



# SUSSEX | PRESS KIT







# Biography

Sussex is the brainchild of Michael Emenau and Rob Lutes. The two renowned musicians were childhood friends and high school bandmates in New Brunswick. After graduation, they went their separate ways—Michael to Tokyo, San Francisco and Paris, where he made a name for himself as a world-class jazz vibraphonist and composer; Lutes to Montreal, where he has recorded six albums and earned a reputation as one of Canada's finest songwriters and roots performers.

Reunited in 2012, the pair began to write together for the first time in 20 years. Encouraged by the results, they decided to make a record. Enlisting the services of some of Montreal's finest players, including guitarist Benoit Charest (Les Triplettes de Belleville), violinist Josh Zubot (Patrick Watson), bassist Sage Reynolds (Jordan Officer) and trumpeter Ivanhoé Jolicoeur (Les Cowboys Fringants), they went into the legendary Studio Frisson in Montreal in Fall 2014 and Winter 2015 and recorded their debut album *Parade Day*.





# Critics

“...a truly great evening...energy, intricacy, texture, nuance, expressiveness, and power, but all with great subtlety. Suffice to say, a great show.”

- Thom Meredith, Sainte-Anne Blues Cafe

“An absolutely charming mix of blues, jazz and folk.”

-Metro Montreal

“The vibes weaving in and around the vocal lines give the song an irresistible jazzy-rootsy flavor.”

-Folk Roots Folk Branches review - FRFB review

“A feast for the ears. An excellent album.”

-Rein van den Berg, Music that Demands Attention

“Whether or not veteran blues/roots performer Rob Lutes and jazz vibraphonist Michael Emenau set out to create something totally new is beside the point; they did, it's here in this genre-ignoring group, Sussex.”

-Bob Mersereau - 100 Canadian Review CBC

“As a group, Sussex has come up with a pile of songs delivered in a train-rambling fashion that immediately sets an adventurous mood. Their approach to performance is unique in that they have the ability to capture an audience without the trappings of flashy showmanship. Their stories are genuine, honest and smart. Only people who are equally hip off the stage as they are can pull this off.”

- Ian Sherwood



**March 17, 2016**

### **MUSIC REVIEW OF THE DAY: SUSSEX - PARADE DAY**

Whether or not veteran blues/roots performer Rob Lutes and jazz vibraphonist Michael Emenau set out to create something totally new is beside the point; they did, it's here in this genre-ignoring group, Sussex. If you put a gun to my head, I'd start throwing terms out, such as singer-songwriter jazz, or jazz-folk, or roots jazz. But really, it's more like "The guy who writes roots folk, blues and jazz songs on acoustic guitar teams up with a vibraphone player with beautiful melodies, and they colour it with violin, acoustic bass, trumpet and some electric guitar." File under:

Emenau and Lutes are two old friends from back in New Brunswick, who even played in the same high school band, went their separate paths, but hooked up again in 2014. They even named their joint project after a New Brunswick town. As for how such a combo of theirs would work, there were certainly no precedents out there, but it turned out to be a natural fit. With hints of early jazz, folk and blues material, both found common ground. Lutes, a spry and light-hearted lyricist, keeps the fun going and the pace lively. Emenau, on that most heavenly instrument, pours on a supply of wonderful, surprising notes, a beautiful compliment to Lutes' aching vocals.

Sage Reynolds' bass and Josh Zubot's violin are integral to the album's sound as well, and Ben Charest's guitar lines and Ivanhoe Jolicoeur's trumpet provide some special moments as well. Truth and Lies is an especially exciting number, as Emenau chases Lutes' quick vocal with ringing notes of his own, Zubot and Reynolds scooting along as well, dashing from key change to key change. This is new, I want more.

**FOLK ROOTS/FOLK BRANCHES WITH MIKE REGENSTREIF**  
**February 6, 2016**

**Sussex – Parade Day**  
**Lucky Bear Records**  
[sussexmusic.ca](http://sussexmusic.ca)

I've known Montreal-based singer-songwriter **Rob Lutes** a long time and have enjoyed watching (and listening) to him develop as a singer, songwriter, guitarist and performer. He knows well how to combine his gritty voice and fluid, blues-based guitar playing into something very compelling. With **Sussex**, Rob has taken his music to a new level.

Sussex is a collaboration of Rob, who is rooted in folk and blues, and vibraphonist **Michael Emenau**, whose roots are in classical music and jazz. Rob and Michael played together 25 or so years ago as high school students in New Brunswick and began collaborating again after Michael moved to Montreal in 2011.

