



## **PRESENTER ENDORSEMENTS**

"Great show. Excellent performance. Would love to get another show in the books soon."

**Alex Miller - Thirty One West (OH)**

"The show was really good - thank you! super nice people too."

**Gail Hansen/Owner - SOhO Music Club (CA)**

"The guys are always awesome. Very glad to have them back. Nice audience - and a good night."

**Brett Elliott/Executive Director – The Kate (CT)**

"A great concert!"

**Tony Beadle/Executive Director - Shalin Liu Performance Center (MA)**

"The show was great!"

**Bryan Sawyer/GM - Bull Run Restaurant (MA)**

"We were really wowed by the band.  
They were also completely friendly and easy to work with, which is always a plus."

**Nora Cary/Owner – Palms Playhouse (CA)**

"A great show!"

**Rob Vogt/Programming Director – Firehouse Arts Center (CA)**

"It was a lovely concert, I've only heard good reactions from the audience  
...this was an enormous success."

**Diane Neri Stern/Programming Manager – Ogden Nature Center (UT)**

"We've been working hard to cultivate an audience that will take a chance on new music.  
Our show with The Sweet Remains helped the cause.

They delivered a top-notch concert to a nearly full house. Smashing success."

**Sarah Craig/Booking Manager – Caffè Lena (NY)**

"Terrific! Great show and a pleasure to work with. The concert completed our Americana Weekend  
in high style - appropriately harmonious! Many positive comments after the show."

**John Chicherio/Performing Arts Director - Huntington Arts Council (NY)**

"Very nice guys to work with, the audience enjoyed very much."

**Lisa Harrison/Owner – Tin Pan (VA)**



## 'The Independents': Film Review

6:05 PM PST 2/8/2018 by Stephen Farber

Charming musical drama hits unexpected notes.

### **Folk rock group The Sweet Remains headlines this musical road movie, with cameos from Tony winners James Naughton and Kelli O'Hara.**

An extremely engaging film showcased at this year's Santa Barbara Film Festival, *The Independents*, a character drama with music, deserves to find an audience beyond the festival circuit. Greg Naughton, the writer-director and also one of the movie's three stars, has an impressive musical theater pedigree. His father, actor James Naughton, is a two-time Tony winner, and his wife, Kelli O'Hara, is also a Tony winner. O'Hara and the elder Naughton have cameo roles in the film, but the movie really depends on the three leading actors — Rich Price and Brian Chartrand in addition to Greg Naughton — who form a folk rock trio. Offscreen, these three belong to singing group The Sweet Remains, and although the film isn't literally their story, it obviously has some parallels to their lives.

The movie begins with Rich, a New York graduate student who is struggling with his dissertation while secretly hoping for a career as a singer. Inspiration literally comes from above when he is almost hit by a falling branch, courtesy of tree trimmer Greg. They discover that they share a love of music and begin writing songs together in the latter's rundown van. On an impulse, they decide to enter a folk music festival in Ohio. On the road, they pick up a scruffy hitchhiker, Brian, who looks slightly dangerous but turns out to be another aspiring musician. So they set out together for the festival. When they perform in a club along the way, a Los Angeles record promoter (expertly played by comedian Richard Kind) happens to be in the audience and offers them a chance at a musical career. But things do not unfold exactly as expected.

In fact, the best thing about the movie is the way in which it subverts all the clichés of the star-is-born story. Greg does not reconcile with his ex-wife. Their big concert gig hits some unpredictable but amusing snags. And yet the three accidental collaborators affirm their friendship and love of music in an ending that proves there are plenty of offbeat ways to satisfy audiences without hewing to formula. Naughton deserves credit for an unconventional, sharply written script.

He is clearly the most experienced and adept of the three leads. Price is probably the main character in the story, but he's not quite a strong enough presence to hold the film together. On the other hand, Chartrand, playing the most entertainingly unstable character, delivers most of the laughs. In one hilarious scene, he gets into a furious argument with a cop (smoothly played by James Naughton) who stops them because of their unconventional van. Brian's uncontrolled, anti-establishment fury is hilariously observed and performed.

The film also has a nice sense of atmosphere. New York locales and rural settings are equally well caught by cinematographer Piero Basso. There are also some scenes in Los Angeles, which were obviously filmed some time ago, because a billboard in Hollywood advertises *The Martian* from 2015. Greg Naughton explained at the Santa Barbara screening that they actually shot over a period of years, in between their musical gigs and as they struggled to secure financing. Yet these setbacks rarely show up onscreen. The songs are smoothly integrated into the story, but the film's main virtue is the warmth it shows toward the three main characters and their sometimes desperate dreams.

