

# Paul Rolnick

## Steering the Ship

By **Peter Haas**



Above  
Paul Rolnick  
playing a ripping guitar  
no doubt  
at band rehearsal  
in 1968

At left  
Paul trumpeting  
the NFA  
Marching Band

**D**id you happen to catch *Auto-Tune The Munsters* on television this past Halloween? A special episode, "A Man for Marilyn," aired over COSI-TV (NBC) into 80 million households. Why special? Its familiar characters—Herman, Grandpa, Lily, Butch—didn't speak their lines. For the first time, they sang their parts; the first time that a vintage television show was transformed into a television musical, using the original dialog but turning it into melodies, re-telling the whole episode in song. It was a technical, creative sleight of hand, co-created by a multi-talented, multi-award-winning record producer, director, recording technician, mix engineer, songwriter, and session singer. They're all Paul Rolnick.



Paul's body of work was just honored as he was named recipient of the 2020 Jamie deRoy & friends ASCAP Award, presented yearly by the ASCAP Foundation.

"The *Munsters* episode is an example of what can be done with today's technology," says Paul. "When you recorded artists in the old days you could spend weeks getting a great performance. Today you can manipulate and finesse it. If someone is flat, or sharp, or phrasing is not quite meshing with the band, you can adjust it. The most important thing is to get the artistic intention right. I can adjust the rest. Over the years, with the varied work I've done, I've become pretty fearless about knowing what singers have in mind with a performance, and I can help them produce the best version of it."

Above  
(from top)  
Paul Rolnick with  
Barry Kleibort

Marilyn Maye  
Kkea Blackhurst  
Kevin Dozier  
Dawn Derow  
Billy Goldenberg

Opposite page  
(from top)  
With wife  
Karen Mason

Paul in performance  
Karen Mason  
Michael Orland  
Larry Gatlin

These skills are evident on a theme song Paul just co-produced for an unusual client: Avery Taylor, a female pro-wrestler. Says Paul: "I was contacted by my colleague, songwriter and jazz artist Randy Klein. He felt I had the right musical

experience to come up with a wrestling ring entry song for Avery. We collaborated on the writing of the song and the arrangement. I sang the lead vocal and harmonies. We had

a bunch of singer friends sing the last double chorus which made the sound massive.

I played most of the instruments.

Randy played keyboards.

Then we got Alex Skolnick from the band

Testament to play a ripping lead guitar. It's my first commercial release of a heavy-metal rock song! Avery is wrestling in Florida, and she loves the song!"

Music, in many forms, has been a major part of Paul's life since his boyhood.

Growing up in New York State's Hudson Valley, he played solo trumpet in school bands from grade school, continuing into high school, and then at Columbia University, where, as a freshman, he was solo trumpeter in the orchestra.

There, too, he started writing songs and came to the attention of the producers for folk-rock singer Jim Croce. They signed Paul to a record deal. "The music we made was never released," says Paul today,





"But I learned so much and could see that music was where I wanted to go, and New York was where I needed to be".

That's where he is.

"There are a lot of albums that performers want to make," Paul comments. "My role, as a producer, is to draw on the knowledge I've acquired as a performer and director, and make it all work. I steer the ship, keep everything alive, keep it vibrant, keep the artists on the same page, balancing all the talent with the job that has to be done."

"Then, once we're finished recording in the studio, I take it home and mix it. Interestingly, mixing is a more recent skill I've developed—and in fact, I'm now being retained to mix recordings that other people have produced."

Paul continues, "Along the way to my acquiring careers, people have found me."



One recently is Dawn Derow, who had come up with an album idea with Jeff Harnar and the late Barry Levitt. It's called *My Ship: Songs of 1941*; it's a lovely foray for her into the world of jazz and swing. She sought me out and said, 'You're the person to help me make this recording.' I am—and we are."

