

Winter-Spring 2010 Newsletter

Wow! What a couple of months. The new band is still in rehearsal mode and our first gig was March 12th at The Stone Lounge in Cortland (a very cool place) We've already had a personnel change; Dave Salce left because of other commitments and Cathy LaManna has joined on drums. Cathy and I worked together in the early 90's, she's a great drummer and a very funny gal so I'm glad to have her involved. We've learned a good selection of my material, things I've recorded over the years , some 'signature' tunes and some fun arrangements (Hit the road Jack, She's about a Mover, The Letter, When Love comes to Town, Gloria, Stuff you gotta watch, 634-5789) So the new line-up is as follows; Brian Barrigar on bass, Tony Schmizzi on Keyboards, trumpet and vocals, John Martellaro on guitar and vocals and the above mentioned Cathy LaManna on drums. So if you're looking for a good band give me a call!

Savoy Brown. Man this is a fun gig! Pat DeSalvo on bass, Garnett Grimm on drums and the legendary Kim Simmonds leading the band and just blistering on guitar. I think this is a good fit for me, the band is great and Kim has proven to be a savvy band leader (take it from me folks, I've been one for 35 years and I know a smart one!) He's a guy who has literally seen it all; from top of the charts, to being fired from his own band and everything in between. He's a super pro and an 'old school' performer who can bring out the 'beast', I mean the 'best' in me.

The Savoy fans have been great accepting the new line-up and I've had many comments on how cool it is to have a sax in the band.(of all the past Savoy line-ups, this is the first time for a sax!) so Kim continues to break new ground even after all these years. Kim is very selective about where and when he plays and the venues and crowds have been great. We play B.B. Kings in New York on Feb. 17 and go to California from March 19-29. All Savoy Brown dates are on my events calendar and SavoyBrown.com as well. **A special shout out to Greg Spencer of Blue Wave Records for planting the 'Savoy Seed'.**

Another shout out to my wife Diana! She won second prize in National Audubon's first ever nature photo contest and with it is a 2 week trip for 2 down the Amazon River in Brazil ! I hope I'm not eaten by piranahs! It's a great photo!

Web site update! Bill Aaron and I are updating the site as we speak, in the next Month look for new pics, new tabs, new text and new recipes.

I can be at once lazy and guilty of 'over think' which are two reasons my newsletters have become so sporadic so from now on, just 'do it'!

Recommended Reading. "Hit Man" by Bret Hart. If your a fan of good autobiographies check this one out. Hart was one of the top professional wrestlers in the world in the 80's and 90's but it's not so much about wrestling as it is one man's journey thru life. It's not one of those ghost written 'puff pieces' but a honest, gritty and often hilarious trip thru the ups and downs in the crazy world of pro wrestling. It has plenty of dirt to dish for fans but you don't have to be a wrestling fan to dig his story. I couldn't put it down.

Recommended Listening. "Dirt Farmer" by Levon Helm. He just won a Grammy for the follow up called " Electric Dirt" but go for "Dirt Farmer" first. It's real back porch country folk and blues; songs passed down thru the years and sung by one of the great voices in American Music.

Recommended Viewing. " The Shootist ", John Wayne's last film and what a cap to an unbelievable career. A mature and in his own words 'ironic' film (he had cancer for the second time and knew it would probably be his last movie) About a man who's dying but intends on doing it in his own fashion. Good supporting performances by Lauren Bacall, Ron Howard, James Stewart, Richard Boone, John Carradine, Harry Morgan and Hugh O'Brian.

A Guy I'll Miss. I didn't realize he had died until watching the montage on The Grammy's last week but one of the last of the 'old guard' in Las Vegas, Sam Butera passed last June. For those of you unfamiliar with Sam Butera, he was the band leader and sax player for 22 years with the great Louis Prima. If your not familiar with Louis Prima; Do some homework!

When I was in Las Vegas about 15 years ago I was driving down the strip and on the marquee (I think it was The Frontier) 'Appearing Nightly, Sam Butera and Keely Smith'. (Keely was Louis ex-wife and a fine singer.) I called up to make reservations and there was no need, there was no charge and no cover, man I had to see what I had only heard of for many years. The show was in the Lounge scheduled to start at 8pm and at 8pm on the dot Sam Butera and 'The Wildest' came out and opened with 'When Your Smiling' and that's just what the crowd did. Sam sang, blew the hell out of the sax and entertained like the master he was. He played the old 'Louis Prima book' and was inspiring, funny and naughty. He closed with 'When the Saints go Marching In' by parading thru the audience blowing and shaking hands with everyone there. I was changed right than and there. He was 65 or so at the time (seemed ancient than, now 'not so old') I bought a cd from him (right from his leather briefcase) and he said " how do you want me to sign it 'Babe'?"

Over the next few years he and his band minus Keely (bad blood from what I heard) came to The Turning Stone in Verona right here in Central New York and I made it a point of always catching the show, he was always right on time and when I bought a cd, it was always the same " how do you want me to sign it Babe"?

He had lived in Las Vegas since 1954 tho both he and Louis were New Orleans natives and continued traveling until he retired in 2005, not because he wanted to but because his kind of work dried up in Vegas and it was too hard for him to fly. (he had a heart condition and his ankles would swell up) He was a consummate pro and a great sax player, I literally saw him blow a pad off his horn one night, he just picked it up, stuck it in place and continued to burn! So energetic and so entertaining, I just thought that he was ' the greatest'. Pick up any of Louis Prima's live discs or greatest hits collections and you'll hear Sam 'blowing up a storm' .

I can't imagine retirement came easy to Sam, he suffered from ill health the last couple of years and died of Alzhiemers. What's the lesson? I guess it's ' be as good as you can for as long as you can!' So that's my plan anyway, tho I'm never gonna quit, if I 'croak' on stage, I'll just want to make sure someone in the band knows how to put away my horn correctly!

Until next time; lets all be as good as we can be, your pal, Joe

" It's nice to be important but it's more important to be nice"- Sam Butera