

Scott's human touch made her a legend

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In September of 1964, Plain Dealer reporter Jane Scott's editor came to her with an assignment: Cover this new group from England called the Beatles at Public Auditorium. Jane was the logical choice as the teen writer — and besides, nobody else really wanted the assignment. Jane, as always, jumped at the chance. It was a fateful moment.

"I never before saw thousands of 14-year-old girls, all screaming and yelling," she would say years later. "I realized this was a phenomenon. The whole world changed."

It was indeed a transformative moment — for America, for Cleveland and for the woman who would become known as "the world's oldest teenager." Who would not only be one of the first American writers to realize the importance of the Beatles, but would also be one of the first to cover Bruce Springsteen and Lou Reed and David Bowie and even the Cleveland '70s punk scene. Who would become so beloved by artists that Springsteen once even serenaded her in concert, and the notoriously prickly Lou Reed would always ask to see her in Cleveland.

Even more significant than that, Jane became beloved by the Clevelanders whom she introduced to these acts in her "What's Happening" column in The Plain Dealer's Friday magazine and its precursor, The Action Tab.

Hired at age 33 just three days after Alan Freed threw the world's first rock concert in Cleveland on March 21, 1952, Jane's career path seemed almost preordained.

"Here was an example of someone who quite literally did it 'my way,' independent, not afraid to go places by herself, with so much tenacity and work ethic," says longtime friend Mary Cipriani, who first met Jane at age 17 at a student music event.

At first, Jane covered the society set and seniors and garden clubs and other typical "women's page" topics. After the Beatles changed her world, she would become known as a groundbreaker in a field in which women to this day are in the minority: rock 'n' roll.

Former Plain Dealer writer and photographer Anastasia Pantisios worked with Jane for several decades, and was friends with her for even more. She is currently working on a biography of Jane.

"Until '64, she hadn't found her thing," says Pantisios. "She was allowed to take the rock beat because [people at the paper] thought it was trivial at the time, and a woman could have it. Most of papers at that time would have sent a columnist, who would have made fun of it and the screaming girls. That was really typical."

"So when Jane decided she was going to start infiltrating more and more rock 'n' roll into her teen column, they thought, 'Oh, this is a cute little thing, it's not serious' at first. ... She was



JEFF DARCY | PLAIN DEALER FILE

Then-Plain Dealer artist Jeff Darcy's illustration memorializing Jane Scott's passing in 2011.



JANET MACOSKA

Jane analyzes Sting's handwriting in 1991.



JANET MACOSKA

Jane Scott visits David Bowie at Blossom Music Center in 1999.

groundbreaking in a couple ways. As a woman, but she was also a pioneer in that she was one of the few daily newspaper rock writers."

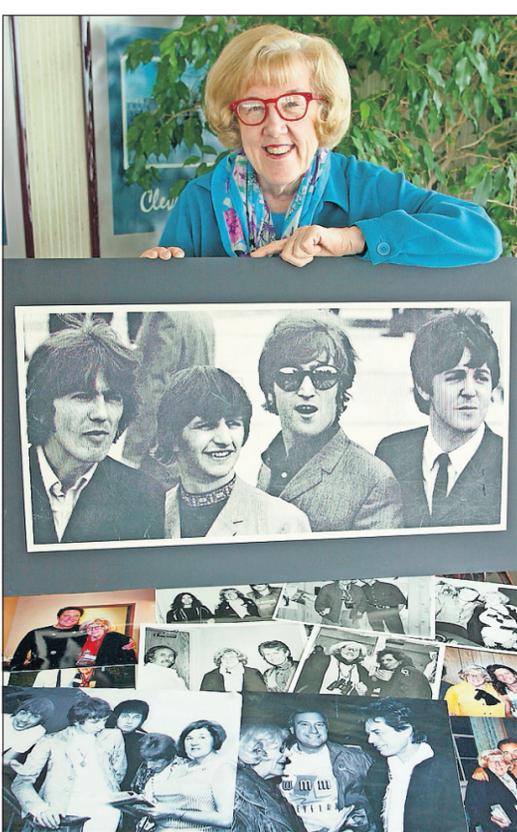
Jane truly was a trailblazer, says former Plain Dealer rock critic John Soeder, who is also working on a book about Jane. "People throw that around a lot, but she really was. ... She was 46 when the Beatles landed in 1964, and she was just getting started. She always wanted to work at The Plain Dealer and as a journalist. It took her a long time to get her foot in the door."

