

People & Places

Music

'I want to bring joy'

T-Pain talks book, embracing legacy

NEW YORK, Nov 27, (AP) — There may be a plethora of adjectives to describe music superstar T-Pain, but boring is never included. So when the idea of writing a book was presented, he knew what he would not be writing: an autobiography.

"I want to bring joy to other people. I don't want to kill the mood. I want people to feel good when they read what I do," said the "Bartender" singer. "So, I felt like why not do something that people can actually get something from?"

The "Buy U a Drink" singer is transitioning from consumer to instructor with his new book, "Can I Mix You a Drink?" Co-written with professional cocktail expert and beverage executive Maxwell Britten, the book, which features gorgeous photos of cocktails on sleek black pages, is filled with 50 alcoholic drink recipes inspired by Pain's music and career travels. He also offers brief, personal anecdotes before each recipe, many named after some of his biggest hits.

"When I go to these different places, all these different things that I probably didn't think I would like, I ended up liking when it was done correctly in the region and from the culture that I was getting it from," explained the "Blame It" harmonizer. "It helped to make this book pretty broad."

In an interview with the Associated Press, T-Pain talked about creating the book, his passion for music, and if he's finally ready to embrace his position in history as a musical trailblazer. Answers have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: How hands-on were you with "Can I Mix You a Drink?"

T-Pain: I wanted to make sure that it wasn't just a book of like screwdrivers, so I definitely was hands-on with a lot of it. I put in my weird requests... the I'm So Hood drink, I requested that be served in a paper bag. The 5 O'Clock, I made sure that I had ice cream inside of it, like it was a beer float, basically. I had a song called "Red Cup" — one of the recipes is called Red Cup. It had to be served in a red cup — it's the exact portions, and you actually pour into the lines on a red cup.

AP: What's your favorite drink?

T-Pain: It was the I'm Sprung because I was drinking wine at the time. But now, it's I'm So Hood, just because of the sheer ridiculousness of it being served in a brown paper bag... Seeing that paper bag just brings light to my day." (laughs)

AP: Can you tell us about your new music? "I Like Dat" has already hit 22 million views on YouTube, and you just dropped "I'm Cool With That."

T-Pain: It's fun to not have to chase anything, I'm actually having fun making music again, and it's not a job. It's actually still my passion. It's not something that I have to do to survive. It's just something that I'm doing with my hobby in my spare time, and if it comes out dope, then why not let the world hear it?

AP: You're independent, so were you surprised at the success of "I Like Dat"?

T-Pain: Absolutely. Like I said, I'm not chasing the No. 1 spot, I'm not chasing money, so, you know, seeing the exposure and seeing the acceptance that it's getting, yeah, that's amazing... The fact that people are still vibing with T-Pain in 2021 — yeah, I love it. That's a dream come true. People would kill and die to last in the game this long.

AP: Eventually, you'll have an album called "Precious Stones." What can we expect?

T-Pain: The reason it's called "Precious Stones" is because I feel like the world has been flooded with just the same white diamonds — like, white diamonds, meaning a metaphor as just the same kind of music all over the place. Everybody's making the same music, everybody's doing the same video... I look at jewelry like that and I'm like, "Why are diamonds so expensive if there's so many of them?" Everything got diamonds in it, everything — but what you can't find a lot of is those precious stones.

AP: You've received a lot of criticism in the past for popularizing Auto-Tune, but have you begun to realize how much you're actually appreciated by your fans and music lovers?

T-Pain: I see it sometimes, man. And it does break through the negativity a lot... As an artist and as a public figure, we always see the negative first. That's just what happens first. When we sit down and actually relax and chill out and stop trying to impress everybody, we do get to see the appreciation. And that's where I am in my life. I'm actually chillin', relaxing and sitting back and enjoying it.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: The Academy of Country Music awards show is getting a NFL-sized upgrade next year as it moves to a new home at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas on March 7.

The ACM and Amazon Prime Video, along with production company MRC Live & Entertainment, announced on Thursday the new date and location for the 57th annual awards show, which will be exclusively live-streamed on the streaming service.

The ACM Awards show was held for several years in the MGM Grand Arena prior to the coronavirus pandemic. It moved to smaller venues in Nashville, Tennessee, this year and last year due to the pandemic. The new 65,000-seat Allegiant Stadium is home to the Las Vegas Raiders.

"We can't thank the city of Las Vegas and Allegiant Stadium enough for welcoming us for the 57th Academy of Country Music Awards — a party so big only a stadium can hold it," said Damon Whiteside, CEO of the Academy of Country Music, in a statement.



T-Pain



President Barack Obama, (right), presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to composer Stephen Sondheim during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House, on Nov. 24, 2015, in Washington. Sondheim, the songwriter who reshaped the American musical theater in the second half of the 20th century, has died at age 91. (AP)

Obituary

He reshaped the American musical theater

Legendary composer Sondheim dies

NEW YORK, Nov 27, (AP) — Stephen Sondheim, the songwriter who reshaped the American musical theater in the second half of the 20th century with his intelligent, intricately rhymed lyrics, his use of evocative melodies and his willingness to tackle unusual subjects, has died. He was 91.

