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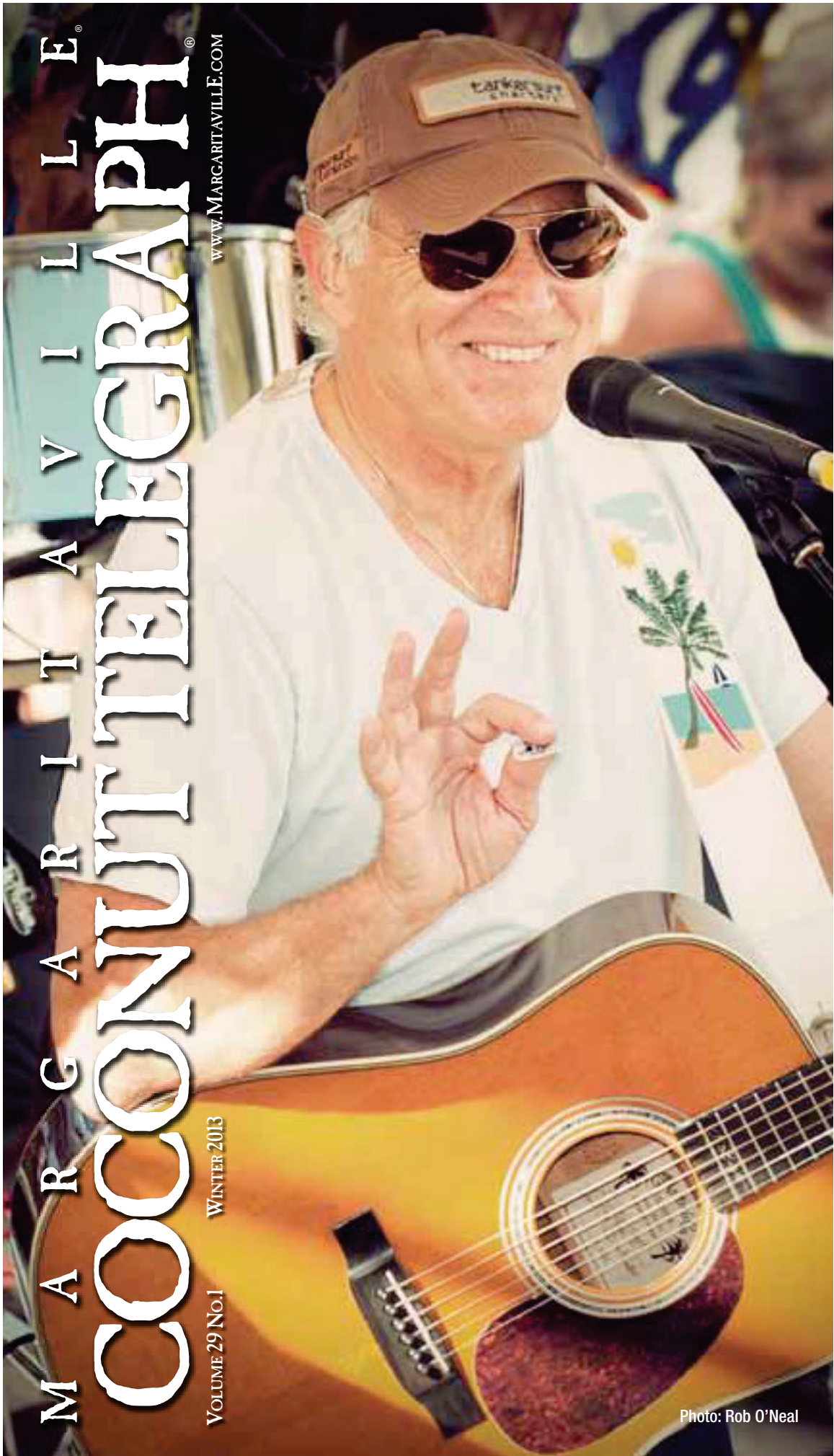


Photo: Rob O'Neal

Meeting the Mayor of Margaritaville

By Matt Hoggatt

I checked my bank account to make sure I had enough money to cover groceries and the entry fee. I was a little bit worried when I noticed that I had less than a hundred bucks, and payday was another week away. This is the sort of life you get used to when you are a cop by day and a bar-stool musician by night. I said "what the hell" though, and went ahead and entered the contest. American Songwriter Magazine holds this contest in each edition. You submit lyrics without music and receive a chance to win prizes and a write-up. I won 3rd place once before. It made me feel like a real songwriter to get that magazine in the mail every couple of months. This time was different. I couldn't remember what songs I had submitted. Maybe it was time for a long-shot. Maybe it was time for a song that worked well in the south Mississippi bars where I was playing. I could always send in the one about the redneck that married his cousin, or the grandmother that chewed tobacco. Not this time, this time I was sending in a song about Jimmy Buffett.

I was first introduced to Buffett by my parents on our annual family vacations we would take every summer. My first tape that's right, I said TAPE was Changes in Latitudes. My 13th birthday brought me the boxed set and I was hooked. That following spring break, we drove to Key West and visited Margaritaville, Captain Tony's and even snapped a few photos of Jimmy's House. That whole month, before and during our trip, I imagined what I would say if I got the chance to meet Buffett. The trip was amazing, memories were made, but Buffett never came. In 1996 someone broke into my truck and stole my entire Buffett collection. I hope it changed their life, I searched the pawn shops and used record stores for a year and my music never turned up.

As I became a singer/songwriter, it was a no-brainer to me why I started. I started because when I heard "A Pirate Looks at Forty" for the first time, I knew what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to be a barstool singer. Many years and beers, jobs, almost college degrees and a wife and kids later, I learned that a barstool singer is a tough job to maintain, and unless you can pay the bills with free draft beer, it's tough to keep the lights on without some kind of record to sell.

