

## AUSTIN FEDERATION of MUSICIANS: The HEART of TEXAS MUSICIANS

**AFM** member **James “Jamie” Desautels** and **Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Bogatz** (Local 433, Austin, TX) came up with an idea: to share with AFM members the adventures of a fellow member currently on the **GRAMMY** ballot, and a day in the life of a local Secretary-Treasurer. They held an informal Q and A session at the Austin Federation of Musicians' office. Here are highlights from their conversation:

**JD** What does a typical day at the Austin Federation of Musicians look like?

**NB** We are currently working on our Free Concert Series. We wrote a contract with the City of Austin worth \$23 000. We are now in the process of securing matching sponsor funds. The next step is talent booking, advertising, and media promotion. We are excited that once again our venue is the Bob Bullock Texas State Museum! We collaborate with other community organizations, such as non-profits or fellow unions. We invite them to come down and have booths at our Free Concert Series live shows. This helps to educate the community on what we all do. The Free Concert Series is from October through May each year. On a daily basis here at the office, we are also managing traveling contracts, recording contracts, financial obligations, office overhead, membership growth, and reporting back to National.



**JD** What drives you to work in music with musicians?

**NB** *I've always had a love of music. I think everybody has a love of music.* I started at Austin Community College, and I didn't think I would get to work in music. I found their Commercial Music Management Program, and graduated with an Associates Degree. I also have a Tech Degree in Recording Arts/Post Production from Media Tech.

**JD** Austin is known as a music city. What do artistic collaborations represent for Austin?

**NB** Anytime you go out, you're meeting people. Any sort of networking can help you. This, combined with an on line presence, helps to reach more people. ***Networking puts money in your pocket.***

**JD** Let's talk about HAAM (Health Alliance for Austin Musicians).

**NB** HAAM is a great organization! They help to provide musicians with affordable health services. ***We have to keep our musicians healthy in order for them to play at the symphony, or on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, or at***

**your wedding.** We use the Free Concert Series as a platform to raise money for HAAM. It all comes back to keeping musicians healthy and working regularly! *We need Musicians to be the Live Music Capital of the World!* We aim for not only a sustainable music community, but a thriving one!

**JD** What is your favorite aspect of this gig?

**NB** It's two things: *I get to meet all kinds of musicians and hear all their stories*, and the networking in that, plus the Free Concert Series. This is a full year of planning, and I get to employ musicians, and show Austin has all kinds of music. It's family oriented performances, so it allows people to come out and we say thank you for your support of our community of musicians. Thank you for being fans. At the end of the concert season, and all the work that goes into it, it's satisfying because people appreciate it; whether they are musicians, organizations that have booths, or whether they're music fans.

**NB** Now I have some questions for you. What drew you to Austin?

**JD** Growing up in Calgary, I watched '**Austin City Limits**', the TV show. Back then, I was fascinated by the many different musical styles featured on the show: Rock, Country, Jazz, Hip Hop, World



Musicians, even occasionally Classical. That's what drew me in: all these different styles. Fast forward a couple decades, and here we are. Now it has grown into the ACL Festival, and beyond. The TV show is heading into its 40<sup>th</sup> season!

**NB** How do you feel going from a Classical side to a Rock n Roll side? You have your hands in a lot of different genres, how do you prepare yourself?

**JD** It's a mindset shift thing. The aspect of a rock, country, or studio situation I enjoy is the focus on memorization. That's a big

thing. The other difference is in musician numbers. In a classical music performance with full orchestra and chorus, you have 70-200 people on stage. ***If you think about an orchestra, they are producing live music with 70 people on stage all year long. That's pretty amazing!***

**NB** Congratulations for being on the **GRAMMY** ballot! Tell me about your nominated song '**ONE BIG CRAWFISH BOIL**'.

**JD** Thanks! We're grateful to be on the ballot! It's a song I wrote with Larry Chaney and Dallas Burrow. Our band name is **TRYTONES**. It's a **COUNTRY** fiddle song that celebrates Cajun culture.

**NB** How do you feel in your career when you have traveled so much? Is it stressful, is it rewarding?

**JD** I've always enjoyed traveling, so it's a thrill! There's an exhilarating quality to it. There is a common

ground with musicians that have traveled a lot. There is a discipline required. You have to keep your body and mind in the game: giving yourself the proper fuels for the show. Different cities all the time can be big mental adjustments. These are all things that are outside of a controlled educational environment. I didn't know what it looked like, or felt like, until I did it. Now I realize that the musical component is what gets you there, but being there, you've got to manage all these other aspects.

**NB** What do you have in common with other musicians that have cross platform experiences like yours?

**JD** We probably all seek to find new sounds. I've always aligned myself with singers. There is something special collaborating with a singer. It's a human voice thing. To write lyrics and music with people is a rush!

**NB** How has the union helped you in your career? And what would you say to the younger generations of musicians?

**JD** Collective bargaining agreements, money for TV/recordings, networking, gig referrals, pension, professional community of peers, mailbox checks. For the younger generations: invest in yourself with the union. I say “when you monetize, you legitimize!” You are the best person to invest in your musical future and career by joining the union. ***Then you are aligning with a similar community, with resources and support.***