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By: Helen Marketti

Peter Tork was one fourth of the 60s group, The Monkees. Many familiar hits became part of the staple soundtrack for the generation such as *Last Train to Clarksville*, *I'm Not Your Steppin' Stone*, *I'm a Believer*, *Valleri*, *Daydream Believer*, *Pleasant Valley Sunday* and more. Talking with Peter Tork was a journey through time and memories which were tied together with his humor, personal reflection and love of music.

Peter lived in Greenwich Village during the early 60s and was part of the folk music scene at the time. "Things moved around a lot back then; a lot of shifting of personnel. People would just get on stage and jam with each other," remembers Peter. "I was in a band for a while with Stephen Stills (Buffalo Springfield, Crosby-Stills-Nash-Young). I was also in a band for a while with a woman named, Carol Hunter who later went on and played guitar for Neil Diamond. It wasn't so much being part of a regular band as it was just playing with



Peter Tork

Peter Tork Plays The Winchester in Lakewood with his band Shoe Suede Blues on Saturday, November 6.

people, forming duets and so forth."

Following his intuition to move out to LA with many of his contemporaries, Peter found himself auditioning for a television show by chance. "Stephen Stills suggested I go to this audition," recalls Peter. "He called me one day and said, 'I ran across this guy who is making this TV show based on A

Hard Day's Night and I think you

good because John knew the deal; he knew the truth about us."

Over forty years have passed since The Monkees were on television, appeared in teen magazines and toured with Jimi Hendrix, yet fans are still interested. Peter shares his thoughts as to why that may be, "I am not quite positive of an answer any more. I will tell you what I think accounted for the value of The Monkees in the beginning and the years after. The Monkees were the only TV show on the air at the time starring young adults without any senior adults overseeing them. I think it



should try out for it." I asked Stephen why he didn't go out for the part. He said they told him his hair and teeth were wrong. They asked Stephen if he had a friend who was like him but better

looking. (laughs) So, I went to the audition, got the part and that's how I became one of The Monkees." (Along with Mike Nesmith, Micky Dolenz and Davy Jones.)

The Monkees television series lasted two years and during that time, the band also toured. "We started touring in 1967," recalls Peter. "Jimi Hendrix toured with us. He was the opening act for one of the tours. It was brilliant for us but not for Jimi (laughs). We also toured with a band called The Sundowners and also The Candy Store Prophets that had Bobby Hart and Tommy Boyce who wrote *Last Train to Clarksville*, *I Wanna Be Free*, *Valleri* and most of the first album.

While on tour, The Beatles hosted a party for The Monkees while in London. "I'm not exactly sure who said what to whom but it was one of those things where there was a request of meeting each other," said Peter. "They tended to hang out in the back room of a bar that was called, The Speakeasy. So we went, well...three of us from each group. It was Mike who wouldn't go and it was Ringo who didn't come. It was great meeting them and hanging out with them, of course. I had heard that John Lennon had once said of The Monkees (British accent), "They're not The Beatles, they're The Marx Brothers!" That was

reflected a requirement of the times. Up until then, it was *My Three Sons* and *Father Knows Best* which was more of a reflection of the 50s ethos where authority figures ran the show. Everyone was aspiring to be the big daddy."

He continues, "The Monkees have lasted because it showed that you can't trust authority figures, you're on your own. In the case of The Monkees, you can be on your own and still be cheerful about it. There were no authority figures with The Monkees, it was just us. Micky has said that it's also because we weren't topical and that is correct, too. If the show was topical, it would have died with the times."

Today, Peter tours with his band, Shoe Suede Blues which also works some familiar favorites from The Monkees catalog into the show. "We've been around for about thirteen years," said Peter. "Band members have changed but regardless of who is with us, we have a great time. The name of the band is a spin off from the song, *Blue Suede Shoes*. I like to refer to it as a time when all the music genres overlapped and when you heard all different types of songs on the radio in the early days. I love Little Richard; I think he is the greatest rock and roll singer of all time. He was just a total powerhouse and taught us all how to do it. Then along came The Beatles who deeply influenced me. But that blues-pop thing just sends me."

For more information about Peter Tork, please visit: www.petertork.com And www.myspace.com/petertorkandshoesuedeblues



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