

SONNY GERACI

Birthday Celebration and Benefit

By Helen Marketti



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Sonny Geraci who was the lead singer for The Outsiders (Time Won't Let Me) and for Climax (Precious and Few) is currently recovering in a rehab facility after becoming ill in April of 2012. There is a rockin' event planned over a two-day period in November to celebrate Sonny's birthday and to earn proceeds to assist him and his family with medical expenses. The event will be on Friday, November 15 from 6pm - 12 midnight and Saturday, November 16 from 2pm - 12 midnight at the Z-plex in Streetsboro, Ohio. Tickets are \$35 for *each* day, which may be purchased in advance and will be available at the door. The lineup will be the same for both days except for the surprise guests. There is also going to be a silent auction and raffle of many cool rock and roll items. Please plan to attend and show your support for Sonny, his family and enjoy a great time listening to some good ole rock and roll!



Sonny Geraci has many wonderful friends who have been working diligently to get this birthday and benefit bash off the ground. Two of his closest friends are Rae Antonin who has worked as Sonny's personal assistant for 18 years and Dennis Tufano (The original voice of The Buckingham: Kind of A Drag, Don't You Care, Mercy Mercy Mercy). They took some time to share the details of Sonny's gradual progress, plans for the benefit and hope for the future.

"Right now Sonny thinks it's a birthday party for him. He isn't aware that it's a benefit as well," explains Rae. "We have so many wonderful people who are donating items for the auction and raffle. Some of the items are Jersey Boys posters that were autographed by Frankie Valli (The Four Seasons). Gene Simmons (KISS) has donated an autographed t-shirt and sent several items of KISS memorabilia. Items have been pouring in from artists almost daily who want to contribute. We are going to have a guitar that is going to be autographed by everyone in the lineup. The items available are quite amazing, some of them are collectibles and very rare."

Rae takes a few moments to explain what happened to Sonny in April of 2012. "Sonny had an AVM (Arteriovenous Malformation) which are tiny blood vessels in the brain that are malformed at birth and his ruptured. Since then Sonny has had a couple of brain surgeries and the recovery period is quite extensive. He had been in a coma and is recovering day by day in a rehab facility. Our goal is to get his home situated so that his wife, Mary Lou and his family can bring him home."

"The idea for the benefit started with a group of us," she said. "Dennis Tufano, the Kocisko family (John, Chuck and Dave) who run the Streetsboro Family Days concerts and me. We are a little committee but everyone else has been getting on the bandwagon. We have help coming from local musicians and national acts. The list of people to thank is endless."

Dennis Tufano who is the original voice of 60s group, The Buckingham's first met Sonny Geraci in 1967. "Sonny was with The Outsiders at the time. The Buckingham's were in Los Angeles working on our third album, Portraits. Sonny was also in LA doing some promotion work. We were introduced to each other and became good friends. We continued to crisscross paths during the late 60s while our bands were on tour but then we lost touch with each other."

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Dennis continues, "In 2008, I was doing a Bobby Darrin tribute show in Chicago. A few fans who were sitting in the front row knew Sonny and they called him on their cell phone and sat the phone on the stage so he could hear me sing. After the show, they told me that Sonny wanted me to call him. I had not seen him in years so I gave him a call soon after. We talked for a long while and he asked me if I would consider going out on the road with him and for us to do shows together. I thought that was a great idea. One day, Sonny asked me if I would hold off singing Mercy Mercy Mercy from my set so that we could sing it together as a duet which the audiences seemed to love and we had been doing the shows that way ever since 2008 until he became ill in 2012."



"I really love Sonny. We have been such great friends. He is a great singer, a great entertainer who loves to connect with his audience the same way I do. We have had a great time together and it was devastating to hear the news. He had been in a coma for a couple of weeks after one of his surgeries. I had learned from one of the caretakers that patients who are in a coma can still hear you sometimes but it was also important to touch them to keep connected."

"During one of my visits to him, I held his hand and told him that he needed to get out of that bed because he had to help me sing Mercy Mercy Mercy. I told him I was having a hard time remembering the second verse because that is the part he always sings. I started singing the song to him and a short while later, Sonny squeezed my hand, opened his eyes and looked over to me and started to mouth words. His wife, Mary Lou couldn't believe it because Sonny had not opened his eyes in several days."

"I believe it was the music that seemed to trigger a response from him," explains Dennis. "Music gives hope and it was great to see him respond to something after the trauma he has been through. I would like to encourage everyone to attend the show for Sonny on both nights, November 15 and 16. Everyone will have a fabulous time. It will be the same great line up both nights except for the surprise guests and we are not at liberty right now to say who they are. The best thing you can do is buy tickets for each night and if you are unable to attend then give the ticket to someone else. It's money very well spent to help with Sonny's medical costs."

"The energy that the artists are bringing to this has been overwhelming. Once they signed up to play, they wanted to know what else they could do to help. It is really for the love of Sonny. We are hoping he will be well enough to attend. The closing finale on Friday night will have all of the artists onstage together singing "Time Won't Let Me" and "Precious and Few". Since Saturday is a longer day, we plan to do that part of the show mid-day. It's a two-day concert to see an incredible line up of acts. Sonny has brought great music to everyone over the years and attending the show both nights are for a great cause. We have great items available for the silent auction and raffle plus the bands will be accessible to fans when they are not on stage. They will be interacting with the guests. Musicians do not get pensions or insurance. There is no corporation behind them and that is why we are doing this benefit. It's a celebration of Sonny Geraci."

For ticket information and an updated list of artists who are playing, please visit:

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