

# Lucy Jinx, muse for auto song writing

by Trina Berlo

Who is Lucy Jinx?

I am Lucy Jinx.

Lucy Jinx is a cult but you have to be in the band in order to be a member.

Yes, Lucy Jinx is a band.

But it's so much more.

I will try to explain.

During a recent show at TNT in Collingwood, **Chuck Baker** and **Tony Burgess** along with their Lucy Jinx bandmates demonstrated in front of a live audience their synergistic creative process of automatic songwriting. Baker launches in on the guitar and Burgess croons without any pre-planning and somehow it works. It just works.

Automatic writing is a process in which the writer channels an unknown entity while giving themselves over to the creative force.

Lucy Jinx is that entity.

While sharing the very first Lucy Jinx Flamethrower pizza from Creemore Pizza Co's Stayner pizzeria, where Burgess works part time, he and Baker explain that Lucy Jinx is the titular character in a trilogy written by **Pablo D'Stair**. They met D'Stair when he travelled from Pennsylvania to film a show by an earlier iteration of the band.

"He thought it was an underground sensation," says Burgess with a raised eyebrow.

Named after a **Bob Dylan** lyric: "Mr. Jinx and Miss Lucy, they jumped in the lake; I'm not that eager to make a mistake," they now use D'Stair's novel as a spell book of sorts from which they draw inspiration but neither has read.

"And we don't think we should," says Burgess.

Lucy Jinx is a character in the book and in the music. The band often refers to 'she' or 'her' when talking about the creative entity.

Most of the band's songs are created in Baker's home studio in Stayner, named The Pit, where they meet weekly. They hit record and invent original music fully formed out of thin air without any advanced planning. When one of them isn't feeling it anymore they tap out, solidifying the song in perpetuity, Baker explains. Once they tap out that song is not altered. It can be enhanced but, with few exceptions, it will never be changed.

Baker said he will then listen to the recordings while walking his dog and look for the gems, which they teach to the rest of the band at weekly rehearsals.



Glenn Hubbers photo

Stayner residents **Tony Burgess** (left) and **Chuck Baker** perform at TNT Bar in Collingwood with their band Lucy Jinx, showcasing their unique creative process of auto song writing.

With a new band of talented musicians who are very supportive of their unique process, Lucy Jinx has a new album, *When They Win*, which also features **Keith Elliot, John Hall, Kyle Dreany** and **Skip Wamstecker**.

The first track Flamethrower is the inspiration for the pizza. Having impressed promoters at the TNT show, they are also on the bill for the Four Winds Music Festival in Durham July 12-14, with headliners Bahamas, Joel Plaskett and Great Lake Swimmers.

Baker, a high school teacher by day, is well known in the area for his many musical endeavours including his solo work. Burgess is an award winning author and screenwriter known for *Pontypool Changes Everything*, *Idaho Winter*, and *People Live Still In Cashtown Corners*.

Baker was cast in one of Burgess' most recent films, *Cult Hero*, for which they were nominated for a 2023 Canadian Screen Awards for Achievement in Music for original song, and by coincidence features a flamethrower.

He and Burgess have been collaborating like this for years, since meeting when their children were in daycare together. Burgess recalls being at an event where the daycare children were being entertained by a man in a full bunny suit when he began to realize that the bunny was very talented. He called out a request and the bunny launched into The Clash without missing a beat. Before long, they were sitting around making up songs in the

backyard, and the neighbours would come by to listen.

As they hone their craft, their song catalogue's keep/toss ratio is getting up around 50/50. Because the songs tend to be short they are able to play many per set, and once got close to 100 songs in a single performance.

"It's exciting," says Baker, "Because I write songs excruciatingly slow."

They describe Lucy Jinx songs as "glam rot, crunched epics and scratched anthems in a hot pop maze. Lucy Jinx plays songs that you remember but have never heard."

Both visual artists as well, Burgess and Baker are able to give themselves over to the creative process.

Baker says to impose restrictions on the process can fuel creativity, just by trusting and relying on the agreed upon structure.

"Now we can anticipate each other," said Baker. "If you do something enough your body takes over and it becomes... automatic."

"You end up making things that you wouldn't normally make," says Burgess.

While sharing the pizza with lots of spicy toppings, Baker and Burgess volley reasons why the process wouldn't work without the other.

"I couldn't do it without Charlie," says Burgess.

"Tony is a natural melody writer," says Baker, adding that he has in the past sought out lyrics from Burgess.

Lucy Jinx hopes to be back on the TNT stage this spring. Stay tuned @lucyjinxband.



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