for a moment that I was at work. And so was Jimmy – he signs off Radio Margaritaville, and struts on stage to gracefully greet his 15,000 or so guests for the evening, *"I think about the good times down in the Caribbean sunshine..."* The Florida State Fairgrounds and oddly named amphitheater become that one particular harbor, if only for a few hours. It's actually a nice venue with great sound, and come to find out Cracker Country is a rural Florida living history museum that attempts to preserve Florida's rural heritage.

And Carson, thanks for the ride.

Father's Day, June 17th.



Bonefishing Friends

Story & Photo by Corbett Davis, Jr.

Most anglers will agree one of the most elusive fish on the flats is the Bonefish. To catch a nice Bonefish on light spinning tackle would be an amazing and rewarding feat for most all anglers. But for others this game is much more complex. Without mentioning names I am lucky enough to know one or two of those exceptional anglers. These sportsmen love the hunt and challenge but hate defeat. Their A+ skills and personalities are characteristic of those who love adventure, our environment, the oceans and living life to the fullest. A few even have real jobs. Hell, some even sing for a living.

They are as complex in themselves as is the sport of stalking and catching a Bonefish. To increase and maximize the challenge, add exercise and great expectations, one particular friend does not even use a boat. Standing up on a paddle board doesn't look all that difficult, until you try it for the first time. Throw in a little wave action slapping at your bow and a brisk breeze blowing across the stern to take the contest up a notch. Now add a fly rod, sun screen, sunglasses, bug repellent, hat, drinking water, camera and underwater video equipment. The difficulty factor just increased substantially.

Now within casting distance, our angler has to stop paddling, position the board to cast, lay down the paddle very quietly while picking up the fly rod, clearing the line and beginning his cast. The fish looks happy and is feeding with his nose in the mud and tail slightly above the water's surface. The fisherman is worried the bone will hear the pounding of his heart as he begins his back cast. He knows he has to make the perfect cast with only one false cast. Too many casts will cause movement of his feet vibrating through the board onto the surface of the water and good-bye "Boney".

Corbett Davis is a good friend of Jimmy's and a jeweler in Pensacola Beach. Check out his latest creations on the following page.

- (A) Jimmy's Fishing Adventures T'**
Distressed front print, garment dyed. Ivory
M #9622, L #9623, XL #9624 \$24.95 XXL #9625 \$25.95
- (B) Tarpon Fishing T'**
"Gotta Stop Wishin', Gotta Start Fishin'". Harbor Blue
M #9010, L #9011, XL #9012, \$21.95 XXL #9013 \$22.95 3XL #9014 \$23.95
- (C) Bonefish Tie Tack**
Sterling Silver with a small emerald chip eye. Measures approx. 3/4". Shipped in jewelry gift box. Jewelry designed by avid fisherman and Pensacola Jeweler Corbett Davis.
#9782 \$29.95
- (D) Bonefish Necklace**
Bonefish measures a little over 1.5" and hangs from a 23" chain. Sterling Silver fish with an emerald chip eye. Shipped in jewelry gift box. Jewelry designed by Corbett Davis.
#9901 \$89.95