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## Obscurity can pave the path to popularity

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Many of my dear readers know that my all-time favorite band is Rush.

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By the way, Rush fans and potential Rush fans should run right out and purchase the relatively recently released DVD by Rush, "Snakes & Arrows Live" — it's outstanding.

Some of you probably are saying: "What in the world does a Canadian rock band with three white guys (Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart) have to do with Black History Month, Jay?"

I'll tell you.

The original Rush was Lifeson, John Rutsey and Jeff Jones. Jones in 1968 was the original bass player and lead vocalist for Rush. Very few people know that little tidbit of

information.

Well, Jones is the star of today's column.

Jones is a black Canadian musician, who first gained fame as a member of the band Ocean. You may (if you are as old as I am or older — or perhaps if you have access to a copy of "Freedom Rock") remember the 1971 single "Put Your Hand in the Hand." That was Ocean's biggest hit.

For those of you (like your humble narrator) who are on the Lunatic Fringe, you know Jones later joined Red Rider and still performs with that band's leader Tom Cochrane. I spent a lot of time listening to Red Rider's "As Far As Siam" back in the day (or should I say back in the day-day-day).

According to Jones' official Web site [Jeff-Jones.com](#):

Jones has spent the last few years songwriting while maintaining a very active touring schedule and performs approximately 150 times a year with the likes of the reformed Tom Cochrane & Red Rider, The Carpet Frogs, and Randy Bachman & Burton Cummings among others. In the past he has toured across North America and has appeared with Red Rider supporting Shania Twain on the 2003 Juno Awards and with Randy Bachman and Burton Cummings on the 2005 Juno Awards. The highlight of this year was being invited to perform at Live 8 in Barrie, Ontario for famine relief.

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After many years in the background, his desire to establish himself as a solo artist was realized. "Positive," his solo CD debut, was released to critical and commercial acclaim in 2001 and was produced by Red Rider's Ken Greer with remixes by legendary producer Terry Brown (Rush, Klaatu, Cutting Crew).

And hey, if you happen to be in the land of the maple leaf or close by, you can catch Jones (with Steve Jensen) live TONIGHT at McReilly's Pub & Restaurant, 82 Dunlop St. East, in Barrie, Ontario, Canada. Jones still plays a mean bass.

I wish I could go.

Jones is worthy of great praise and respect, sharing his musical gifts with the world for all these many years, and being a groundbreaking rocker. Some of y'all may know the song (and the expression) "I was Country, when Country wasn't cool." Well, I was a black rocker before the term "crossover hit" became a household term. I listened to Red Rider when black kids who listened to rock were called "Oreo" and told they weren't black enough. I am glad those days have gone away.

And here is a quick shout-out to Run-D.M.C., which is the group most responsible for killing the stupid foolishness of so-called "black music" and "white music" — thank you Run-D.M.C. and God bless you.

Almost everyone knows Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Fats Domino and Jimi Hendrix. But it's the somewhat more obscure people such as Jones, Tiran Porter and Phil Lynott who paved the way for the more well-known, groundbreaking black rockers and groups such as Bad Brains, Body Count, Living Colour and 24-7 Spyz — who have made a significant impression in more recent years.

Thanks for reading. A dear reader suggested that I this month continue pointing out the most egregious Academy Award ripoffs. The Best Actress Oscar in 1981 SHOULD HAVE GONE to Ellen Burstyn for her exceptional performance in "Resurrection" (1980). She was robbed.

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