

Jason Newsted: Art Out Loud

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An energetic and highly amplified electronic rock music having a hard beat, that is how Merriam-Webster defines heavy metal. If there was a viable channel in which to personify this description, then Jason Newsted would surely be one of its embodiments. A six-time Grammy winner, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame artist, Newsted—also known as “Jasonic”—is the former bassist of the band that arguably bred the metal genre—Metallica. From 1986 to 2001, Newsted forged his name in the annals of rock history with his beefy, fast-paced, and at times, nostalgic bass lines, as Metallica took the world by storm. Eternal staples like “Enter Sandman,” “The Unforgiven,” “Nothing Else Matters,” “One,” and “Fuel,” are but a brief sampling of the songs that were hatched during Newsted’s tenure. By singing lead on a few songs during the band’s live performances and astounding countless audiences with his remarkable bass solos, Newsted stamped his musical footprint. He even took over lead vocals for a whole show at the Kentucky Speedway during the 1999 Summer Sanitarium Tour, while frontman James Hetfield recovered from injury—and fiercely delivered.

“I got to join my favorite band,” Newsted remarks. “I got real, real f***** lucky and got to travel around the world five times. Just imagine being in a dreamlike state for 15 years—that is the only way I could sum up what the experience entailed. Suffice it to say, I had too much fun.”

Upon meeting Newsted, my impression of him was that, although he did not have his characteristic long hair that flailed aggressively during his early days with Metallica, he is still as spirited as ever; a character's character. He exposes his protean persona between soft-spoken interactions, as well as bouts of song, historical data, and art lore. Then, he intermittently plasters on a whimsical look that fuses attitude, madness, and facetiousness while flashing the immortal metal horns as an exclamation point to his story, and then he carries on naturally. We are in his studio home in Jupiter, Florida. The house itself doubles as an enviable man cave/music recording studio with no windows, and a progressive dual art workshop (one side is Newsted's, the other is his wife's) in a Florida room that lights up every which way—the house displays an unintentional, yet balanced contrast of light and darkness. Having moved on from the extensive global tour life, Newsted's current situation allows him to explore his personal vocations in a [slightly] more organized fashion. He splits his time throughout the year between California, Michigan, Montana, and Jupiter. Out of the four locations, Jupiter is where Newsted finds himself lingering the most, because it's where he claims to find the necessary solace and focus to open the floodgates of creativity at a pace that agrees with him.

“Every year, I spend more and more time here,” Newsted points out. “While being on the road and going through the craziness that is the big league touring life for 15 years, this is where I would come to get away from it all. This is where I like to be to calm down and reset. I see myself staying here year-round soon.”



Newsted's tie to Florida is deep-rooted, and it extends much further than Jupiter. At age 11, hailing from Niles and Kalamazoo, Michigan, he was first

exposed to Florida when his family would drive down to Zephyrhills to visit Newsted's grandparents, Lloyd and Delma, who, at the time, had purchased a mobile home plot in the western Florida town. Upon his retirement some years later, Newsted's father, Robert, actually moved to the same trailer park in Zephyrhills to watch over Lloyd and Delma. As Newsted, the young boy with gargantuan musical aspirations, became acquainted with the west side of Florida, witnessing a majestic sunset or two off the coast of Bradenton, he knew very little of the fact that he'd be back on the east coast of the Sunshine State years later as a respected tour-de-force of the rock world. Later on, while touring with Metallica, mostly around Florida's east coast, Newsted continued to visit his family whenever he had a day off. It gave him great satisfaction to see Lloyd and Delma's personalized gold and platinum Metallica albums on their walls to show their pride for their grandson. During this time, he also recalls driving around the freeways and Florida Turnpike back-and-forth to visit his grandparents towards the end of the 90s and frequently passing by the Jupiter exits and feeling an inexplicable pull.

"There was something subliminally appealing and dreamy about living in a place called Jupiter," Newsted affirms. "Some kind of fascination."

To date, Newsted has been part of the Jupiter community for nearly 20 years.

"For my wife, Nicole and I, this is the only place that we've ever found a sense of community in," affirms Newsted. "We feel strong within our circle of friends, and the close-knit community that we see in businesses and restaurants always shows us great respect. It's an immeasurable, invaluable component that fuels me; it makes me want to increase my contribution to this town. Jupiter has a good-natured center that, if you allow it, will pull you right in."

