

# The Intelligencer

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## Music with a political message

Rick Denzien produces tunes for the Web out of his studio in Ambler.

*By Brenda Lange, Correspondent*

**Rick Denzien has strong beliefs, a philosophical outlook and earnest speech.**

**He easily could have been the theologian or philosopher he once studied to be.**

**Instead, the singer/songwriter from Ambler blends his views of government, big business and the environment with his musical talents to tell deeply personal stories about our past, present and future.**

**"I got angry at businesses that messed up the environment," says Denzien, of the title track on 1991's "Heal the Land," his first release. "That whole CD made a statement on the environment."**

**"Exit 21," Denzien's latest effort, continues in the theme of what he calls "organic" or real music.**

**"This is about the exit of the old century into the new -- the age of innocence coming into the age of accountability," he says as he tries to explain the CD's crossover appeal to all age groups -- even to children as young as 10.**

**"These kids like music that's not contrived," says Denzien, who will perform at 1 PM today at Track Records in the Doylestown Shopping Center, Doylestown. "They may be in 10-year old bodies, but they have 25-year old heads. They're all computer- and Internet- and technology savvy. They're almost adults already."**

**Appealing to an Internet-savvy generation is appropriate, as "Desperation," the lead song on the CD, has topped the Internet music charts as set by [www.mPulse.com](http://www.mPulse.com), since its debut last March.**

**"This song deals with my frustration with government," Denzien says. "In the context of a free society, no matter who you are, you should have freedom to be happy. Yet, if you go against the grain of society, and are a contrarian -- like MOVE or Waco -- you will become a target."**

The CD is just now making its way onto AAA (adult alternative) stations across the country, behind the single's worldwide travel via the Web.

"We just started on the Internet right away in 1991 with "Heal the Land," he says.

He hasn't looked back.

Denzien is a native of Buffalo, NY, and settled in the Philadelphia area after graduating from Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, NY, with a degree in religion, philosophy and psychology.

"Mostly self-taught" on the guitar, Denzien credits an epiphany in his backyard when he was about 16 and one excellent music teacher with helping him realize his talent on the instrument.

Denzien formed his own recording label when he couldn't find a major label that appreciated his music enough to represent the entire CD.

Slot-1, named after the position held by the No.1 song on the Billboard Magazine hit list, is headquartered in a residential/industrial neighborhood in Ambler.

In his cave-like studio there, Denzien composes and records with his band, The Gas House Gorillas. He also produces albums for Sony, as well as local bands, when he's not touring.

["Laser Writing on the Moon,"](#) Denzien's second release, won a Billboard Magazine Songwriter's Award in 1994 and began to receive air time on those early AAA stations.

Drummer Ronnie Crawford and bassist Mike Gregos, as well as Philadelphia-area musicians J.J. Zeller on drums, Dave Strong on guitar and Phil Smithburg on bass all joined Denzien on "Exit 21" which was part of the Grammy process for best engineered album.

"It didn't make the shortest list," he says, holding his thumb and forefinger close together, "but it made the long short list. It was the thrill of my life."

Explaining Denzien's musical style requires a long list of adjectives, and some Internet music commentators have described it this way:

"Lyrically, 'Exit 21' leans toward the political, blending optimism with social commentary, interspersing spirituality with practicality. The songs build and draw you in; the hooks captivate." ([Andy Stevens, Press & Sun Bulletin](#)).

**"It is honest, thought-provoking tunes with a message." [\(Muzik-Man\)](#).**

**Or, as Denzien says simply: "You don't create music in a vacuum. Sometimes it's a struggle, sometimes it comes like a flash. When you make that connection...find the real message, it just works."**

**Denzien doesn't come across as your "typical" rocker. Indeed, his music blends elements of rock and pop with very introspective lyrics. His Old Navy fleece and cargo pants are a paradox to the double-pierced ear and sunglasses, but his philosophies come across as well thought out and deeply seated.**

**Married and the father of two, Denzien involves his family as much as possible in his work.**

**He tells the story of his son, who, when he was about 1-1/2, sat on his father's knee during a recording session. The boy stayed perfectly still and quiet until the final chords.**

**Then, a little voice -- "Daddy done?" -- came through softly on the recording, where Denzien let it remain, maybe as a reminder of what's really important in his life.**