

# Harwich's Digney Fignus Finds His Niche

## Singer/Songwriter's Latest Pokes Fun At Politics

by Tim Wood

As five men on stage do their best to imitate scowling Russians, a woman in a blond wig prances up, coffee cup in hand, and does a little dance around the leader as he pantomimes the opening line from the song filling the studio.

"She wakes up in the morning/picks up a cup of Joe/Talks about the latest and pretends she doesn't know," he mimes.

The woman steps off the stage and the men try really hard not to crack up.

"She's Kellyanne Conway," singer/songwriter Digney Fignus says as his partner, author Debra Swiss, expresses her incredulity in having to impersonate the White House advisor.

On a recent Sunday afternoon, Fignus, a Harwich resident, and his band ran through the song—his latest single "The Emperor Wears No Clothes"—numerous times in the studio at the Cape Media Center in Dennis Port. Earlier they'd played a rousing concert of Cajun, country and Americana music for a small but appreciative audience, some of whom were now helping out in the process of making a video for the new song.

The song is a not-so-subtle swipe at our commander in chief, a klezmer-influenced, catchy Cossack tune complete with double entendres that Fignus says "kind of wrote itself in a lot of ways."

"I remembered that old fairy tale that was told to me as a kid by my grandmother," he said of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes." He'd also heard commentators, including Rachel Maddow, make the correlation.

"With the current situation, it just seemed to fit," he said.

Along with Fignus and his band—Chris Leadbetter on guitar and mandolin, Dave Dillon on drums, Tim Fiehler on bass and Gary Urgonski on percussion—some members of the audience, including a 90-year-old friend, participated in the

video shoot.

Fignus first made a name for himself on the Boston punk scene in the 1980s. He ran a club called Streets and scored an MTV hit with the video for his song "The Girl With The Curious Hand." The video was partially filmed in Provincetown and "still holds up," Fignus said. The song is



Digney Fignus and band members film a video for his single "The Emperor Wears No Clothes" at the Cape Cod Media Center. TIM WOOD PHOTO

video shoot. For one of the run throughs, everyone, including the band, donned pink pussy hats. Fignus said he's not sure how much filmed at the Media Center will make the final cut; other scenes were being shot on location and possibly with a green screen (which allows other scenes to be projected in the background). He said he hopes the video will be completed in the next month, after which it will be posted on his website, [www.digney.com](http://www.digney.com), YouTube and Facebook. The single is available on

still part of his repertoire.

"Folks still remember that stuff," he said, adding that the fact that he now lives on the Cape "kind of comes full circle."

He charts his conversion to Americana—a label that incorporates a number of genres, from Cajun to country, that include traditional acoustic instruments—to a member of his band, a Berklee College of Music graduate, who introduced him to more traditional instruments and music. As a rock musician, he scoffed at

country, but soon began to appreciate the musicianship of many artists working in traditional genres.

"That really flipped my script and changed my mind about that kind of music," he said. He found that it fit the way he plays guitar as well.

"I think I'm a better acoustic player than electric," Fignus said. "It's just a different skill set." He was also inspired after attending folk festivals in Lowell and Bangor, where he saw that the music reached all age levels.

"You just have to open your ears," he said. "It's got that beat that makes people move. It's all good. The more you know, the more you can draw from."

Fignus has released three CDs of Americana music—"Talk of the Town," "Trouble on the Levee" and "Last Planet on the Left." He's found a lot of acceptance for his music here on the Cape. He plays regularly at the Harvest Gallery Wine Bar in Dennis and will play O'Shea's in West Dennis Aug. 4 and the Port Summer Nights music stroll in Harwich Port on Aug. 23.

"The Cape music scene is awesome," he said. "I had no idea when I moved down here just over three years ago I would be so much fun and accepting. It's been a wonderful surprise." He added that Swiss, author of "The Tin Ticket," has found the same sort of acceptance. Fignus contributed music to a promotional video for the book, which can also be seen on his website.

"The Emperor Wears No Clothes" has already received some airplay, including spins on a Melbourne, Australia station. Although most of his music is not overtly political, the tune—which came first—just seemed to fit the subject matter, he said.

"Once I got the hook, it was easy to go back and tell the story," he explained.

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