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■ Your Guide to the local music scene



Alan K. Stout
MUSIC ON THE MENU

Schpaybo: 'Stress' for success

As area musician Steve Spirko talks about his new CD, "Schpaybo," the conversation drips with enthusiasm, confidence and satisfaction. "This record is my life," says Spirko. "It's like my child. It's an artistic statement that I've made that I'd just like to share with people."

As a longtime member of various regional bands and a musical instructor and retailer, Spirko, — whose nickname is "Schpaybo" — has spent most of his life involved with rock 'n' roll. He began recording the new hard-rocking album in November 1995.

"It was supposed to take three months and it ended up taking 11," Spirko says. "I went to one studio first and just wasn't happy with the results I was getting.... I moved to Sound Investments in Scranton in March, and on the first day there I got more done in eight hours than I did in three months at the other studio. I was just thrilled that there was a studio in the area of that caliber."

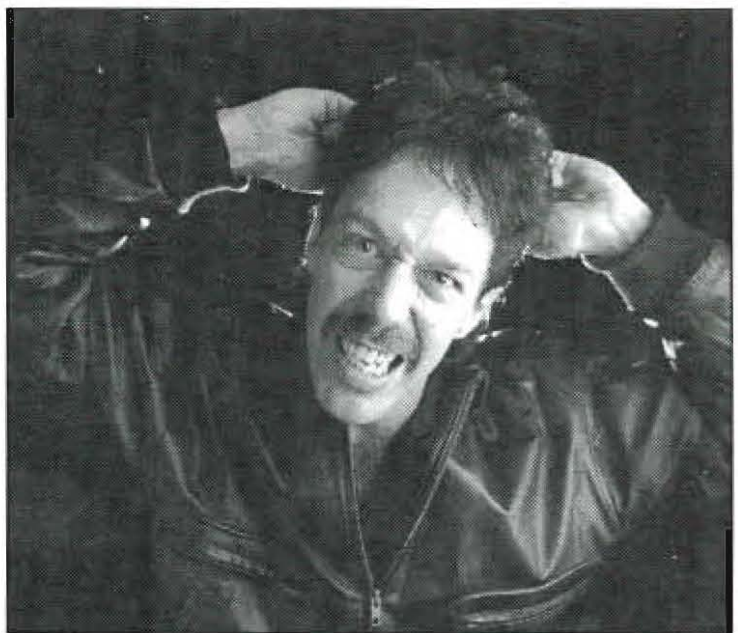
Caliber is something Spirko mentions frequently throughout the interview. His main objective throughout the project, he says, was to produce a major-label sounding, high-quality product.

"My first goal when I set out to make this record was to make it sound like a record rather than a demo tape," he says. "It seems like so many people will settle for something they really don't want.... The more I learned in the studio, the further I raised my goals."

The album was produced by Spirko and engineered by Tom Borthwick and Joe "Wiggy" Wegleski of Sound Investments. Spirko plays guitars and drums and sings lead vocals on most tracks. Guest musicians included N.B. Bronson, drums; Chris London, lead and slide guitar; Jody Vincent, vocals and lead guitar; Richard Rock, bass; and Len "E," bass.

"They're very talented musicians," Spirko says. "They gave the performances of their lives.... Everybody had a total positive attitude about making this record and making it professional in every sense."

A native of Stroudsburg, Spirko, 41, began playing drums at age 10 and began playing professionally at 13. He says seeing the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show inspired him to learn an



Steve Spirko's new CD, 'Schpaybo,' is available now.

'Schpaybo'
Available at
The Music Store Inc.,
104 S. Main St., Old Forge.
Info: 451-1522

instrument, and that the song "Wipe-out" from The Surfaris first turned him on to the drums. He began playing guitar as a second instrument about 15 years ago to enhance his song-writing ability.

Over three decades, Spirko has played throughout The Poconos in rock bands such as Red Weather, The Bon Swaado Brothers, Mountain Jam, Exchange, Cruiser and The Chris London Band. He's also a drum instructor, and manages The Music Store Inc. in Old Forge. He was the winner of a national Z-Rock "Drum-Off" in which entrants played drum solos live on the air over the national radio network.

Spirko says he's delivered "Schpaybo" to every local radio station and has sent it to various industry contacts throughout the United States and Europe.

"You just don't give the record to somebody and they pass it on to somebody else and all of a sudden you sign a record deal," he says. "It's going to be a lot of hard work to get behind this record and do everything I have to do to get it played."

Some who have heard it are listeners of WZMT-FM's "Cellar Full of Noise," which airs Sundays at 8 p.m. and is hosted by DJ Mike Naydock. "Stress" made its debut on the program on Dec. 22, Spirko says, and it's scheduled to be played again this Sunday. Another track, "Heartshock," will be played Jan. 12.

Spirko says some of the songs on the new album were written as long as 10 years ago and have been rearranged. "Stress," the first single or emphasis track, is a newer composition and was actually written in the midst of recording the album.

"It was a riff that was going through my head for about a year," he says. "I could never get it to sound

right on the guitar. One day I just picked up the guitar and played it. The song wasn't even going to be on the record, and that was the one that — with all first and second takes — just came out right.

"I felt everybody could relate to the words of the song," he adds. "You hear so much about stress now in life.... Every time you turn on the TV, everything is stress, stress, stress."

Spirko's inspiration for lyrics comes from everyday life experiences. To him, the most important element in songwriting is keeping things positive.

"The way music is today, there's too much negativity and profanity," he says. "It's just overall dejection. Why would you want to write a song that makes people depressed? You can come home from work and open your mailbox and get depressed looking at the stack of bills in there. To me, music should make people happy and want to have a good time and take their minds off their problems. It should be uplifting.

"I'd rather affect people in a positive way. I wanted to make an upbeat, fast-moving, cool record without any negativity in it.... It plays like a party. It's like a traveling amusement park in a little box. It slams you again the ceiling and doesn't let you down to the final note."

Win 'Schpaybo' CD

The Times Leader has five CD copies of 'Schpaybo' that readers can win. Simply send a postcard by Wednesday, Jan. 8, to 'Schpaybo' CD contest, c/o Alan K. Stout, The Times Leader, 15 N. Main St., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711. Winners will be chosen through a random drawing.

Cellar Full of Noise

This week on The Cellar Full of Noise, Mike Naydock will be playing original material by Schpaybo, Teddy Young, The Mange "and other stuff." Showtime is 8 p.m. Sunday on WZMT-FM (97.9) — 98 Rock. This week's TV version of Cellar Full will feature Sick Tickets. Airtime is 11 p.m. Saturday and 10 n.m. Sunday on WYT.N-TV 35