

ENJOY! MUSIC

Hyde Park legend's bio takes your breath away

My head is spinning. Again. I just reread the official biography of Hyde Park native Jeff Armstrong, which literally took the wind out of me.

Armstrong has one of those names we see week in and week out in the ENJOY! club listings. He plays flamenco guitar at the Rio Mexican restaurant in Poughkeepsie each Friday evening.

I started to wonder just how much more there was to Armstrong when I attended an event this summer at the Hyde Park Station. Armstrong was performing there with his band, Night Train. When I started interviewing people for a story about the event, they told me to speak with the president of the Hudson Valley Railroad Society — whose name was, you guessed it, Jeff Armstrong.

The trains aside, let's look at the ways Armstrong enjoys music.

- He is currently:
 - an associate professor of guitar at Marist College.
 - director of Marist Guitar Ensemble and Chapel Choir.
 - adjunct lecturer at Dutchess Community College.
 - director of DCC Jazz Band and Guitar Consort.
- "I like that age group because they're really into music," Armstrong said of college-age students. "They're passionate about it."
- Now, consider Armstrong's educational background, in addition to the degree in business administration and marketing he got from the State University of New York at New Paltz and the associate's degree he got from Dutchess Community College:
 - an MFA in music theory and composition from Bard College.
 - a bachelor's degree in music theory and composition from SUNY New Paltz.

Other notable accomplishments include composition study with college professors Meyer Kupfermann, Joan Tower and Richard

JOHN W. BARRY



ON THE RECORD

Tietelbaum. Tower, a Bard professor, received three Grammy nominations Dec. 6.

Armstrong has also released 10 CDs of original material and is working on an 11th CD. He has two daughters and is a New York Giants fan.

And — he owns and plays a theremin, which you might know for the sound it added to "Good Vibrations" by the Beach Boys and all those old, scary, B-movies of horror starring Vincent Price.

Music, Armstrong said, is "the medium I like to use to express myself."

He opts for music over other means of artistic expression because of "the rhythmic drive. It has a lot of technical aspects to it; it's very math-oriented."

Armstrong plays just about everything, from Delta blues standards by Robert Johnson to classic rock standards by Stevie Ray Vaughan, Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix, and everything in between.

"I grew up with a blues background and a classic rock background," Armstrong said. "I've got an older brother. I listened to his music, to his records back in the day — Kiss, ELO, Foreigner, Steve Miller Band."

Armstrong is set to play at 7 p.m. today and Saturday at The Rio Mexican Eatery and Bar, 5-7 Raymond Ave., Poughkeepsie. Call 845-486-5119 for information.

John W. Barry is the music writer for the Poughkeepsie Journal. Write him c/o Poughkeepsie Journal, P.O. Box 1231, Poughkeepsie, NY 12602, call 845-437-4822, or e-mail jobarry@poughkeepsiejournal.com.

M
N
T
T
th
se
pl
a c
we
tra
pla
ing
Be
dri
an
fri
gu
re:
ab
sc
wa
off
'80
set
ni
me
wh
da
yo
ye:
all
shi
ur