

Hudson Valley

C'MON
JUMP IN!

The 12
Coolest
Swimming
Holes,
Lakes and
Waterfalls



- SPECIAL ICE CREAM SHOPS
- A HOME FULL OF LOCAL FINDS
- OUR (UNOFFICIAL) BOURBON TRAIL

WSDG
WALTERS-STORYK DESIGN GROUP



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AUGUST 2023

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CALLING ALL FALL FOLIAGE FANS

Send us your favorite, prettiest leaf-peeping spots in the Valley at edit@hvmag.com—we'd love to include your picks in a future issue!





Grand Gestures



PHOTO BY GU HANBO

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS FOR SOME OF THE MOST ACOUSTICALLY INCREDIBLE SPACES IN THE WORLD START RIGHT HERE IN THE HUDSON VALLEY. TURN THE PAGE TO MEET EXPERT SOUND MAN JOHN STORYK. BY JONNA GALLO WEPPLER



If you live or even just consistently spend time in the Hudson Valley, chances are you're familiar with the work of a man named John Storyk. The globally-renowned architect and acoustics expert—who leads a thriving design group based in Highland that has offices around the world—moved to the region right around the time a certain peace-love-and-music festival was putting Bethel on the map.

It was nothing short of perfect timing, given that music has played a huge role in Storyk's life, both professionally and personally. During his years at Princeton University in the late 1960s, he studied architecture with some incredible professors while devotedly nurturing a blues band. "I've loved music as far back as I can remember, starting when I was 10 or 11 years old," he recalls fondly. Music was always where Storyk was at, one way or another.

After graduation, he continued playing with his college band and started his first architecture-adjacent job as a volunteer carpenter at a Manhattan club in SoHo (long before SoHo was SoHo). Offered the opportunity to share ideas, Storyk piped up with visionary concepts based on a mix of his college learnings, lifelong love of music, and gut feelings about acoustic design. The recommendations were not only welcomed but incorporated into what ended up being a counterculture enclave called Cerebrum—which was featured on the cover of *LIFE* Magazine. Word made its way to rock legend Jimi Hendrix, and the hugely influential guitarist soon stopped by to check it out. In short order, Hendrix tapped Storyk to design a Greenwich Village club that ended up morphing into a personal recording studio unlike any before it that endures to this day. Dubbed Electric Lady Studios, the now iconic facility has hosted sessions for The Rolling Stones, Stevie Wonder, Adele, and Taylor Swift, among countless other luminaries in the music world.

"I'm a huge believer in serendipity, it's my favorite word," says Storyk, now 77. "Great things often can and do develop by chance. My life is proof." Meaning early on, one assignment led to another, and before long he was commissioned by Woodstock entrepreneur Albert Grossman for a series of Hudson Valley projects including the Bearsville Theater and Recording Studio, permanently securing his ties to the artsy, creative region.

Meanwhile, as commissions kept coming and business boomed, Storyk and the love of his life, Beth Walters, built Walters-Storyk Design Group (WSDG) from the ground up. Now happily settled in a home they dreamed up together in Highland, that includes a separate office structure to

comfortably accommodate WSDG's 20-plus member U.S. team (plus a regulation-size softball field for good measure), Storyk devotes a lot of attention to local, frequently pro bono projects, though he also still relishes a steady flow of international assignments, especially in China. (The son of an international commodities trader, Storyk traveled often as a kid and developed an ease about being on the move that stayed with him.)

Passion projects in the Hudson Valley area include revamping WKNY Radio Kingston's new broadcast complex in a 157-year-old hexagonal brick building on Broadway and enhancing the boathouse at Marist College, which needed a design solution for a podium set-up that made it hard to understand what speakers were saying. Ironically, poor speech intelligibility is not at all uncommon in meeting rooms and public speaking venues, according to Storyk, noting that WSDG also made acoustic upgrades to the Maggazino Italian Art Gallery in Cold Spring.

"Many of these problems are basic and not overly expensive to correct," says Storyk. Today's sophisticated sound reverberation measurement tools and many new, reasonably priced acoustic treatments can be installed quickly and inexpensively, and the differences in sound quality are dramatic. "Professional acousticians understand the root cause of reverberation problems and are familiar with cost-effective wall and ceiling treatments that are available to ameliorate them."

Those tricks of the trade helped WSDG capably tackle the near-constant echo of dogs barking that had plagued the humans and animals at the Dutchess County SPCA in Hyde Park for as long as anyone could remember. Not only was the problem solved, but one of the WSDG associates who led the project ended up adopting one of the resident dogs. "That lucky canine is now our company mascot," says Storyk.

As for his global pursuits, in addition to large-scale jobs in Germany, France, Switzerland, and Qatar, WSDG has designed and built over 20 significant studio and educational complexes in China over the past 25 years, including a state-of-the-art professional production facility for China Film Group, the futuristic Ascentone Studios, and 55TEC Studio, all in Beijing supporting China's burgeoning pop artists and robust audio recording scene. It's music to Storyk's ears.

"The world is a tough place, much more so now than it was when I was starting out," Storyk reflects. "But even so, serendipity is available for all of us. You just have to have your antenna up and be ready."

Acoustic wiz John Storyk with global music industry legends Alicia Keys and Herb Alpert, and just a few of the thousands of acoustically awesome spaces designed by WSDG: Ascentone Studios in Beijing, the Magazzino Italian Art Foundation rooftop viewing studio in Cold Spring, and WKNY station in Kingston.