The simplicity of the town and its close proximity from point A to B fits Newsted like a glove. He emphatically claims that while he is here, he only needs to travel three miles from wherever he is to fulfill his needs: Restaurants, grocery stores, the beach; all is available within a three-mile span – and he'll usually make these short trips on his bike. Newsted also correlates the water bodies that surround Jupiter to a happier, healthier, and more connected form of living, which is the main thesis on one of the many books stacked on his nightstand: *Blue Mind* by Wallace S. Nichols.

But whether it's in Jupiter or any other location, this legendary artist finds himself—or loses himself, for that matter—he is always fueling his creative engine, and the rest is all ink on paper, and more currently, paint on a canvas. Newsted discloses his mantra, "I have to do something everyday that proves that I was here." He continues, "Whether that's one painting, five paintings, six drawings, one song, six songs, or an improvised jam with some local guys on one too many beers, I'll make a record of it. I record everything and have been doing so [in many formats] since I was 20. I want to be able to have the

record of that particular day because it shows that's what I did for that day, and if I ever need to refer to it or relive it, it's there."



Newsted has reinvigorated his relationship with the acoustic guitar. He currently sings and plays guitar for Jason Newsted & The Chophouse Band.

For Newsted, painting is a passion that has the capacity to reach the same heights as music does. In 2004, Newsted suffered a harrowing shoulder injury after trying to catch a falling bass amp head during a recording session; surgery was needed and a lengthy recovery process ensued. During this time, Newsted recalls needing to get “what was inside, out” and, while developing an ambidextrous way of doing things, turned to painting. He feels as though his “colorful and crazy paintings” matched the “colorful and crazy music” that he had been creating at that point in time. It turned out that putting brush to canvas wasn’t a mere distraction for Newsted to pass the time as his shoulder healed, for when it did, his hunger for producing paintings did not subside. He honed this talent that was seemingly “always there,” and after crafting a number of pieces that he deemed worthy of showcasing, Newsted had his first art gallery show opening on May 5, 2010 in San Francisco, California.

Although he took intermittent hiatuses from painting over the past decade, he still managed to churn out numerous original pieces. He has recently reinvigorated his drive for painting, and he credits this to the encouragement from art world impresario and fellow Jupiter resident Nick Korniloff. Newsted now creates visual art daily, guided by a sleepless muse. Newsted’s wife Nicole is also an artist and—judging by the setup of their Jupiter studio—the duo shares their creative space, working alongside each other in a positive pulse, feeding off each other in order to materialize what they visualize in their minds. As I peruse through a few of Newsted’s past and contemporary

works, I notice one distinguishable pattern: A multi-layered orgy of colors that often features mythical creatures stemming from Newsted's imagination and certain words and phrases that resound so loudly that the artist feels they need to be repeated for full acknowledgement. A style of his own, to say the least.

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As far as art showings go, Newsted's schedule is filling up. He showcased his "RAWK" Art Exhibit at Art New York last May with resounding success; selling 90 percent of displayed works to prominent and established international collectors. In the short term, his exhibit will be open for the public from December 1, 2017 to February 3, 2018 at The Robert M. Montgomery, Jr. Building of the Cultural Council of the Palm Beaches in Lake Worth. Newsted's exhibit will also have a major presence at Art Miami on December 5, 2017. A percentage of the earnings he accrues from the sales of his paintings directly benefit the Perry J. Cohen Foundation (PJCF), as Newsted is a firm advocate of the efforts that the Jupiter-based local charity puts forth towards environmental education, the arts, and boating safety.

"As I find myself thrust back into the art world, I look forward to the challenge and I am, once again, enthralled," Newsted says. "My eyes have been reopened by seeing other artists work, visiting studios and galleries, and speaking with creators and curators that are really making things happen. It's an unexpected, yet welcomed twist in one chapter of my story, and I am very excited and grateful that I get to share my art and contribute to a great cause at the same time."

This is one of many of Newsted's philanthropic acts. In the last year, Newsted performed three benefit concerts in the Jupiter-Tequesta area geared to aid the Music Program at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Tequesta. Moreover, since 2004, he has been an official supporter of Little Kids Rock, a non-profit organization that provides free musical instruments and instruction to children in underserved public schools throughout the United States.