Sondheim's death was announced by Rick Miramonte, president of DKC/O&M, Sondheim's Texas-based attorney, Rick Pappas, told The New York Times the composer died Friday at his home in Roxbury, Connecticut.

Sondheim influenced several generations of theater songwriters, particularly with such landmark musicals as "Company," "Follies" and "Sweeney Todd," which are considered among his best work. His most famous ballad, "Send in the Clowns," has been recorded hundreds of times, including by Frank Sinatra and Judy Collins.

The artist refused to repeat himself, finding inspiration for his shows in such diverse subjects as an Ingmar Bergman movie ("A Little Night Music"), the opening of Japan to the West ("Pacific Overtures"), French painter Georges Seurat ("Sunday in the Park With George"), Grimm's fairy tales ("Into the Woods") and even the killers of American presidents ("Assassins"), among others.

"The theater has lost one of its greatest geniuses and the world has lost one of its greatest and most original writers. Sadly, there is now a giant in the sky. But the brilliance of Stephen Sondheim will still be here as his legendary songs and shows will be performed for evermore," producer Cameron Mackintosh wrote in tribute.

Six of Sondheim's musicals won Tony Awards for best score, and he also received a Pulitzer Prize ("Sunday in the Park"), an Academy Award (for the song "Sooner or Later" from the film "Dick Tracy"), five Olivier Awards and the Presidential Medal of Honor. In 2008, he received a Tony Award for lifetime achievement.

Dominant

Sondheim's music and lyrics gave his shows a dark, dramatic edge, whereas before him, the dominant tone of musicals was frothy and comic. He was sometimes criticized as a composer of unhumable songs, a badge that didn't bother Sondheim. Frank Sinatra, who had a hit with Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns," once complained: "He could make me a lot happier if he'd write more songs for saloon singers like me."

To theater fans, Sondheim's sophistication and brilliance made him an icon. A Broadway theater was named after him. A New York magazine cover asked "Is Sondheim God?" The

Guardian newspaper once offered this question: "Is Stephen Sondheim the Shakespeare of musical theatre?"

He offered the three principles necessary for a songwriter in his first volume of collected lyrics - Content Dictates Form, Less Is More, and God Is in the Details. All these truisms, he wrote, were "in the service of Clarity, without which nothing else matters." Together they led to stunning lines like: "It's a very short road from the pinch and the punch to the paunch and the pouch and the pension."

Taught by no less a genius than Oscar Hammerstein, Sondheim pushed the musical into a darker, richer and more intellectual place. "If you think of a theater lyric as a short story, as I do, then every line has the weight of a paragraph," he wrote in his 2010 book, "Finishing the Hat," the first volume of his collection of lyrics and comments.

Performances

Early in his career, Sondheim wrote the lyrics for two shows considered to be classics of the American stage, "West Side Story" (1957) and "Gypsy" (1959). "West Side Story," with music by Leonard Bernstein, transplanted Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" to the streets and gangs of modern-day New York. "Gypsy," with music by Jule Styne, told the backstage story of the ultimate stage mother and the daughter who grew up to be Gypsy Rose Lee.

It was not until 1962 that Sondheim wrote both music and lyrics for a Broadway show, and it turned out to be a smash — the bawdy "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," starring Zero Mostel as a wily slave in ancient Rome yearning to be free.

Yet his next show, "Anyone Can Whistle" (1964), flopped, running only nine performances but achieving cult status after its cast recording was released.

It was "Company," which opened on Broadway in April 1970, that cemented Sondheim's reputation. The episodic adventures of a bachelor (played by Dean Jones) with an inability to commit to a relationship was hailed as capturing the obsessive nature of striving, self-centered New Yorkers. The show, produced and directed by Hal Prince, won Sondheim his first Tony for best score. "The Ladies Who Lunch" became a standard for Elaine Stritch.

The following year, Sondheim wrote the score for "Follies," a look at the shattered hopes and disappointed dreams of women who had appeared in lavish Ziegfeld-style revues. The music and lyrics paid homage to great composers of the past such as Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and the Gershwins.

In 1979, Sondheim and Prince col-

laborated on what many believe to be Sondheim's masterpiece, the bloody yet often darkly funny "Sweeney Todd." An ambitious work, it starred Carou in the title role as a murderous barber whose customers end up in meat pies baked by Todd's willing accomplice, played by Angela Lansbury.

"Sunday in the Park," written with James Lapine, may be Sondheim's most personal show. A tale of unpromising artistic creation, it told the story of artist Georges Seurat, played by Mandy Patinkin. The painter submerges everything in his life, including his relationship with his model (Bernadette Peters), for his art.