*Parade Day*, the first Sussex album, includes five songs written or co-written by Rob, one by Michael, and five of their songwriting collaborations. They also include a charming cover of **Randy Newman's** "Dayton, Ohio – 1903."

Rob plays acoustic guitar and fronts the band as lead singer while Michael is heard throughout on vibes and occasionally on percussion and piano. And they get some great backup from the likes of guitarist **Ben Charest** (best known for his infectious film score for *Les Triplettes de Bellville*); trumpet and flugelhorn player **Ivanhoe Jolicoeur**; upright bassist **Sage Reynolds**; and violinist **Josh Zubot**.

The album opens strongly with "Hollow Log," a song about maintaining a sense of balance in the face of life's problems. The vibes weaving in and around the vocal lines give the song an irresistible jazzy-rootsy flavor.

The jazz-meets-roots fusion really comes alive on such numbers as "Truth and Lies," with some nimble, Reinhardt-like guitar lines by Ben; "Superman's Escape," a bouncy song with the vibes, guitars, violin, bass and horn all contributing to the toe-tapping groove; and "Sparkle Blues," a slow, jazz ballad.

I also really enjoyed Sussex's take on "Dayton, Ohio – 1903," a gentle period piece from Randy Newman's classic 1972 album *Sail Away* (which was also memorably covered on **Priscilla Herdman's** *Forgotten Dreams* – a 1980 album I had a little something to do with).

Sussex has already launched *Parade Day* in Quebec City and Montreal. Several more launch concerts are coming up including a show on March 25 here in Ottawa at [Irene's](#).

--Mike Regenstreif



**January 27, 2016**

**By Bernard Perusse, special to Montreal Gazette**

### **Rob Lutes leaves his comfort zone for Sussex**

For Rob Lutes, the road to authenticity started with the Bee Gees and led to scratchy old 78 records.

“Musically, as I’ve gotten older, I’ve always gone backward,” the Montreal singer-songwriter said during a recent interview. As a child in the 1970s, Lutes knew every song on the 1969 collection *Best of Bee Gees*. From there, he discovered the Beatles, then embraced electric Chicago blues players and later landed on the work of Delta blues pickers like Charley Patton and Robert Johnson, whose essential work in the 1920s and 1930s is never far from Lutes’s heart.

Those decades, in fact, seem to be the spiritual setting for *Parade Day*, a recently released disc by Sussex, a group centred on Lutes and vibraphone player Michael Emenau. Touches of between-the-wars jazz and blues can be found throughout the album, which also features, as guests, guitarist Ben Charest, best known for co-writing the Oscar-nominated song *Belleville Rendez-vous* from the 2003 animated film *Les triplettes de Belleville*, violinist Josh Zubot, trumpet and flugelhorn player Ivanhoe Jolicoeur and bassist Sage Reynolds. Fred Bouchard produced the album with Lutes and Emenau.

“Ironically, as technology increases and more things are available on YouTube, what makes me most excited are these early recordings on 78 that someone has uploaded. I never would have heard (Patton’s) *Green River Blues* without YouTube,” Lutes said. “In an age where everything is photoshopped and edited and vocals are Auto-Tuned and the world has become something you can’t necessarily trust,

these early recordings — with their blemishes and with their mistakes and with their out-of tune guitars and their funny rhythms and extra beats — speak to authenticity. This record has some of that.”

Whatever blemishes there are on Parade Day don’t leap out at the listener, but the 1934 Gibson L-00 guitar Lutes plays on Hollow Log and Ginger nicely symbolizes the group’s quest for musical truth over polished production. The instrument was passed on to him by his brother-in-law, whose uncle, killed at Juno Beach in 1944, had owned it. “The intonation is weird, the neck is a little bit off, so it doesn’t sound perfectly in tune — but, man, does it sound right,” Lutes said.

Lutes and Emenau were best friends in their teens, when both attended Kennebecasis Valley High School in New Brunswick. Their band, The Hippopotamus Waterfall — a name inspired by Buffalo Springfield — played cover versions of evergreens like The Letter, Rock and Roll Song and Heart of Gold.

Having largely lost contact for some years, the two reconnected when Lutes was touring in Europe in 2007. Emenau was living in Paris at the time. The friendship resumed in earnest when Emenau moved to Montreal in 2011 and soon joined Charest’s Terrible Orchestre de Belleville.

