

# The subdude



Amid memories of that previous journey and eager anticipation of this current one, I entered the twists and turns of the Hutchinson River Parkway and made my way to Connecticut's Merritt Parkway, exiting at Wallingford to visit with some friends. As tree cover increased and urban sprawl decreased, I felt the temperature moderate. My new summer riding gear—a TourMaster Draft Jacket and First Gear HT Air overpants—was perfectly suited to this more temperate climate above New York.

The next day, local roads away from my friends' home brought me to Route 8; a road I would traverse for two more states as I drove north. Near the top of Massachusetts, I took a diversion that had

**T**he brutal New York heat and humidity of the greater Metropolitan area worked against personal comfort as I suited up and mounted my fully

loaded R1150R. Independence Day week had caught my attention as the ideal time to avoid work and ride around New England, all the while trailing some friends and respected musicians, the *subdudes*. This is nothing new for me. In August of 2004, I rode with them to three shows around New York—all the while enjoying the glorious Empire State roads on my first BMW Motorcycle, the R1200C.



## A three-day concert tour

# Roads of New England

the Green Mountain National Forest before heading east on 131 to enter New Hampshire. Routes 103 and 10 brought me to a left turn on Brook Road; the night's place of rest and dining.

Fortunately, I arrived at the Back Side Inn ([www.backsideinn.net](http://www.backsideinn.net)) to experience the Wednesday night homemade Italian pasta buffet. Innkeepers Anne Bernroth and Glen Verity purchased the property in 2003 and have made it a welcoming home to their guests. The 135-year old farmhouse is on the back side of Mt. Sunapee and offers 10 guest rooms, a wrap-around



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been recommended by a recently discovered online hero, [www.motorcycleroads.us](http://www.motorcycleroads.us). After Dalton, I drove west to Route 7 and turned right on North Main Street to take the Mt. Greylock ride. This is 15 miles of *challenge!* I discovered some short-lived enjoyment of this run up past Mt. Greylock, Stony Ledge, and Mt. Williams with its switchbacks and hairpin turns. This was a rugged road, which many would consider as the width of a single lane.

Entering Vermont, the famed and fabled Route 100 was the natural choice. Dotted with quaint historic towns and homes, the machine and I meandered along the path 90 miles up into the state. All the while we were skirting

*White Mountain  
National Forest—  
North Country.*

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Portland Monument Square Concert—City of Portland.

restaurant, and the surrounding 120 acres backing up to Rand Pond.

After a delicious early-morning breakfast, I took off for a day of riding through the White Mountain National Forest. The White Mountain is located in northern New Hampshire and southwestern Maine. Route 112, the 34.5-mile Kancamagus National Scenic Byway runs through the very heart of the forest, from Lincoln to Conway. From there, I traveled Route 16 up through atrocious shopping traffic and mind-numbing construction delays. Past North Conway, riding again became spirited and I had the chance to appreciate the stark and scenic beauty of the vast forested area. Although this motorcyclist did not climb Mt. Washington (no bumper sticker for me), I did stop past Pinkham Notch for a picture of it as a background for my R bike. Turning right on Route 2 (subsequently 26), I entered Maine and found lodging at a bed and breakfast in South Paris at A Friend's Place ([www.afriendsplace.com](http://www.afriendsplace.com)).

Built in 1892, TL McGee and Diane Dupuis have worked tirelessly on its restoration. Tastefully furnished in an eclectic array of eras, the couple really does take the meaning of "hospitality" to a whole new level. I told them about the *subdudes* show in Monument Square in Portland and they were eager to join me at the concert. Shortly after I arrived, we were in their truck headed for Portland.

The *subdudes* ([www.subdudes.com](http://www.subdudes.com)), a New Orleans-based act spanning numerous genres (blues, folk, R&B, country,