## The Sweet Remains vocal trio will come to big screen and the MIM

Randy Cordova, The Republic | azcentral.com | May 10, 2017

The Sweet Remains produce a melodic brand of coffeehouse pop highlighted by some gorgeous, honey-coated harmonies that bring to mind the Eagles at their mellow best. The three-man band has built up a loyal following on the road and through three studio albums.

Greater exposure soon could be coming their way. Member Greg Naughton has written and directed "The Independents," a feature film that looks at a traveling band struggling to stay together. It offers a "Louie" kind of reality: Naughton and bandmates Rich Price and Brian Chartrand play characters named Greg, Rich and Brian. The soundtrack will consist of Sweet Remains tunes. But it is not strictly their story.

"I've always wanted to get into filmmaking," says Naughton, calling from Connecticut. "I kept coming back to this idea that was kind of crazy, but the world of being in a band and traveling is certainly something I have knowledge of. And those guys are characters. They're so funny."

### 'A polygamous marriage'

But they're also not actors. It's different for Naughton. He began his career as an actor and founded New York's Blue Light Theater Company. And he comes from a rich theatrical background: His father is Broadway leading man and two-time Tony winner James Naughton; his wife is Tony winner Kelli O'Hara; and his uncle is David Naughton of "An American Werewolf in London" fame. His bandmates have no such experience or connections.

"To their credit, it wasn't difficult," says Naughton, a thoughtful, friendly sort. "I've directed theater, and you'll quite frequently come up against an actor who has an ego and their own ideas and they sometimes fight the supposed authority of the director. But the guys felt like they were going to put themselves in my hands. They said, 'You tell us if this is working or not.' That was a huge leap of faith on their part."

The movie, which should hit the film-festival circuit this year, will include some of the aspects that make the Sweet Remains so unusual. For example, none of the members live near each other. Naughton is based in New York; Price is in Vermont and Chartrand lives in Phoenix: "The biggest problem we face is trying to arrange the times and places to rehearse and record," Naughton says with a sigh.

Naughton and Price had begun working together when Price discovered Chartrand's music. The three jammed together in a hotel room and something clicked.

"It was just one of those strange things," says Naughton, 48. "It was three guys who can hang out without a lot of trouble and the sound just felt right. There's not just oral harmony; there's got to be social harmony, too. That's why bands don't stay together; it's like a polygamous marriage."

### Solo beginnings

All three had solo careers prior to forming the group in 2008, another feature that will be touched on in the movie. (Naughton's 2001 disc "Demagogue & the Sun Songs" features the haunting "The Sun Went Out," which belongs on the shortlist of great songs about astronauts.) Chartrand continues to pursue solo work while the other two focus full time on the band.

"I was definitely at a point where I didn't enjoy all that comes with trying to run your own show and be a solo artist," Naughton says. "I think if I hadn't found this band, I probably would have given up music altogether. I come from a theater background, and I really missed the collaborative and social element of that."

He does not paint a glamorous picture of life on the road for solo musicians.

"Being a solo artist — you're in a crappy hotel by yourself. You get in a car and you drive to the next gig by yourself. There's way too much time for meaningless mind chatter. I was not keen on that lifestyle, so when I fell into this band and this situation, it was so much more enjoyable. You spread the dirty work of bookings and budgeting around and that's great, but it's even more great sharing the stage."

### Finding fans

The group's greatest success has come through Spotify, where their songs have garnered more than 16 million plays. Records like the sweetly intimate "Dance with Me" (from 2008's "Laurel & Sunset") and Naughton's playful "Stop the Night" (reworked for 2015's "Night Songs") have found an audience despite receiving only scattered airplay on traditional radio.

"It's funny, this stuff keeps changing all the time and a lot of it has to do with luck," Naughton says. "Every time I'm not sure what the next turn of the road looks like, something leads us in the right direction."

The group tasted a rare bit of controversy in December with the release of a holiday song called "Love Conquers Hate" (Sample lyric: "Let's show them that love can trump hate/That's all we want for Christmas"). Price conceived the tune, which initially surprised Naughton as the band tends to shy away from political messages in their music. But he's happy with the recording, which earned some hate email but also raised money for anti-bullying charities.

"It's hard to always be in the same lane with ideas," he says. "We're really good at negotiating stuff and getting a consensus. It's all give and take and a lot of negotiations, and I'm actually quite proud we manage to do it as functionally as possible. I count Rich and Brian as my two best friends. We spend an awful lot of time together, and at the end of the day, we'll still occasionally have a social event with the families. That's something nice."