“We started writing tunes. Michael would push me in different directions. He added instrumental breaks I wouldn’t have had there,” Lutes said.

Lutes said his more intuitive roots-based approach to songs and Emenau’s jazz background and knowledge of theory — he holds a Bachelor of Music in Classical Performance from McGill University — complemented each other to form the basis of Sussex’s unusual sound. “I would come at a song and be playing it, and Michael would say, ‘It breaks every harmonic and compositional rule — but it works — so let’s go with it.’ We pushed each other.”

The two wrote the material, both separately and together, with a couple of lyrical contributions from Lutes’s wife, Monique Reidel. The disc features one cover, Randy Newman’s Dayton, Ohio — 1903.

Some of the more recognizably Lutes-ian songs proposed were set aside for another time. “I basically let Michael judge,” Lutes said. “He had somewhere in his head this idea of what we were going for, and he would tell me if a given song fit what Sussex was.”

Even the name of the group reflects the mutually challenging dynamics, Lutes explained. Sussex is a town on the Kennebecasis River, about 45 minutes away from where Lutes and Emenau grew up in New Brunswick. “I grew up half a kilometre from Michael’s house and



Sussex was outside the zone where we lived,” he said. “So we liked the sound of it as a name, but it was also representative of being outside our comfort zone.”

**AT A GLANCE**

**Sussex** performs Feb. 5 at 7:30 p.m. at La Sala Rossa, 4848 St-Laurent Blvd. Admission costs \$20. Students pay \$10 at the door and children 12 and under get in free. For details and regular-price ticket purchases, go to [www.hellodarlinproductions.com](http://www.hellodarlinproductions.com).

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February 23, 2016

The video player shows a man, Hance Colburne, smiling in front of a cityscape. The text "Information Morning Saint John With Hance Colburne" is overlaid on the right side of the video. Below the video is a dark blue bar with white text.

Take Liberty: Spotlight Sussex  
**Information Morning - Saint John**

February 23, 2016 | Season 2016, Episode 300240298 | 07:54

Singer-songwriter Rob Lutes has teamed up with an old friend to make some new music. Rob Lutes and Michael Ermenau are Sussex.



February 2, 2016

GLOBAL NEWS MORNING MONTREAL

February 2 2016 8:05am

04:04



## A band called Sussex

Michael Emenau and Rob Lutes from Sussex drop by the Morning News to talk about the band's upcoming album launch at Sala Rosa.





January 17, 2016

## New Montreal band "Sussex"

Air Date: Jan 17, 2016 12:00 AM ET

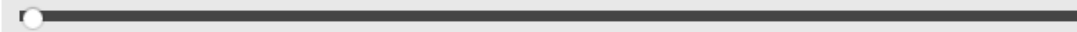


All in a Weekend Montreal  
New Montreal band "Sussex"



LISTEN

00:00 / 09:02



It's been many years since two Montreal musicians started their own band in high school. Their music careers took them in different directions since then. But now they've started a new band. Rob Lutes and Michael Emenau tell us about their upcoming album



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CBC

# EAST COAST MUSIC

with Bob Mersereau

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**August 13, 2015**

## **Rob Lutes always in touch with his N.B. roots**

Originally from Rothesay, veteran roots music performer Rob Lutes never forgets his home town when it comes to live shows. I'm not sure if he uses the booking as an excuse to visit family and friends, or vice versa, but you can count on a show or two every year, when he can zip down from Montreal.

This time, you can catch him at The Barrel's Head in Rothesay, and don't worry about having to stay up late. This is a special matinee performance, happening on Sunday, Aug. 16. That's a relaxing way to spend the day, in a nice gastropub and wine bar.

Lutes doesn't have a new album to promote this time, but there is a new project he's about to unveil. The long-time solo artist has actually joined a band. Check out the name; it's called Sussex. There's no actual connection to our beloved dairy capital, but I'm sure the town appreciates the nod. Sussex is a collaboration between Lutes and a long-time friend, vibraphonist Michael Emenau. The music they are creating is a unique blend of jazz, blues and folk, with vibes, stand-up bass, violin and more, and I'm pretty excited about what I've heard on the group's website. There's an album coming soon, in the fall.

In the meantime, you can't go wrong with a Rob Lutes show. Also on the bill is Saint John chanteuse Apryll Aileen, with her splashy modern pop vocal material. Show time at The Barrel's Head is 3 P.M. Sunday.



# Booking/Management

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