Jane was a forerunner from an early age. Born May 3, 1919, in Cleveland, she was a 1937 graduate of Lakewood High School. She went on to study English and drama at the University of Michigan, where she graduated in 1941. Though she didn't make the cut for the school newspaper, she contributed articles.

After graduation, the intrepid young woman enlisted in the Navy, where she served as a code breaker. After World War II ended, she was encouraged to follow a typical women's career path: teaching. It wasn't her thing, and after a year, Jane took a job as a features reporter at the Chagrin Valley Times.

"If you read through these old papers, in a lot of the human interest stories you can see the outline of who she is going to be," says Pantisios. "Jane was always a reporter, not a critic, and that's why she was so good at finding out what was going on."

"She was really good at



RON SCHWANE | AP FILE

Jane Scott poses with some of her memorabilia collection at her home in Lakewood in April 2002, shortly after her retirement from The Plain Dealer.

going up to people and talking to strangers and connecting with people."

This open-mindedness and inquisitiveness transferred well to the rock 'n' roll beat — and were two things that made her so good at covering this new music.

"She took everything seriously," says Pantisios. "She

was interested in everything, whether it was deep underground noise or some mainstream band playing Top 40."

For Jane, it was as worthy to cover the (now-legendary) local '70s underground scene as it was up-and-comers such as the Rolling Stones, David Bowie, Led Zeppelin or Aretha Franklin.

"One thing people underrated with her was her ability to home in on people to keep in touch with what was going on," says Pantisios. "People would say, 'Why is she always asking kids what they think of this band?' She was gathering info."

"If you look back at The Plain Dealer, she was really on top of the whole underground thing, because she connected with people like David Thomas and Peter Laughner and published interviews in The Plain Dealer. She took them seriously; she wasn't joking around."

Jane's importance covering Cleveland's music scene can't be overestimated, Pere Ubu frontman David Thomas told The Plain Dealer in 1999.

"She didn't critique music. She reported facts. And, subversively, she demystified the art. She peeked behind the curtain and rooted out the parochial. Every musician sees the media as gullible rubes. Well, Jane just didn't cooperate. She laid the haughty low with an enthusiasm for the humble (and human) detail. 'The emperor has no clothes!' She and Ernie Anderson shaped the attitudes of a unique generation of musicians."

Soeder says it was this unpretentious human touch that made Jane such a great reporter. He recalled a time when the two of them did a joint interview with Billy Joel.

"I started out asking all the typical music journalist questions ... and Jane at some point just leans in and says,

In memory

In honor of Jane Scott's 100th birthday, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame is hosting a celebration on Thursday. It will begin with a cake reception at 6 p.m., followed by a discussion, photo presentation and Q&A in the Foster Theater at 7:30. The panel will feature Michael Stanley, John Soeder, writer Holly Gleason, Rock Hall curator Anastasia Karel and Laura DeMarco. Admission is \$10 for members, \$15 for others. Available at ticketing.rockhall.com. The Rock Hall is at 1100 East Ninth St., Cleveland.

"How is your daughter, how old is she now what is she up to?" You could literally see the transformation in Billy. He was patiently answering my questions, but when Jane did her thing it was like two neighbors talking over the backyard fence. He just opened up to her."

Several of the rock stars Jane befriended sent her well wishes on her 80th birthday in 1999, including the late Lou Reed.

"When I was in the Velvet Underground in the '60s, Jane was one of the only people I can remember who was nice to us. Interested. Interested in the music, the styles — a very smart guileless lady who loved music and musicians and had unbiased attitudes towards the evolving culture. I always looked forward to Cleveland and seeing my friend Jane. When I went solo, she remained one of the few kind people I knew. Always fair, always interested. She would ask interesting questions about the music, why was something this way, how could she better appreciate things?"

Jane retired from The Plain Dealer in 2002. But that didn't slow her down. She kept up a busy schedule of concert-going, always with her giant purse that included a notebook, camera, sandwich, water and other essentials.

