

More Than Happy Together

By Helen Marketti

The 1960's was a decade that began rather calm and unassuming but ended with a sonic boom for culture, politics, society and music. Turbulence and unrest began the stirrings of a time where youth sought to have their voices heard. Songs on the charts eventually graduated from the simple teen crushes and lost loves to more thought provoking, sign of the times issues.

A group that left their mark on the charts during this time were The Turtles. Originally calling themselves, The Crossfires; The Turtles became one of the 1960's signature rock groups with popular hits such as, "Happy Together", "She'd Rather Be With Me", "It Ain't Me Babe", (originally written by Bob Dylan), "Let Me Be", "Elenore" and "Outside Chance" among many other notable hits.

Over 40 years have passed since The Turtles were one of the "teen sensations" and its fascinating to hear the reflective thoughts and ideas from those who were there to contribute to an ever changing time.

"We're still building ourselves, still growing emotionally, physically and spiritually. Howard and I love playing live concerts. We've never taken a break to rejuvenate. We're still in progress". This is the response from Mark Volman when asked what was the spark that keeps them going after 40 years.

Mark Volman (aka "Flo") and Howard Kaylan (aka "Eddie") still tour the country to this day and perform about 60 gigs a year, singing the songs that made The Turtles climb the record charts 40 years ago. However, there is more to their lives than "just being a Turtle".

Howard spends his time writing fiction and screenplays. Mark is a professor of Music History at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. He also teaches courses that help students learn the "laws of music", such as copyrights, management, publicity, producing and song writing. Mark has taught at the university for nine years and because of his experiences and knowledge, he is able to give guidance and advice to singers and musicians entering the music world today. "We were so young. (The Turtles) We were drawn into the liar of the wolves. It's difficult to get objectivity in the music business".

Mark also has a consulting business where he can assist former students who want to delve into the rock and roll genre. He works with signed and unsigned artists. He consults with aspiring artists all over the world. "I love music and what it is. I want to help students now". What better mentor than someone who learned the "hard way" as there was no one at the time for The Turtles to turn to for proper direction and advice during the 60's.

For Johnny Barbata, who was The Turtles drummer at the height of their popularity which included his drumming on their 10 hit singles remembers being told by Gene Clark of The Byrds that The Turtles were looking for a drummer (as former drummer Don Murray had left the band). He auditioned for the open seat and was basically hired on the spot. The spark for Johnny after all these years is simple but says it all, "I love playing the music".

Although Johnny is not currently involved with touring with The Turtles, he has acquired an impressive, if not envious, rock and roll drummer's resume. His extensive experience also includes having been the drummer for Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and for Jefferson Airplane and Jefferson Starship. He has performed on over 100 albums as a studio drummer.

He remembers his time with The Turtles as a great time and experience. "When you saw The Turtles, you always got more than what you bargained for.

It was a show! I did drum solos and Mark and Howard entertained. Fans saw a show as well as a concert".

Johnny also shares a story about overzealous fans at a gig in Montgomery, Alabama during the 60's. "The place was packed with girls. Cops were lined up to hold them back. As we ran past, some of the girls were able to break through the line of cops. They tore our clothes, pulled off buttons...I was scared for my life". (...and those fans probably still have those souvenirs to this day!) His thoughts on why people still like 60's music, "Its honest, its natural, there are great melodies. Its real".

Currently, Johnny and his wife, Angie, have a new CD called, "California". He also has written an autobiography titled, "Johnny Barbata, The Legendary Life of a Rock Star Drummer". The book delves into Johnny's memories with The Turtles, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Jefferson Airplane and other musical as well as personal experiences. Filled with stories and anecdotes, its an excellent read for aspiring drummers and rock and roll fans.

Along with the music and lyrics of rock bands also comes the surroundings, the neighborhoods, the hang-outs and the forming of lasting friendships.

Laurel Canyon (in Los Angeles) was the neighborhood where many rock and folk musicians lived during the 60's. It has seemed to be given a glorified and romanticized image because of its famous residents of once upon a time. (The Doors, The Byrds, The Turtles, The Mamas & Papas, Joni Mitchell, Graham Nash and the beat goes on...)

Having lived in Laurel Canyon, Johnny had this to share, "I lived there from 1965-1971. It was great... the whole underground movement that was going on. I liked it".

