



THE LEGENDARY HORSESHOE TAVERN CELEBRATES ITS 70TH BIRTHDAY

**SPECIAL 'HORSESHOE 70TH CONCERT SERIES' RUNS
SEPTEMBER 26 TO DECEMBER 31**

**FIRST SERIES OF B-DAY SHOWS ANNOUNCED FEATURING
BILLY BRAGG – 54.40 - HOLLERADO**

**NEW BOOK 'The Legendary Horseshoe Tavern - A Complete History'
By David McPherson TO BE PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 23, 2017**



Link to above photo: <http://bit.ly/2hk6n2Z> | Photo credit: HS Tavern

(August 01, 2017 - Toronto, ON) **The Legendary Horseshoe Tavern** marks its **70th birthday on December 6, 2017**, and will celebrate with a series of very special concerts billed as *the Horseshoe 70th Concert Series* kicking off **Tuesday, September 26** and running until **December 31**.

The series features notable artists doing multiple night 'underplay residencies', as well as one night stands by artists who have performed at the famed Toronto venue in previous decades.

Affectionately known as "The 'Shoe" by locals, the opening night of the series features celebrated singer, songwriter and activist **Billy Bragg**, a leading figure of the anti-folk movement of the 80's. Bragg will perform solo and electric sets over **3 consecutive nights from September 26 to 28** including songs from some of his most seminal releases.

The **September 26th show** will feature Billy's current live set with the trademark chop and clang guitar playing that we've all come to love, the **September 27th show** will feature music from *Life's a Riot with Spy vs Spy, Brewing Up with Billy Bragg, Talking with the Taxman about Poetry*, and the **September 28th show** will feature music from *Workers Playtime, Don't Try This At Home*, and *William Bloke*.

Tickets to the licensed/19+ shows go on sale **Thursday, August 3 at NOON ET** and will be available via **Ticketfly, Rotate This, Soundscapes, and Horseshoe Tavern's Box Office**. See below for more details on each show and ticketing information.

Other artists slotted to perform as part of the *Horseshoe 70th Concert Series* includes Vancouver's legendary punk rockers **DOA**, indie rockers **Hollerado**, Moe Berg's seminal power poppers **The Pursuit of Happiness**, Vancouver alternative rock icons **54.40**, and Hamilton folk-alt-death-country-punk **Elliott Brood**.

There are more b-day events and concert series to be announced including the once-every-10-years **private industry party on Tuesday, December 5th**, and a **special concert by a longtime H-Shoe artist on the actual birthday, Wednesday, December 6th**.

Although the building at 370 Queen St. W. was erected in 1861 as a blacksmith's shop, the **Tavern's storied music history began in 1947** once provincial liquor laws were ushered in, permitting **longtime owner Jack Starr** to convert the commercial property into a restaurant-tavern. **In the mid-50's Starr** re-converted the bar to the **Country Roots n' Rockabilly Music Tavern**, a 500 seat live music venue featuring country and rockabilly acts. Notorious bank robbers The Boyd Gang were known to be regulars but more noteworthy, the venue began sealing its reputation as a cultural musical institution, **booking country superstars like Willie Nelson, Conway Twitty, and Loretta Lynn** to name a few. **Stompin' Tom Connors** famously built his name at the Horseshoe **playing extended residencies**, and Starr became key in **helping develop Canadian national and local acts like Ian and Sylvia Tyson and The Band**.

Upon **Starr's retirement in the late 70's**, he rented the business to **Toronto music promoters Gary Topp and Gary Cormier** who quickly made a name for the venue by featuring a gamut of cutting edge and eclectic acts. The duo introduced Toronto to punk & new wave music like **The Cramps, The Ramones, Talking Heads, MC-5**, and famously bringing **The Police** to Canada for the first time. Unfortunately the Garys' vision was miles ahead of its time and the **venue closed** under the weight of its own progression. Their final concert at the venue, known as the '**Last Pogo**', became historic both for the music, the scene, and a **documentary by filmmaker Colin Brunton**.