Three years after "Sunday" debuted, Sondheim collaborated again with Lapine, this time on the fairy-tale musical "Into the Woods." The show starred Peters as a glamorous witch and dealt primarily with the turbulent relationships between parents and children, using such famous fairy-tale characters as Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood and Rapunzel.

Sondheim was born March 22, 1930, into a wealthy family, the only son of dress manufacturer Herbert Sondheim and Helen Fox Sondheim. At 10, his parents divorced and Sondheim's mother bought a house in Doylestown, Pa., where one of their neighbors was lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II, whose son, James, was Sondheim's roommate at boarding school. It was Oscar Hammerstein who became the young man's professional mentor and a good friend.

He had a solitary childhood, once in which involved verbal abuse from his chilly mother. He received a letter in his 40s from her telling him that she regretted giving birth to him. He continued to support her financially and to see her occasionally but didn't attend her funeral.

Renamed

In September 2010, the Henry Miller Theatre was renamed the Stephen Sondheim Theatre. "I'm deeply embarrassed. I'm thrilled, but deeply embarrassed," he said as the sun fell over dozens of clapping admirers in Times Square. Then he revealed his perfectionist streak: "I've always hated my last name. It just doesn't sing."

In 2010, the year he turned 80, Sondheim had to endure a public fuss when a Broadway theater was being renamed in his honor.

At a ceremony outside the 1,055-seat auditorium on West 43rd Street, the composer looked sheepish by the time he got to the podium following gushing words from admirers that included Patti LuPone and Nathan Lane. He also offered up a window into his psyche.



Taiwanese director Ang Lee arrives at the 58th Golden Horse Awards in Taipei, Taiwan, Saturday, Nov. 27. Lee is guest at this year's Golden Horse Awards, one of the Chinese-language film industry's biggest annual events. (AP)

Variety

MILAN: Bryan Adams tested positive for COVID-19 upon arrival at Milan's Malpensa Airport, ahead of the unveiling of the 2022 Pirelli calendar that he photographed.

The Canadian rock 'n' roller disclosed the positive test in an Instagram post that included a photograph of him in a room after being tested and then sitting in an ambulance, being taken for a more reliable PCR test. He was seated normally, wearing a surgical mask.

"Here I am, just arrived in Milano, and I've tested positive for the second time in a month for COVID," Adams said in the post. "So it's off to the hospital for me." He thanked fans for his support.

Adams, who also enjoys a career as a photographer, has shot the 2022 Pirelli calendar, after initially being engaged to shoot the 2021 version that was canceled due to the pandemic. Adams was expected to appear at in-person press events promoting the calendar Sunday and Monday, but that was now uncertain.

Normally the unveiling of the Pirelli calendar is a gala event attended by those who appear and other VIPs, but this year was already a scaled-back affair due to the ongoing pandemic, with a tight guest list for an evening event.

Adams chose as his subjects for the calendar called "On the road," other musical talents, including Iggy Pop, Cher, Jennifer Hudson, Saweetie and St Vincent. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Dave Hickey, a prominent American art critic whose essays covered topics ranging from Siegfried & Roy to Norman Rockwell, has died.

His books, including "The Invisible Dragon: Essays on Beauty" (1993) and "Air Guitar: Essays on Art & Democracy" (1997), won him legions of fans beyond the art world cognoscenti.

His stylish prose, brash criticism of taste-making institutions like museums and universities and equal embrace of works considered both high- and low-brow left a lasting influence on a generation of artists and critics.

"There is no one like him. He belongs in the canon of American nonfiction prose," his biographer Daniel Oppenheimer wrote in "Far From Respectable: Dave Hickey and His Art," published last June.

He died Nov. 12 at home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, after years of heart disease, said Libby Lumpkin, an art historian who was married to him. He was 82.

David Hickey was born in 1938 in Fort Worth, Texas, and grew up moving around Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and California. After hopping through graduate school programs, he dropped out and opened a contemporary art gallery in Austin, Texas. He moved to New York in 1971, where he ran more galleries, edited the publication Art in America and wrote for the Village Voice and Rolling Stone magazine. His work and interests immersed him in an artistic com-

munity that included Andy Warhol, Dennis Hopper and David Bowie.

Hickey later moved to Las Vegas to teach at the University of Las Vegas, Nevada. In the essays published in "Air Guitar" about how art should fit into broader culture, he championed Las Vegas as the most American of American cities for its detachment from traditional social hierarchies.

America "is a very poor lens through which to view Las Vegas, while Las Vegas is a wonderful lens through which to view



Adams



Cher

America. What is hidden elsewhere exists here in quotidian visibility," he wrote.

Hickey challenged the idea that the Strip's neon lights were somehow inauthentic, pushed back against notions that Las Vegas entertainment was culturally irrelevant and "especially enjoyed a good smoke and gambling spree at Eureka Casino on East Sahara Avenue, where he was often spotted with a cigarette while jabbing at slot machine buttons," according to a Las Vegas Review-Journal obituary. (AP)