Mark remembers the "ole neighborhood" as well, "We all lived there because it was affordable. It wasn't an overly desirable neighborhood. All of us were striving and finding our way. I lived there from 1967-1987. It was in the middle of the Hollywood dream. It was close to the music industry and what it represented to the 60's at the time. We came together and wrote songs. It was the spirit of it. A 5 to 7 minute drive down the canyon and you were either on Hollywood Blvd or the Sunset Strip. We mostly rented, there wasn't a whole lot of buying. I remember my wife and I going to Robby Krieger's (The Doors) house and playing Yahtzee with he and his wife or having dinner at John Densmore's (The Doors) house. I also remember hanging out with Three Dog Night and Tim Buckley. There were jamming sessions and hanging out with Joni Mitchell and Graham Nash. Being in The Turtles was my job. When we weren't on the road, my wife and I volunteered at our child's elementary school. Laurel Canyon was where we lived. I never looked at it as a tourist attraction".

Billy Steele was a guitarist for The Turtles during the 1970's. He toured with them as, "Flo & Eddie and The Turtles". Billy started playing electric guitar when he was the tender age of seven. He would bring his guitar to school and play for his classmates. Among his early influences were Top 40 radio hits, The Ventures and Bill Haley & The Comets.

By junior high, Billy had a band. The drummer had a driver's license and his own car. "It didn't matter if he could play the drums or not. As long as we had a ride to the gigs. None of us were old enough to drive yet. We played at old folks homes and flea markets", Billy remembers. "By the time I was 18, I had a record deal with Capitol Records".

Billy has quite an extensive music experience that spans generations as well as genres. He has wrote

Turtle Notes



•The Doors were the opening act for The Turtles when they played at the Whiskey-A-Go-Go.

•During the 60's, The Turtles sang a commercial jingle for Pepsi to the tune of their hit song, "Happy Together".

•The Turtles were the favorite rock group of President Nixon's daughter, Tricia, and were asked to play at a ball held at the White House.

•On Saturday, May 12th at The Palace Theatre in Marion, Ohio, there will be a performance by The Turtles and The Buckingham's. For ticket information, visit www.marionpalace.org

•To find out more about The Turtles, visit www.theturtles.com

•For more information on Johnny Barbata, visit www.johnnybarbata.com

•For more information on Billy Steele and the Hot Club Quartette, visit www.hotclubquartet.com

songs for and with people including Alice Cooper and Steve Perry (Journey). He has done a great deal of studio work that also has involved sound effects and commercial jingles. His interests span from Blues, Rock and Roll and Jazz. He has also played in big band orchestras.

Billy currently lives in the Los Angeles area and plays guitar with his own jazz band, "Hot Club Quartette". They have a fan following in Los Angeles and also as far away as Japan. Young people attend their shows as well as people in their 70's and 80's. Music has a way of bridging the gap and bringing people together to listen, enjoy, reflect and learn. "You create your style from what has been done before", Billy said when asked about his current band. "You plug in to who's out there and what they're doing. That's how we formed our band". Hot Club Quartette focuses on music from the 1930's.

Even though they are involved with their own various projects and live in different places throughout the United States, the friendships have remained over the years. What's the ingredient that keeps friendships going for over 30 or 40 years?

Johnny Barbata, "To have respect for each other".

Billy Steele, "I've never had an ego problem with the other guys. We're there for the music. We liked working together. It was fun and effortless".

Finally when asked how he would like The Turtles to be remembered, Mark Volman's answer was insightful and reflective. Pausing to gather his thoughts on The Turtles, as well as how he, as an individual, would like to be remembered, "There are different ways to reflect. We (The Turtles) were just hard working singers and musicians. Look at our history, our music and experimentation with songs. There are more things ahead that haven't happened yet. Look at our life as a career, not just having been in The Turtles. I would like people to see my involvement in other things (teaching, working with charities, becoming Valedictorian...) Look at the friendship between Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan. Survey the legacy."

Local websites and weather at lifestyles2000.net

Celebrate Easter at The Lodge Sawmill Creek Resort

Sunday, April 8
Spectacular Easter Sunday
Brunch in Wilderness Hall

Garden Setting
for the Easter
Bunny

\$20.95 Adults
\$8.95 Children
Reservations
Required

ASK ABOUT ONE
AND TWO NIGHT
PACKAGES

Sawmill Creek
Shops

Open 10:00-5:00pm Daily
Men's & Women's Clothing,
Jewelry, Unique Gifts,
Classic Home Accessories
Children's Toys and Games
Gourmet Kitchen Shop
Books and Keepsakes
419-433-5402

Sawmill Creek
Golf Club

18-hole Tom Fazio Course
Open to the Public
April-October

Stop in Mulligan's Pub for a
casual lunch or dinner.
Deck Dining with a
view of the course.

Pro Shop/Rental Clubs
419-433-3789 for Tee-Times



Sawmill Creek Resort
Cleveland Rd. • Huron, Ohio
www.sawmillcreek.com

800-729-6455
or
419-433-3800

April 2007