Forgetting short stints as both another country club, and a strip club, an historic turn for the building occurred with the synthesis of **Ken Sprackman closing the Hotel Isabella**, deciding to drive cars to Florida while in-between occupations, and the building sitting empty. True story, Starr, an avid 'snowbirder' needed his car driven to Florida, **Ken answered the call, they struck up a friendship, and before you know it, Ken became the next operator of the 'Shoe. Really you can't make this stuff up!**

After Kenny modernized the bar for Starr, he was offered to buy the business, on one condition, **Sprackman had to take Kingston resident Michael (X-Ray) Macrae, on as a partner**. He had been bugging Starr for years to operate the venue. X-Ray introduced Kenny to his local friends **Dan Aykroyd, and Richard Crook**, and the **four became the second generation owners of the H-Shoe Tavern**.

Kenny and X-Ray re-invented the venue as we know it today. Sprackman managed the bar and revised venue operations, some of which impacted the entire Canadian Music industry. The duo introduced the '**artist takes the door - the venue takes the bar**' **booking policy** - a radical move at the time which ultimately became the standard for local bookings in practically every original live music venue in the country. Similarly X-Ray focused on booking the music, he welcomed developing artists from St. John's to Victoria, including **The Watchmen, The Odds, Amanda Marshall**, and with a **focus on one emerging band from X-Ray's hometown of Kingston, The Tragically Hip**.

As the **Toronto music scene began to coalesce** next door at the Cameron House (which featured **Handsome Ned and Jack Dekeyzer**) and **on Queen St** with former punks like **Greg Keelor, Jim Cuddy, and Bazil Donovan**, who had a keen interest in Americana and Canadiana roots music. X-Ray also began importing the newest and best bands from Austin, Texas and the South. The Horseshoe quickly became the preferred touring showcase for new roots music, indie promoters, and was the go-to hangout for locals, music industry types and visiting celebrities.

Fast forward to the **90's**, when **Jeff "JC" Cohen** was hired by **Kenny and X-Ray** to lead the venue into the 21st century. Cohen had the distinction of opening the country's first dedicated all-ages venue, '**One Step Beyond**' (in Ottawa) and his punk-a-fied alternative music bio includes stints as a **booking agent (Rheostatics, One, Lowest of the Low, Big Sugar, Malhavoc, Mahones)** working alongside Ralph James, **talent buyer** (Apocalypse Club and El Mocambo), and **management consultant. (The Bourbon Tabernacle Choir, 13 Engines, Big Rude Jake)**

Along with his then 'assistant' - and now 'partner' - **Craig Laskey**, the Horseshoe was given a shot of Garys like music adrenaline, cemented with initial bookings like **Dick Dale, Link Wray, Olivia Tremor Control, the Oblivians, Neutral Milk Hotel, Wilco, the Old 97's, Sunvolt, Neko Case, the Jayhawks, Golden Smog, and Whiskeytown/Ryan Adams**', while re-committing to being a national showcase for emerging Canadian artists like **Nickelback, Great Big Sea, Joel Plaskett Emergency, and Big Wreck.**

"I honestly thought Kenny and X-Ray would give us about the same short leash Starr gave the Garys," says Cohen. "I thought our musical taste might be far too progressive for the venue, and Craig was always nervous about continually filling an entire week's worth of bookings, but Kenny was extremely supportive from the get-go. He let us update the way the 'Shoe ticketed shows and promoted its brand, and X-Ray loved our re-commitment to cutting edge roots music from Texas. He literally made us to go to our first SXSW in 1996, picked up Steve Jordan and us at the airport, insisted we head over to the Green Mesquite for our first ever Texas meal, and taught us where and what we should be seeing. SXSW became our primary source of A&R; it's been like 22 years, and we haven't missed one yet.'

By 1998, the venue's reputation had evolved into the quintessential local venue to catch emerging artists like **The National, Death Cab For Cutie, Spoon, and Frank Turner, new recording release showcases for Billy Bragg, Bad Religion, The Dropkick Murphys, Soundtrack Of Our Lives, and Foster The People**, and surprise performances from industry heavyweights like the **Rolling Stones, Foo Fighters, Bryan Adams, Melissa Etheridge, The Tragically Hip, Blue Rodeo, and Dead Weather.**

Click [HERE](#) for a 'short list' of performers that have graced the venue over the years.

In the fall of 1998 Cohen was brought in as managing partner, Laskey took over the talent buying, before he too became an owner in the mid 2000's, along with in house comptroller Naomi Montpetit.

