

# THAT 1 GUY

## Biography

“The honey tastes sweeter when you anger the bees.” **The Moon is Disgusting.**

For Berkeley, CA-based **Mike Silverman**, better known by his alter ego **That 1 Guy**, when it comes to making music, necessity is the mother of invention.

A classically trained upright bassist who won several jazz scholarships and competitions, **Mike** became one of the most original and in-demand upright bass players in the 90's progressive jazz scene. At the peak of his powers, **Mike** was developing and utilizing techniques that were previously thought impossible on the upright bass. Often getting hired as a one-man-rhythm-section, he would function as a bassist, drummer, and entire mini orchestra simultaneously.

His resume included studio and live work with jazz tenor legend Dewey Redman and another one of his heroes, Buddy Collette (of Charles Mingus fame). **Silverman's** self-taught percussive technique - banging the strings and the instrument's body - led him to develop the **Magic Pipe**. Eventually frustrated by the inability to get all the sounds in his head from the upright bass, he built a system of electronically wired, steel plumbing, shaped somewhat like a harp, with a thick bass string wired from top to bottom and a hole that billows smoke during the climax of his live shows. Adding an electric cowboy boot plugged in and played like an African talking drum and an electrified musical handsaw, **Silverman** evolved into **That 1 Guy**, playing everything with his hands and feet while incorporating such disparate influences as Dr. Seuss, Captain Beefheart, Frank Zappa, Rube Goldberg and Stanley Kubrick. He would never play a conventional bass in concert again.

“The Magic Pipe basically employs the same principle as a gutbucket,” he says of the instrument's origin. “That was the initial inspiration for creating it. It also resembles the diddley-bow, which was basically a metal cable attached to the side of the house, from the roof to the porch, and played by the original bluesman with a beer bottle like a slide guitar.”

**That 1 Guy's** music travels a similar evolutionary path on his second album, **The Moon is Disgusting**, from the primitiveness of the Mississippi Delta in the title track to the farthest reaches of outer space in the 14-minute-plus closing aural soundscape, “Rainbow,” offering a microcosm best described as more songs about the moon, fruit and transcendence.

The follow-up to **Songs in the Key of Beotch**, his 2004 release on Ani DiFranco's **Righteous Babe** label, **The Moon is Disgusting** was recorded over the summer of '06, with veteran Bay Area engineer Karl Derfler (Roky Erickson, Daniel Johnston, No Doubt). Derfler originally recommended Silverman to add musical saw on a pair of tracks for Tom Waits' recent three-CD Orphans set, only to have **Mike** end up playing bass instead.

“Karl helped facilitate the ideas,” says **Mike**. “We just clicked and it really opened the floodgates for me. A lot of these songs and ideas have been bottled up inside me for years, and came pouring out. We kept the live feel in the studio, and nothing was labored. He captured the magic.”

From the earthy blues of the title track and the tribal stomp of “*Bananas*,” which is “slapstick” in its truest sense, to the a cappella treated vocals of “*Dig*,” the hip-hop beats of “*Butt Machine*” and the pastoral-to-abstract psychedelic trip of “*Rainbow*,” **The Moon is Disgusting** traces the evolution of man from animals in the jungle to machines orbiting the earth, a kind of 2001: A Space Odyssey for the head. Call it **That 1 Guy's** version of rubbing two sticks together to get fire and sound, a modern cave painting.

“The album was originally conceived as the soundtrack to an animated film I wanted to make,” says **Silverman**. “I've used the line about the moon and the cheese in my music for the last 10 years. I don't know its significance, but I just really like the imagery. I used to have these dreams about how the texture of the moon was made out of this weird cheese-like substance. It must be some kind of subconscious fascination. I tried to grab that and put it into music.”

The result transcends the novelty of its origin, and succeeds on its own terms. As **Silverman** sings in “*Butt Machine*,” the **Magic Pipe**, and what it creates, is all a matter of “function over form,” which parallels our own evolution as a species, from monkeys grabbing bananas in the trees to a cosmic voyage over the “*Rainbow*.”

“I love music that takes you on a psychedelic trip,” he says. “But I’m as straight-laced as they get.”

Songs like “*Mash*” and “*Mustache*” are both tribal and raw, the primal beat taking us back to our animal instincts, while “*Bananas*,” “*Oranges*” and “*Guava*” make up a cycle about fruit in the tradition of past **That 1 Guy** food songs such as “*Weasel Potpie*” and “*It’s Raining Meat*.”

“Honest to god, it just comes out that way,” laughs **Silverman** about his topics. “The words flow together and form a groove.”

As he points out, the moon has always been a mythic presence throughout the history of man. “We’ve completely evolved as a species with the moon,” says **Silverman**. “It’s part of our biology and our psychology. It’s in our minds and in our souls.”

With the release of **The Moon is Disgusting**, **Silverman** continues to consolidate his gains as a live performer. With an audience that ranges from psychedelic warriors to families and folks of all ages, he has played the **Magic Pipe** in locales as exotic as Istanbul, Scotland and Australia, where he is celebrated as a modern folk hero, selling out theatres, with residents comparing his instrument to the native didgeridoo. At last year’s prestigious Edinburgh Fringe Festival, he was presented with the **Tapwater Award** for Best Musical Act.

“So much of my music has an indigenous, tribal feel to it, based on rhythms from around the world,” he says, explaining his popularity Down Under. “And there’s this sort of tubular, pipe-shaped vibe that seems to make perfect sense down there.”

**That 1 Guy** has also opened for artists as disparate as Soul Coughing, Saul Williams, Bob Weir & Ratdog, Yo La Tengo, Fabolous, Naughty by Nature and, most memorably, Guns N’ Roses guitarist Buckethead, with whom he collaborated on an acclaimed series of shows last year.

The Washington Post raved, “**That 1 Guy** brought the concept of the one-man band into the 21st century.” Relix said: “His grooves are so bombastic, they rattle china cabinets and dissolve kidney stones into the next zip code.” Bass Player Magazine called **Silverman’s** music “earthshaking future funk,” while Billboard simply said: “In the case of Mike Silverman’s slamming, futuristic funk act...the normal rules of biology just don’t apply.” Ripsaw says: “**That 1 Guy** is truly, honestly unique, and simply mesmerizing.” The Spokesman called **Silverman’s** music, “Home Depot meets Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.”

“These last few tours, I’ve really noticed it taking off,” says Silverman about the response to **That 1 Guy’s** live show. “People are starting to grab onto it and come back, bringing five or 10 others with them. It’s just growing exponentially.”

With his new album, **The Moon is Disgusting**, **That 1 Guy** is taking his music and art to the next step, choosing to release it on his own, just as he creates it.

**The Moon may be Disgusting**, but **That 1 Guy’s** music is anything but.

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