Mary Cipriani recalls a 2006 Bruce Springsteen show where she got to hang out with Jane backstage until the Boss came and gave her a big hug.

Jane passed away July 4, 2011, at age 92. Newspapers and television stations across the county weighed in with tributes to the World's Oldest Teenager.

Her personal archives and notebooks have been donated to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Many have been digitized to allow members of the public and scholars to browse. There's also a sweet statue to Jane, big red glasses on and notebook in hand.

"We are honored to be the repository of all of Jane's papers. They are one of the real gems in a remarkable collection," says Rock Hall President and CEO Greg Harris.

"For us, her legacy is remarkable: Such a long and distinguished career, loved by artists and readers. She was a pioneer and she was a local treasure, but her legacy extends far beyond the local."

SHOES

FROM D4

It's something I saw time and again, because for 12 years, I was The Plain Dealer's Friday magazine editor. The entertainment mag was started by Jane, by the way, with her teen pages and then Action Tab.

It fell on me to edit her What's Happening column every week. Truthfully, it was sometimes difficult. Jane was already 73 when I took over the magazine. Management at the paper had tried to push her out a few times already — they eventually succeeded in 2002, 10 years after I became her editor.

Jane by that time had a tendency to omit important details, so she was required to turn in copies of press releases with all of her items

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announcing concerts, etc. But not with her backstage bits, and as good as she was writing reviews of the Beatles and discovering Springsteen, that was Jane's forte.

Today, backstage access is restricted like you wouldn't believe. In Jane's heyday, photographers could shoot entire shows, sometimes standing on the stage with the band, even. Reporters hung around for the entire show, then went back to talk to the artists afterward. It's how she built relationships with people like Lovett.

She'd show up with that big handbag of hers, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich as emergency rations, her ticket pinned to her blouse, her pen

and pad and, of course, her trusty camera.

If there is an artist from Bruce Springsteen to Bruce Cockburn who escaped her handy little lens and "Smile!" I don't know who it is. Tico Torres of Bon Jovi mentioned her to me, and at U2's recent show at FirstEnergy Stadium, the band paid homage to her in their finale.

And she didn't limit it to the "big guys." Back in 2015, when Beau Coup was getting ready for a 30th-anniversary show, co-lead singer Frank Amato talked about the interest Scott took in the Cleveland band.

"Jane really took a liking to the band early on," Amato said in that 2015 interview.

"She was always helping us, writing articles about us and all the positive stuff that was happening."

Amato and his Beau Coup band mates were among those who led the charge when the paper tried to dismiss Jane. And they had some pretty heavy firepower from Springsteen, Bowie and more.

Jane was loyal, and loyalty begets loyalty, a fact I think people tend to forget today.

I have two favorite Jane stories — that I can share, at least. One involves my daughter, Brandi. Now a married mother of two (including a teenage wannabe rocker) Brandi was the typical rebellious teen, and a huge fan of

Black Flag.

So when Henry Rollins' band played Jacobs Pavilion, or whatever it was called back then, Brandi had to be there. So did Jane. Only it was just one of them who was crowd-surfing. She was able to avoid doing it like a snitch, but a concerned Jane wanted to be sure I knew my 13-year-old, 4-foot-11 daughter was riding a sea of hands all evening, just so I could check to see if she was OK.

The other is something I witnessed myself, at that Butthole Surfers show. Jane wanted to get a close picture of guitarist and band founder Gibby Haynes, so she went wading into the mosh pit. Being the stupid, but gallant,

Texan that I am, I followed her, worried about what might happen to an old lady in a sea of thrashing teens and 20-somethings.

I need not have worried. The crowd parted as if she were Moses walking through the Red Sea. Even above the din of guitars and drums, I could hear, "That's Jane Scott!" Of course, there's one in every crowd, and this particular young upstart decided he wasn't moving. At least until he felt Jane's high heel come down on his instep.

"Sweet Jane" indeed. Navigating crowds as I've done for the past 10 years or so, I've often thought how useful a nice, sharp high heel might be. But that was Jane's gig. And as I said, there's only one Jane.

No one could ever walk a mile in her pumps. Or even try.