"I know the feeling of learning how to play an instrument and develop a relationship with that instrument," Newsted says. "It's one of the best feelings there is, and to be able to put instruments in children's hands so they can obtain that feeling means the world to me."



Art imitates Newsted: Newsted will be exhibiting his current “RAWK” collection throughout South Florida in the coming months.

Newsted knows all about long-standing relationships with instruments. Prior to and after Metallica, his destiny has always been linked with performing and recording music, be it on bass guitar, rhythm guitar, or drums. His trajectory is marked by an array of rock ‘n roll gems: From Flotsam and Jetsam to Metallica, from Echobrain to Voivod, from NEWSTED to WhoCares, from Rock Star Supernova to, albeit briefly, collaborations with Ozzy Osbourne and Tina Turner. Nowadays; however, Newsted has nurtured a relationship with the acoustic guitar and assumes the role of lead vocalist for a folk group he formed known as Jason Newsted & The Chophouse Band. The name is derived from Chophouse Records, a label which Newsted founded in San Francisco, California in 1992, and where NEWSTED’s Heavy Metal Music LP was recorded. The Chophouse Band’s repertoire includes folk cover songs from legendary acts of the likes of Johnny Cash, George Jones, Tom Waits, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, and Jason Isbell.

“The primal nature of these songs that we play [with The Chophouse Band] is what makes it all so attractive to me,” Newsted points out. “After being in these loud, earth-shifting bands to stripping back from all the hundreds of thousands of watts of amplifiers and effects, I realized that there’s ways to get to the purity of the music quicker. I went to the other end of the spectrum to rediscover myself and learned a new style of playing with the acoustic guitar, and it just feels right to play these songs live. It’s a fun, joyful vehicle to get our ya-ya’s out.”

According to Newsted, the project remains fresh in nature, and the group’s band members are ever-changing and so are the instruments utilized on

stage. Although they don't have a consistent touring schedule, and this is due in part to Newsted's external engagements, The Chophouse Band has played shows all over the country, and in the Jupiter-Tequesta area, they've played at popular local spots such as Blowing Rocks Marina's Tiki 52 and at the Corner Cafe and Brewery's open mic night. I was able to learn, however, that The Chophouse Band will be playing at the Cultural Council of the Palm Beaches on December 1st, 2017, which is the opening night of Newsted's two-month-long exhibit for the Cultural Council. Meanwhile, Newsted has begun writing his own original songs to not only add to the set list of The Chophouse Band, but to hopefully record an album in the near future.

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Despite the fact that heavy metal runs through his veins, Newsted has found a new type of propulsion in modern art and the acoustic guitar. He continues to live life just as loud while pursuing interests that keep him inspired, motivated, and true to himself. No matter what the future might bring, one thing is certain, Newsted will continue working towards growth and happiness for he and his family within the same path that leads to the creation of art in all of its splendorous facets... *and nothing else matters.*

“RAWK” Art Exhibit

For those in the South Florida area interested in checking out Jason Newsted’s “RAWK” Art Exhibit, his schedule is as follows:

Dec 1, 2017 - Feb 3, 2018

Newsted exhibits his collection at the The Robert M. Montgomery, Jr. Building Main Gallery of the Cultural Council of the Palm Beaches (open to the public).
601 Lake Avenue, Lake Worth, FL 33460
(561) 471-2901 | www.palmbeachculture.com

Dec 5 - 10, 2017

Newsted’s art exhibit at Art Miami
(see website for ticket information).
One Herald Plaza @ NE 14TH Street, Miami, FL 33132
1-800-376-5850 | www.artmiamifair.com

Jan 11 - 15, 2018

Newsted shows his art at Palm Beach Modern
+ Contemporary art fair.
824 S Dixie Hwy @ Okeechobee Blvd, West Palm Beach, FL 33401
(305) 517-7977 | www.artpbfair.com

Feb 15 - 19, 2018

Newsted exhibits his collection at Art Wynwood
(see website for ticket information).
One Herald Plaza @ NE 14TH Street, Miami, FL 33132
(305) 517-7977 | www.artwynwood.com

Feb (TBD)

Private showing of Newsted’s art at Arcature
Fine Art Gallery
318 Worth Avenue, Palm Beach, FL 33480

(561) 805-9388 | www.arcaturefineart.com