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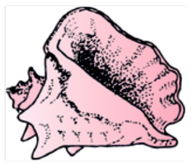

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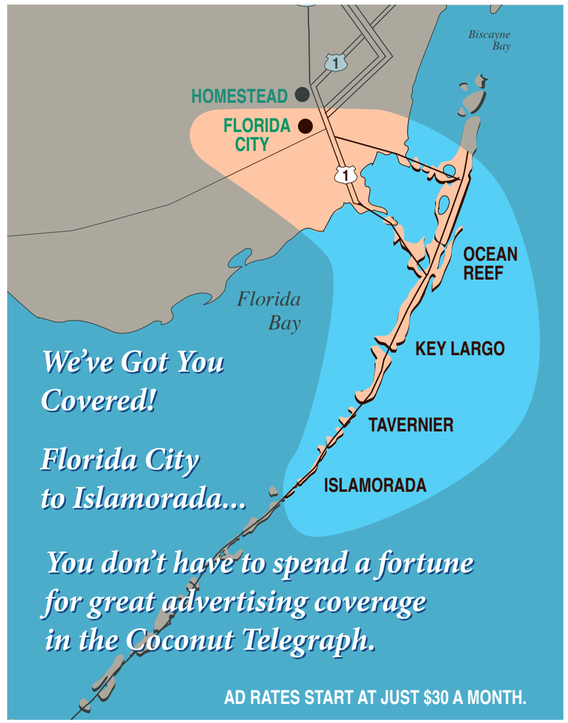
Zen Beatings - Luke Sommer Glenn Blog 3
Critters: Oleander Moth by Carol Ellis 4-5
World Toilet Day is November 19th 6
November Happenings: Key Largo & Islamorada Libraries 7
Artist of the Month: Manny Leone 9
Food Bank Donation Tips 10
Celebrate with Friends 11
Getting from Here to There - Keys Map Page 12-13
The Day the Turkey Broke the Speed Limit 15
Key Largo Locator Map Page 16
Tomb of the Black Pharoah by ChristopherMichael 17
Business in the Keys 18
Daily OM: When the Universe Throws a Curve Ball 19
Coco-Nut Funnies 20-21
Adopt a Key Largo Animal Shelter Pet 22
Conch Characters / Around Town 23



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Zen Beatings — A blog by Luke Sommer Glenn

Luke Sommer Glenn is a local entertainer and Conch Character.

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I've played with the same bass players for years at a time. For example, Brent and I were in the Photons for 12 years or so. We had a few side guys but we had a lot of drummers over those years.

My previous drummer, Kelly (RIP), was running Cadillac Jack's on the Mims/Titusville no man's land. He hired the Photons for a five-night stand through an agency. Our band, Martial Law, had recently imploded.

Having nothing else to do, I helped out around the bar every night. I got to know the guys over a few smokes out back and sitting in with them, adding more tunes each night.

Like most good bands at the time, they kept losing guitar players to the real-job-and-responsibilities world. I ended up in the band because I was always available. I didn't want a life-sucking day job.

The agency had circuits all over America with opportunities for bands that included rooms, one drink per set, a meal and no drug test. That appealed to my wanderlust.

After a few years, the drummer and the rhythm guitar player decided they liked South Dakota and stayed for the winter. The drummer had become an insufferable asshole, not just the hole, the whole ass—so his departure was welcomed.

Brent and I came back to Florida with no intention of being in a band with a drummer that antagonized the other guitar player to the point of the guitarist pulling a gun. Still better than a day job.

After the gun episode, the bass player and I roomed together so the other two wouldn't kill each other. We always got along. He was a Canadian, the least offensive people ever.

My buddy, RJ, hooked me up with a job in Orlando and that's where we found our new drummer, Rob G, a young guy with natural talent. The company gave us a rehearsal room in the shop and many good times were had while we got Rob up to speed on the (song) arrangements.

It was all fun and games until marriage and kids came along—another case of responsibilities breaking the band. Brent had been married for a few years, then I got married, but it was Rob G's wife spitting out kids that ended the lineup.

We had a skinny Kentuckian called Hard Head who played with marching-band sticks, BMFs. He started his morning with a Bud Light, shot of Jim Beam and a cigarette. One of the drivingest, loudest drummers.

At the end of the night, he would make himself a sandwich and a bag of chips, then pass out in front of the TV.

We got booked in a less-than-desirable room in southern Alabama, the Four Sons Lounge in Opp. "City of Opportunity," said a sign coming into town. It's a railroad lawyer's last name, actually.

Our then-drummer, Stan, felt the gig was beneath him and refused to go. We called the agency and told them we had to cancel because we could not find anyone willing to do it.

"You guys just go on up there, I'll find you a drummer."

I figured he had to know a lot of cats that could play so the three of us made the 12-hour drive from central Florida. We arrived and set up. No drummer. It was only 5PM; we didn't start until 8PM.

After being reassured over several phone calls, this kid in a ragged-out '70s Camaro stuffed full of drums showed up. We met him at the bar and commenced to getting him set up....

As he banged around on the drums, I became heavy hearted. The drums sounded like shit, they weren't properly tuned, the cymbals were dull and cheap-sounding, like tin instead of hammered bronze.

His movements were uncoordinated and sporadic. Zero rhythm. I looked at the other guys and they had the same sinking feeling expression I had.This guy can't play.

Fucking agent bullshitted us when he said he had heard the kid play.!

I put the drum mics away —no need making his crappy sound and bad playing any louder than it had to be. It was the only time I didn't mind sharing time with a DJ. We did a half hour, then the DJ did a half hour, back and forth all night; the DJ took the last hour.

We tried to find songs with a beat he could keep. "Just hit the kick and snare, boom, chick, boom, chick," we kept telling him. He couldn't even keep simple time. It was bad. We had to play as if he wasn't there; he just flailed along thinking he was doing great.

We got a proper drummer for the next gig somewhere in Mississippi. A few days later the phone rang and it was someone asking me if I would recommend the "kid," whatever his name was.

I wasn't quite awake but I could hear the kid in the background telling the guy on the phone what to say.

I said, "He's a nice guy but he needs to spend some time in the woodshed."

"Wh- What do you mean?" I heard the kid ask.

"Shush," the voice tells the person in the background. "What does that mean?"

"He needs to start at the beginning and learn the rudimentary drum licks, man."

"Rude-rud-a what?" I heard the kid ask in the background.

I answered before the voice on the phone could repeat the question.

"You know—paradiddles, flams, rolls, drags and ruffs. And he needs to use a metronome to keep time with while practicing," I said.

I could hear him complaining over the phone, He thought he was good— bunch of know-nothing old guys, he said, using much harsher terms.

Shit, I wasn't even 40 yet!

He was miffed that we didn't pick him up. His friends told him he was good, his mother told him he should go on the road and play the drums ...in a town far, far away, well out of earshot.

It's easy to find a person who wants the gig but few that are willing to put in the effort to learn the material. What can you expect from someone who beats on things & calls it music?

Note: We had to abridge this article for space. See Luke's online blog for the full story! www.lukesommerglenn.com