I started writing the song "Dear Jimmy Buffett" in my kitchen one day a couple of years ago. I was boiling a few shrimp and reminiscing about my Key West trip. The thought occurred to me, what I would do if Buffett dropped in

on one of my shows? What would I say to him? I'd most likely stutter or say something redundant about being his biggest fan...unless I could sing my thoughts to him, yea that would work for sure. Would I ask for his autograph? No...maybe something unusual...how about a record deal instead? Hell you only live once. Write that down.

I won first place in the American Songwriter Magazine lyric contest in 2012 and an article was published on me, as well as the lyrics to "Dear Jimmy Buffett." At 7:35 a.m. on a Sunday morning I received an email that said "Give me a call, J.B liked your song." The chain of emails that followed that day led me to a stage in Birmingham and Tallahassee alongside who I now call Jimmy, where I performed my song and he performed his new song too, "Dear Matt Hoggatt." 21 years later, I was in Key West again, but this time I was headlining at Margaritaville and staying at Jimmy's house. On March 15th, 1993 I arrived at Margaritaville as a tourist, but on March 15th 2012 I was a performer. I guess life really does imitate art. Now, I have a record available on Mailboat records entitled "Hotter than Fishgrease" and I wrote most of those songs in my Kitchen too. Did I ever tell Jimmy what I wanted to tell him when I was 13 years old? Nope.... I can't remember what it was that I wanted to say. What I can tell you though is, never stop dreaming.



"Dear Matt Hoggatt"
By Jimmy Buffett

Hey Matt Hoggatt, you got my attention
With your winning songwriter's tune
You're all over Facebook, Google and Twitter
And you just might be more famous soon

So, I figured I needed to get you this message
Fame may not last that long
I did it the way we both know is best, I put it down in a song

Matt, back when I started it was no big secret
I was digging through oysters for pearls
It wasn't the fame, it wasn't the fortune
It was simply about meeting pretty girls

Luck and hard work and a little bit of talent
I would say those were the keys
And never stop dreaming
And never stop scheming
And I hope you are as lucky as me

Yeah, I got those planes and a restaurant chain
And I lived through a live stage-dive, too
Hey Dear Matt Hoggatt, I did hear you calling
And your message it really got through

Yeah, I've got those planes and restaurant chains
I want to buy you a Landshark or two
Dear Matt Hoggatt, I did hear your cool song
And buddy that is how you got here
So, let's talk about that record deal, this year

The Beer is Too Cold, the Daiquiri's Too Fruityful

Lost Shaker of Salt Tour Inaugural Trip A Seasoned Success

In a world of sameness, a Margaritaville Travel Adventure stands apart. Climb aboard for a zany, unique adventure into a realm of interesting, unexplored pure fun. Heck, we're not off the beaten path, sometimes you can't even find the path to where we are going to take you. Laugh a lot, kick off your shoes, call the kid in you back for an encore, and bring some friends who haven't loosened up in a while. It's time to get into a Margaritaville state of mind.

Ken M: It was an adventure, not a tour, yet we experienced very interesting sites and also had a blast with the other members of the group. Group size was perfect and a great mix of personalities.

Anne E: This is one of the most relaxing, reality escaping trips I have ever been on.

Pam G: This has changed my thoughts about travel by bus and tour groups! The pre-planning info really made a difference. Also – never really sure if it's going to be “all that is promised.” It was and more!

Rick S: Total fun, educational (history of the area), and great bunch of people, your staff were excellent, professional, and above expectations.

Barb B: this was a great combo of planned and unplanned time.

Brenda S: The goals of the trip were given and means to achieve mapped out. I feel this has been a great trip and plan to do other trips with these leaders.

For future adventures please see www.MargaritavilleTravel.com



There's No Place Like Home when It's This Far Away

Kenny Chesney Loves Key West.

Rob O'Neal, Key West Citizen

The country music superstar has been visiting the island for several years and is no stranger to Jimmy Buffett's recording studio, wherever that is.

Over the past five years, Chesney has wowed crowds at Hog's Breath Saloon, Sloppy Joe's and now, for a second time, at Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville Cafe, 500 Duval St.

Following an afternoon of phone calls and texts beamed around the island, the much-decorated singer took the stage about 8 p.m. to the delight of a packed house of mostly Margaritaville employees and their families. And though the show was put together on a whim the night before, it wasn't long before the whole town knew about it.

About 1 p.m., rumors began to fly about a free acoustic show. Fred Cravitz, a recent island import from Albany, N.Y., had even heard about it.

“I got the call from my buddy back home,” he said. “It's all over Facebook.”

Chesney was flanked Wednesday night by Buffett's guitarist, Mac MacAnally, and Keith Gattis, and the three strummed acoustic guitars from the comfort of their bar stools while playing songs ranging from MacAnally's “Back Where I Come From,” which Chesney recorded in 1996, to Chesney's “Beer in Mexico,” and “Hemingway's Whiskey,” as well as the cafe's namesake classic.

But the true “lump-in-the-throat” moment happened when Chesney slowed things a bit, saying he didn't want to bring the energy down, but that he had received a call 20 minutes before showtime from a resident of Newtown, CT.

On the other end of the line was the mother of a young Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting victim. The grieving mother told Chesney her 6-year-old daughter would sing his 2002 hit “No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problem,” every morning before school.

Touched by the gesture, he then dedicated the song to the child's memory, pointing toward the heavens as he sang. The crowd was visibly moved.



Photo: Rob O'Neal