Says Cohen, "We're 3rd generation owners, having been given the opportunity by X-Ray and Kenny [Sprackman] to guide the venue into modern times, and not fuck it up. It's been close to 23 years now and I think I did ok. The 'Shoe is not just still in business, but the venue is just as relevant, musically, and culturally speaking, as it ever was, if not even more so."

Read more about the venue's history and various incarnations here: <http://www.horseshoetavern.com/our-history/>.

A couple of years back, local author David McPherson approached Craig and JC about writing a book about the venue, in which JC suggested would be an ideal tie to the 70th celebration. David spent years talking to artists, managers, staff, and the Starr family, gathering decades of stories for his upcoming book, **The Legendary Horseshoe Tavern: A Complete History**, set for publication by Dundurn Press on September 23.

The venue will celebrate the launch with a **private media and industry launch on October 11 from 6:00-8:00pm**, followed by a no-cover night with a local band. The **foreword** for the book is written by **Blue Rodeo's Jim Cuddy.**

For more information on the book, visit: <http://horseshoetavernbook.com>.

More information on upcoming events will be released in the coming weeks.

THE HORSESHOE 70TH CONCERT SERIES is presented by INDIE88 and EXCLAIM!

BILLY BRAGG (solo & electric)

DATE: Tuesday, September 26, 2017

DOORS: 8:30pm

(solo & electric - featuring Billy's current live set with the trademark chop and clang guitar playing that we've all come to love)

PRICE: \$49.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1533594>

DATE: Wednesday, September 27, 2017

*(solo & electric - featuring songs from **Life's a Riot with Spy vs Spy, Brewing Up with Billy Bragg, Talking with the Taxman about Poetry**)*

DOORS: 8:30pm

PRICE: \$49.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1533596>

DATE: Thursday, September 28, 2017

*(solo & electric - featuring songs from **Workers Playtime, Don't Try This At Home, William Bloke**)*

DOORS: 8:30pm

PRICE: \$49.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

DOA

DATE: Saturday, October 14, 2017

DOORS: 9:00pm

PRICE: \$16.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1533617>

HOLLERADO – Presented by 102.1 The Edge & INDIE88

DATE: Thursday, October 19, 2017

DOORS: 8:30pm

PRICE: \$24.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1533091>

DATE: Friday, October 20, 2017

DOORS: 9:00pm

PRICE: \$24.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1533095>

DATE: Saturday, October 21, 2017

DOORS: 1:30pm

PRICE: \$24.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*ALL-AGES/DRY no ALCOHOL show

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/backstage/event/1533099>

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

DATE: Friday, October 27, 2017

DOORS: 9:00pm

PRICE: \$29.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1533634>

ELLIOTT BROOD

DATE: Friday, November 3, 2017

DOORS: 9:00pm

PRICE: \$29.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1533648>

DATE: Saturday, November 4, 2017

DOORS: 9:00pm

PRICE: \$29.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1533651>

54.40

DATE: Wednesday, November 22, 2017

DOORS: 8:30pm

PRICE: \$39.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes.

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1535358>

DATE: Thursday, November 23, 2017

DOORS: 8:30pm

PRICE: \$39.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes.

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1535366>

DATE: Friday, November 24, 2017

DOORS: 9:00pm

PRICE: \$49.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes.

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1535373>

DATE: Saturday, November 25, 2017

DOORS: 9:00pm

PRICE: \$49.50 Advance at Ticketfly, HS Tavern Box Office, Rotate This & Soundscapes.

ON SALE: Thursday, August 3, 2017 at 12:00pm

*Licensed/19+

Purchase Tickets here: <https://www.ticketfly.com/purchase/event/1535380>

Knowing 54.40 expect some rather unique and interesting musical support and guest appearances

More Horseshoe Tavern Birthday events and concert series to be announced mid to late September 2017

Photo Links:

<http://bit.ly/Horseshow60thCraigLaskeyJeffCohen>

(L to R: Craig Laskey, Jeff Cohen)

<http://bit.ly/HScirca1979>

(Photo credit: Patrick Cummins)

<http://bit.ly/HSTavernLastPogo>

(Photo credit: Edie Steiner)

The Horseshoe Tavern: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

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