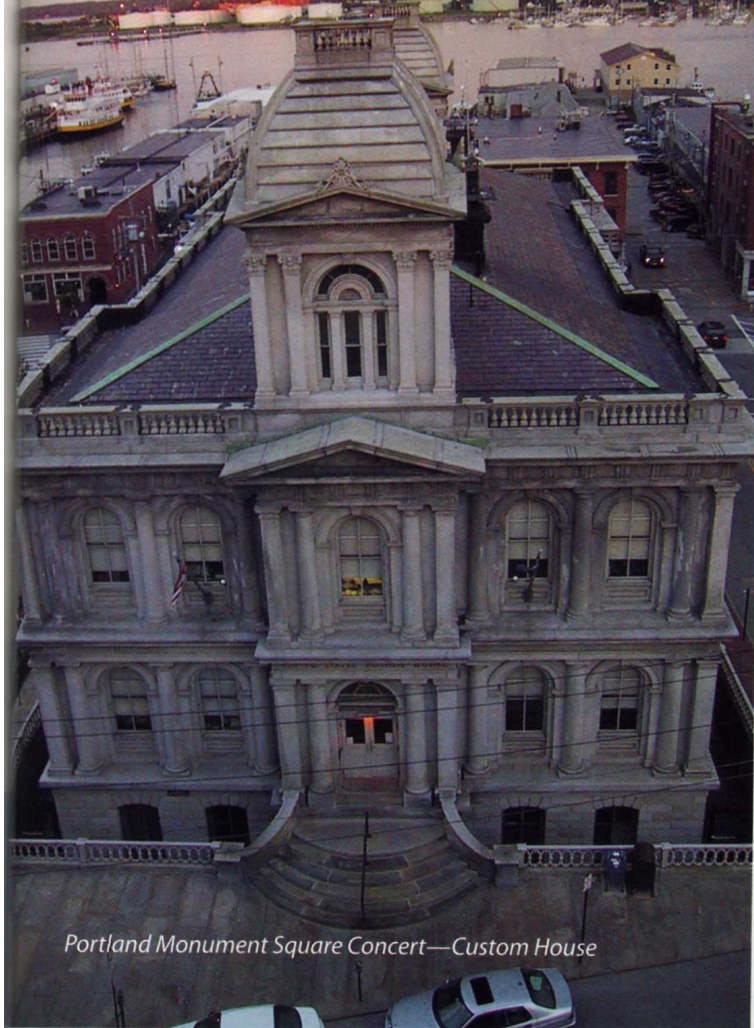
Cajun, funk, gospel, and rock) are noted for a mostly acoustic sound—sparse instrumentation with a strong emphasis on songwriting and vocal harmonies. The band is comprised of: Tommy Malone (lead vocals, lead guitar); John Magnie (lead vocals, keyboards, accordion); Steve Amedée (vocals, tambourine, percussion, electric mandolin, drums); Tim Cook (vocals, percussion, bass); and Jimmy Messa (bass, guitar, vocals). This year marks the sixth studio release for the band, "Behind the Levee." Relentless touring and an extremely loyal grass-roots fan

base have advanced the band's status as a perennial market favorite throughout the nation.

Something magical happens when the *subdudes* take the stage at any venue. An infectious chemistry overtakes the band and the audience that is indescribably wonderful. Polished, yet spontaneous, the band kicked off their first northeast show with "Morning Glory" from their 2004 offering, "Miracle Mule," followed by "Need Somebody." The set continued with crowd pleasers such as "Late at Night" and "All the Time in the World." The band went on to highlight tracks from their most recent release, including "Papa Dukie and the Mud People (Love Is a Beautiful Thing)," which tells the story of a hippie band that came to the small Louisiana town where band members

Tommy Malone and Steve Amedée grew up in the 1960s.

The show ended with the ubiquitous encores and left the onlookers wanting more. We, on the other hand, wanted dinner, and made our way to Gilbert's Chowder House, known for their award-winning chowders (saw that one coming). The interior walls of the restaurant tell stories of victory in numerous competitive gastronomic bouts. Located on the water in Portland, they are next to an active fishing wharf. It doesn't get fresher than this!



Portland Monument Square Concert—Custom House

After starting with a healthy garden salad, I sampled the clam chowder as well as the lobster stew. The three of us shared an order of mussels (with onions, garlic, and other seasonings), and then walked around Portland, Maine's largest city. A trip to the top of a local parking garage afforded us uninterrupted views of the city at dusk. On a peninsula, jutting out into Casco Bay with its numerous islands, Portland is New England's second largest fishing port.

