

THE DAILY NONPAREIL

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On the RIGHT TRACK



Musician, songwriter works past blindness to discover artistic vision

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God never closes a door without opening a window.

At least that's the philosophy of Council Bluffs resident and musician John Watt.

Watt, 40, has been blind for more than 20 years, after he attempted to take his own life at the age of 18.

"My blindness is the result of an

attempted suicide, a gunshot wound that left me totally and permanently blind," he said.

"It was simply a case of clinical depression. I can even remember being depressed as a toddler, though at the time I didn't really understand what was going on."

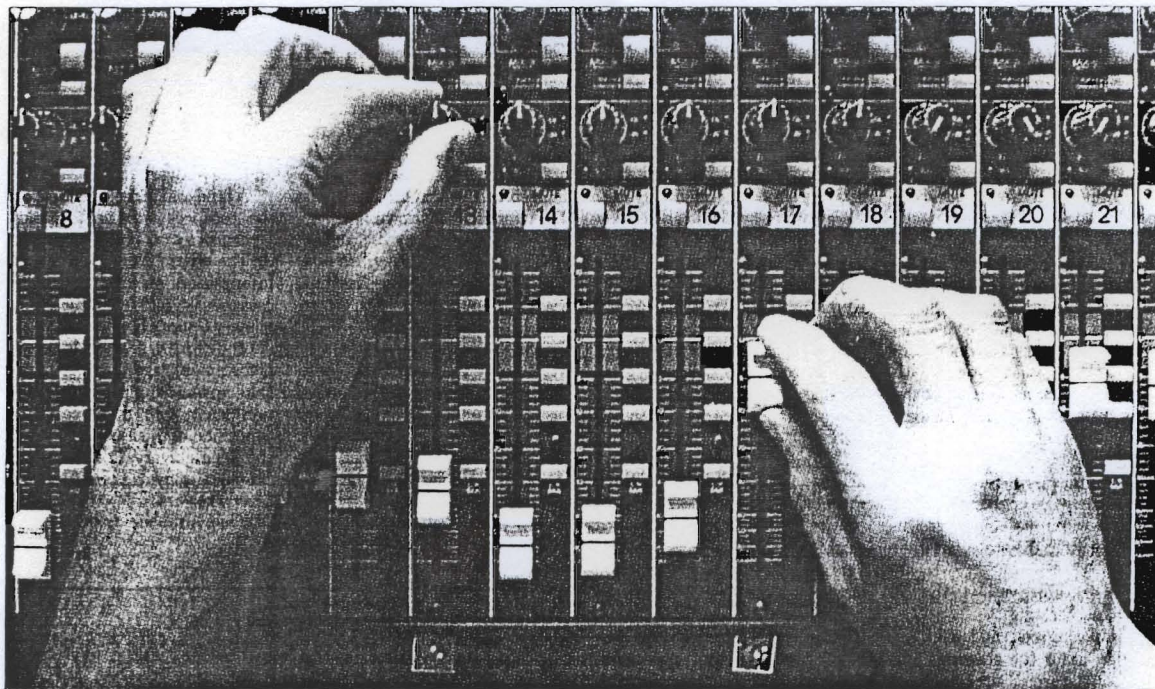
But the darkness did not prevent him from finding a light inside himself.

"In any case, God never closes a door without opening a window," he said "That

window for me was musical insight and artistic vision. Without having lost my sight, I probably would never have picked up a guitar. I might have ended up driving a truck."

When he picked up that guitar he found what he referred to as his "natural aptitude" for music, which would become his passion.

TRACK/See Page 6A



Staff photo Ben DeVries

Council Bluffs musician John Watt works on a soundboard at his home in Council Bluffs.

Track

Continued from Page 1A

"If I wouldn't have lost my sight, I wouldn't have found my artistic vision," he said. "I just never would have played. Which is the ironic part."

Watt taught himself how to play the guitar with little to no outside influences. In addition, he taught himself how to play the harmonica, keyboards and piano.

Music is a passion he has cultivated over time, he said. For the first 10 years of his musical career, Watt said he worked as a solo artist.

He is currently a member of local band "Private Hoserod" as well as having recently started his own band, "The John Watt Band."

"I am still with the band I was playing with before," he said. "One day, a couple guys approached me about starting a new band. While we were talking about names, they suggested we call it 'The John Watt Band,' so I actually didn't name the group that. But I was very honored to know they wanted to do that."

In keeping with promoting his music as much as possible, Watt had a home recording studio built at his house.

"It's simply too expensive to keep going to commercial studios, so I simply bought my own," he said.

The home studio features top-of-the-line equipment and gear that Watt purchased himself.

He has already released a couple of CDs. He released his latest CD, "Big Studio Fears," earlier this year. The CD features selections written by

Watt such as: "She's My Girlfriend," "Walk Away" and "I Loved You the Most."

Within the next two years, he said, he plans on releasing three or four more CDs.

"I recorded at my house so I could do what I wanted to without the clock ticking," he said.

"Big Studio Fears" sold out twice before just being re-released.

Some of his other work has also gone on to larger markets. His song "Forevermore" has been recorded by country music artist Gary Redden of Nashville; who Watt said, is planning to re-record it in the near future.

Watt is also a bit of an author.

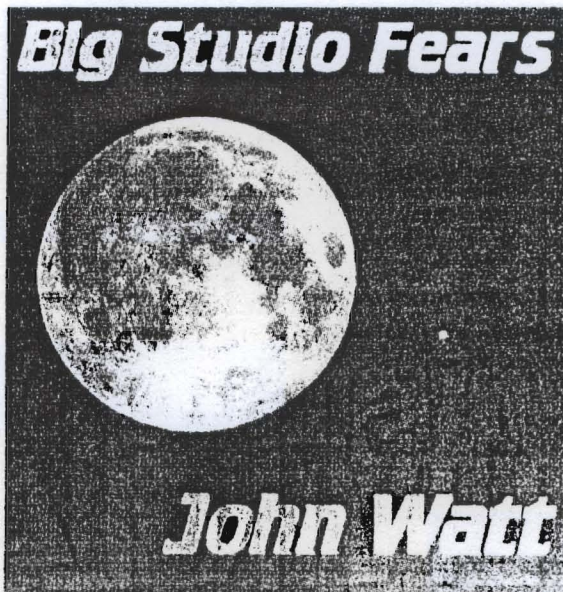
He has written two books: "Cabin Fever: 1867" and "Words are Words."

"Words are words" is a tale of tragedy and misadventure in the far north filled with grit and realism," he said. "I was lucky enough to find an agent Dixie Segnar, to help me edit the project."

While he puts the best of both talents into his songwriting, Watt said he pushes himself to do more.

He recently attended the 89.7 The River Music Summit, sponsored by Iowa Western Community College's radio station.

"It was kind of a thing to give local music a push," he said. "One of the best pieces of advice I picked up was to release several EPs instead of one large album. It keeps things fresh, and that is



exactly what I intend to do. There will be three or four EPs coming from me in the next two years."

His work with the bands is also something that keeps him heavily involved. "The John Watt Band" will perform Aug. 28 at the Red Oak Tap tavern in Red Oak. Audience members may be able to request some of his previous songs, but he said he's focused on new musical pieces and his future projects.

"I had a lot of fans asking where they could get a copy (of the CD), and I always had to tell them it was sold out," he said. "I should never have let it slide, but all my energy was going into my new material -

some of the best material I have."