

Musician Spotlight: Mike Mahoney of Pearly Baker



by Butch
McCarthy

As one of the founding members of the Pearly Baker band, Mike Mahoney is considered one the godfathers of New Bedford music. Recently I interviewed Mike, and here's what we talked about:

Butch: Tell me about the line-up for Pearly Baker Band.

Mike: Ken Richards, Tim Richmond, Terry Sullivan, Jim Novick, and Eric Costa. Terry broke a bone in his shoulder, so Geoff Fortin has been called up to fill in while Terry is on injured reserve. My longtime friend Art Tebbetts has also performed with us, and is a founding member of the Pearly Baker Acoustic Trio, along with Ken and myself. We play a few times a year.



Pearly is (L to r) Ken Richards, Jim Novick (hiding behind drums), Mike Mahoney, Terry Sullivan (drums), Tim Richmond, and Eric Costa.

How did you get involved with music?

Mike: The Beatles on Ed Sullivan. 1964. I was ten-years-old. It sparked something in me that was powerful; I wanted to look like them, sound like them, and run around like they did in *A Hard Day's Night*. Still do really. My friends and I recreated their stage set in a basement where we performed Beatles songs long before we had instruments. We even turned a coffee table into a drum riser to mimic Ringo.

I got my first guitar when I was in fifth grade. A kid up the street named Tom Delany showed me chords and how to strum and tune it. I formed a couple of bands in junior high, played "Louie, Louie" at the 8th grade dance, and then got into folk music for a stretch in high school.

What is your latest project?

Mike: Pearly Baker celebrated our 25th anniversary last year by booking ourselves into the Zeiterion and donating all the proceeds from the show to charity. We raised \$18,000 for the United Way Hunger Commission, which is the outfit that supplies most of the food pantries on the SouthCoast. The people seemed to enjoy the show, and the band had a ball playing on that stage. Afterward, the consensus was that it should be an annual event...so our latest project is to do it all again!

The concert will take place on May 7, and, like last year, every nickel we raise will go to the charity, to help feed the hungry people in our community. Check out "2nd Annual Pearly Baker Bash" on facebook for the details. Also on facebook, you can access Pearly Baker at "I Love Pearly Baker". For the record, a fan started this group, and then shared administrative powers with me. Had we started the site ourselves, it would have a different name.

Who are your musical influences?

Mike: Grateful Dead, Rolling Stones, The Beatles, The Who, J.J. Cale, Zappa, CSN, Bob Dylan, Celtic music, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Stravinsky, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Thelonius Monk, Oscar Peterson, Glenn Miller, and a whole host of folk musicians.



Pearly Baker Loves You.

What is your favorite movie?

Mike: My favorite movie is *Brazil*, directed by Terry Gilliam and starring Robert De Niro.

What do you like about the current music scene?

Mike: Assuming you mean the commercial music scene, the Grammys and that, I don't actually consider most of it music. It's just product tailored to the lowest common denominators; a collection of hooks and beats. I appreciate Taylor Swift, Pink, and Gwen Stefani. Eminem and Jay-Z amuse me at times.

What kind of guitars and gear are you using?

Mike: I have a custom-made, one-of-a-kind by Carvin guitars. It is a model DC127, koa wood body, ebony fingerboard, tobacco sunburst finish with Sperzel locking tuners and a Wilkinson tremolo system. I've owned it for 21 years.

My amp is a Rivera R100-212. It's the same amp Vince Gill has used for years. Paul Rivera was an amp designer for Fender for

many years until he went off on his own, and he's known for the high degree of workmanship in even his baseline amps. For instance, point-to-point soldering (instead of stamped circuit boards) and other production values normally associated with boutique amps that cost many times more.

Those are my workhorses. I have a fake Tele and a Strat and a Fender Princeton and some other practice amps. I have some acoustics, and a classical guitar I putz around the house with. I still have the first guitar I ever owned-some Sears monstrosity. It isn't playable right now, but someday I intend to restore it.

My new favorite toy is a digital recorder "sketch pad," a Boss Micro BR. It is an amazing device. It's about the size of two decks of cards, but it contains a full gallery of guitar effects, programmable rhythm tracks, in-board tuner, internal mic, as well as dedicated mic and guitar inputs. It's a fully functional 4-track recorder, with 8 virtual tracks per track, but it's best used to capture that fleeting musical thought you might stumble upon. In under a minute of setup you can be recording a vocal and a guitar part at the same time.



Mike Mahoney(center)
playing guitar.

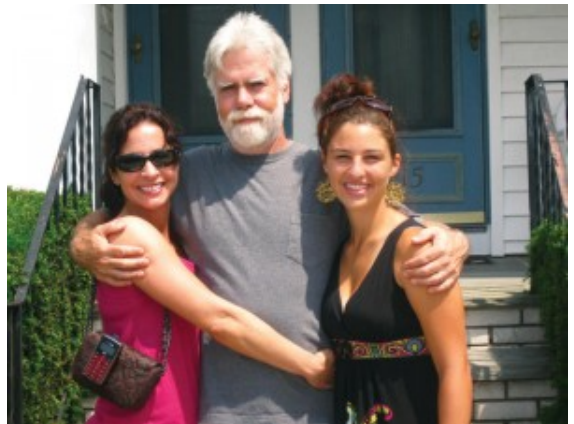
Where do you perform usually perform?

Mike: Pearly Baker plays at the New Wave Cafe every Tuesday

starting at around ten thirty-ish. Ken, Art and I play a couple of times a year as the Pearly Baker Acoustic Trio at the Kinsale Inn in Mattapoisett, and of course, we are playing the Zeiterion on May 7.

What is the current status of your long-running Tuesday Night Pearly gig?

Mike: Well right now we're in a bit of a bind. Our latest venue, the New Wave Cafe, where we've been playing every Tuesday for the last year, is closed for re-modeling. We were told it was going to be one or two weeks tops, but last night was the third week it was closed, but there's hope it will be open very, very soon. Recently we teamed up with Pearly's 7th member, Art Tebbetts, and had a fun night at the Black Watch Pub, playing wooden music and singing fun harmonies. But the plan is to get back to the New Wave when it's ready.



Mike with his wife Irene, and their daughter Aubrie.

Do you have a day job?

Mike: I'm a graphic designer at UMass Dartmouth, working in the publications office.

When you go out locally, what bands do you go see?

Mike: I'm mostly a stay-at-home kinda guy these days. I go to see Marcus Monteiro when I can. I've seen McCarthy, Richards

and Legge a few times, Neal McCarthy Problem, and of course, Ken and Neal with the JRS at Freestone's.

The 2nd Annual Pearly Baker Bash to benefit United Way Hunger Commission will be held at the Zeiterion Theater May 7 at 7PM.