The following morning brought a delicious breakfast and delightful conversation with TL and Diane. After saying goodbye, I traversed the state westward, back on routes 26 and 2. This time, after entering White Mountain National Forest again, I traced a circular path in the "North Country," above the Presidential Range. This area of the White Mountains, bordered to the south by Route 2 and to the north by Route 110, is enormous, wild and considerably less well known. The most prominent peaks were of the Pilot and Pliny Ranges, including Mount Cabot (4180'), Mount Waumbek (4005'), as well as Black Crescent Mountain and Mt. Weeks.

Heading back on Route 2, I briefly entered back into Maine and made a right turn onto 113, paralleling the appropriately named Wild River. The stretch of 30.5 miles of this scenic road follows Evans Notch and the east border of the National Forest from Gilead to Fryeburg, crossing into New Hampshire a few times. Amid panoramic views of open, unspoiled landscape interspersed with strikingly stark rock face and mountain peaks, I made my way down this challenging, thin, twisty, and *thrilling* road.

Traveling west for the remainder of the day, I arrived in Keene, New Hampshire to visit with friends who were joining my wife (she was traveling by car with our children) and me at that night's *subdudes* show, 53 miles south in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Sometimes referred to as "Paradise City," Northampton is a wealth of culture, art, schools, and businesses. With roots in tradition, this lively and sophisticated metropolis of the Pioneer Valley has been called home by such well-known figures as Jonathan Edwards, Calvin Coolidge and Sylvia Plath.

A meal at an uncrowded but reliable Thai restaurant, Siam Square, was a stone's throw from the venue, the Pearl Street Club. Once again, the *subdudes* provided a buoyant offering, which enchanted the fans. Spectators danced and swayed to the slow and even groove of "Next to Me," a new anthem, which has become a track of reverence to the band's beloved city of New Orleans. Perennial favorites such as "Why Can't I Forget About You?" complemented newer, vigorous songs such as "Social Aid" and "Pleasure Club." The show closed with a surprise request, "Sugar Pie," and the signature *subdudes* exit number, "Bye Bye."

After a night in Keene, the next stop for the band and me was Newburyport, a Massachusetts city with a foundation



Steve Amedée



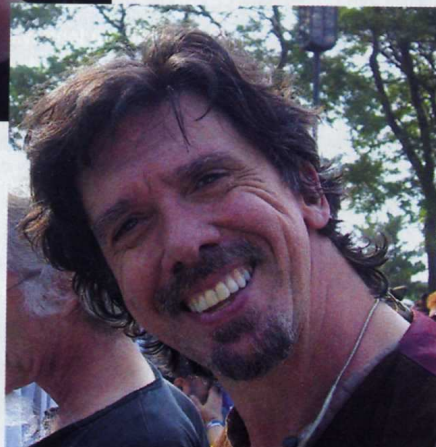
John Magnie



Jimmy Messa



Tim Cook



Tommy Malone

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based in maritime trade. Having broken from Newbury in 1764, this city, originally purchased from the Pawtucket Indians, was the site of the day's Riverfront Music Festival in Waterfront Park. It was here at the base of the 177-mile long Merrimack River that the *subdudes* took the stage in the late afternoon.

Toward the end of the show, the band provided a robust rendition of "It's So Hard." This is a song in which Tommy Malone seems to take his guitar solo and put it in a pressure cooker until the band finally converges to bring it all back to a grand closing. The *subdudes* left the stage, but the music continued. I took the time to admire the Federal styles along High Street, the large 1850s mill buildings, churches, and cemeteries. Newburyport has much to offer the visitor—the Tannery district, the 1835 Custom House, shipyards, as well as some beautiful and striking Victorian homes.

I left the city that gave birth to the Coast Guard, and started on roads to take me to the western side of the state. My next and final stop was Great Barrington, in the Berkshires. Here, again, I would rejoin my wife and children for the last night of our shared vacation. Staying with friends there, we were treated to more gourmet delicacies. We were staying with a trained chef turned antique lighting store expert. For him, cooking is now a hobby. Gorgeous weather and great company made for an exquisite day of getting together with friends over a restaurant-quality meal, rounding out a week of superb motorcycling.

The next day, after a five-star breakfast and lunch, I entered New York State and took the Taconic Parkway back to my home. My "mission" was complete—I had seen three shows in three days and had motorcycled in almost all of the New England states. Adventures such as these make the return to work quite a trial. Travel opens up the possibilities of revisiting in greater detail, as well as seeking new places and roadways with which I can fall in love. ●

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