Many others have sought out Paul. He wrote and produced theme music for the American Red Cross home video, *First Aid—The Video Kit* (CBS/Fox Video), and composed and produced the theme and music for the ABC-TV specials, *Embracing*

*Judaism; Grateful Am I, To You; and To God's Ear.*" He wrote and produced theme music for the Nostalgia Network's *Dancesport: American Couples and American Families*; the theme to Comedy Central's

*Afterdrive*, sung by Denis Leary and Bill Kimble; the theme to Nickelodeon's *Kid's Court*; the Emmy Award-nominated theme to the TV show, *Let's Have Fun*; the theme to the Style Network's *Modern Girl's Guide to Life*; and themes and music for CBS Sports and NBC Sports.

Paul wrote, performed, and produced CLIO

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## PAUL ROLNICK

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Award-winning IDs for Nickelodeon; IDs and themes for Nick Jr. and Nick at Nite; and logos for CBS/Fox Video, Playhouse Video, Key Video, and Shochiku Video (Japan).

As a singer, his voice has been heard

// Karen and I  
went on our first date.  
It was great!!  
We were engaged  
soon after.  
That was 30 years ago  
—and we're  
still here. //

on numerous commercials and industrials including Avis, Buick, Cadillac, Coors Light, Ford, Micro Machines, Hasbro, Hertz, McDonald's, Transformers, and The Milford Plaza. He was also a featured performer singing on *The Guiding Light*, *As the World Turns*, *All My Children*, and *Another World*.

Paul has won numerous awards for songwriting.

"Cold Enough to Cross," co-written with Henry Cory, won the 2006 Bistro Award.

"It's About Time," co-written with Shelly Markham, won the 2013 MAC Award.

"Shoot For The Moon," co-written with

Dennis Scott, won an Emmy nomination and has been recorded by Roger Whittacker, Lene Siel, Rene Bondi, Karen Mason, and is the title cut of Paul's current album on Zevely Records. He is currently writing songs for *The Young and the Restless*, and has high hopes for two new songs: "Jerusalem," a prayer for peace; and "Coming Home," a salute to war vets co-written with Bob Levy.

Further, Paul has produced and/or mixed recordings for—or had his songs performed by—such personalities as Judy Collins, Jimmy Buffett, Jeff Bridges, Willie Nelson, Julie Wilson, Steven Schwartz, Shawn Colvin, Larry Gatlin, Rosanne Cash, Don McClean, Stephen Stills, Ani DiFranco, Steven Brinberg, Julie Gold, Eric Michael Gillett, Joan Baez, Ari Hest, Kathie Lee Gifford,

Craig Carnelia,  
Andrew Lippa, Loni Ackerman, Billy Stritch, Maltby & Shire, Paul Evans, Jamie deRoy, Kevin Dozier, Gretchen Reinhausen, Stearns Mathews, Andrea Marcovicci, Shelly Markham, Valerie Lemon,

Uptown Express, Lorna Dallas, Jim Speake, Jana Herzen, Charnett Moffett, Deborah Tranelli, Billy Goldenberg, Maureen Kelley Stewart, and



Ervin Drake...  
And Karen  
Mason.

"One evening," recalls Paul, "I was taking a seminar across the street from Steve



comments during the show; a few days later, my friend called to tell me that the woman thought I was cute, and did I want her number? I said 'Sure!'



Opposite page  
(from top)

Jamie Lawrence  
Billy Goldenberg  
Sheldon Harnick  
Thom Shepherd  
Alex Rybeck  
Karen Mason

this page  
(from top)

Paul Rosnick  
Rex Benincasa, Tedd Firth  
Barry Kleinbort, PR  
Karen Mason  
Bob Renino

And performing with  
Karen Mason

McGraw's in New York City. When it was over, a friend invited me to see the show there. We were seated in the back. Next to us was this couple: a man—songwriter Brian Lasser—and a woman companion. She and I exchanged a few funny

I followed up and phoned. That woman was Karen."

At the time, Karen was in *And the World Goes 'Round*. Since then, she's been on Broadway (*Sunset Boulevard*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Hairspray*, *Wonderland*), performed symphony dates and concerts, and has recorded seven solo albums on Zevly Records, Karen and Paul's label. Says Paul today "Karen and I went on our first date. It was great!! We were engaged soon after. That was 30 years ago—and we're still here." ○

Editor's note

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