

## Michael Fracasso – February 20

Thanks to Michael for a thrilling show, and thanks to everyone who came out to listen. We heard lots of old favorites and were treated to some new, not-yet-recorded songs. If you haven't done so yet, you can listen to some of Michael's music online at [www.myspace.com/michaelfracasso](http://www.myspace.com/michaelfracasso).

I apologize for the extra length of this newsletter, but we have two excellent shows coming up very soon, and both artists deserve a lot of press.

## John Spillane – March 7

John Spillane ([www.johnspillane.com](http://www.johnspillane.com)) is an Irish musician, songwriter, performer, recording artist, storyteller, poet, dreamer - a canvas filled with color and brilliance. Place him in the genre of folk, acoustic, traditional, world or pop - that's fine with John. Whether performing solo with guitar, with gentle accompaniment, or with full band before 10, 10,000 or 100,000, John entertains, charms, and mesmerizes. John is a native of Cork, the County he lovingly describes as "the centre of the universe", and it has been a huge creative influence on him. Vocally, he is quite unique with an almost sean nós-like element in his singing and he is said to have a voice "full of honesty, commitment and sensitivity." John's performances shimmer with the magic realism that permeates many of his songs as he effortlessly flits between beautiful poetry tinged with melancholy to roguish, irreverent Cork humour.



John's awards and honors include:

- Twice winner of the Meteor Award (think Irish Grammy) for Best Traditional Folk category 203 and 2006
- Irish Music Award winner
- Twice winner of the prestigious Realta Song Contest 2001 and 2002
- Winner of the Top Solo Performer for 2009 by the Irish Music Association

Some quotes from the press:

- "...some of the most skillfully crafted, vividly realized songs anyone has written in Ireland over the past dozen years." Earle Hitchner, premier writer/reviewer for Irish Echo and The Wall Street Journal.
- "funny, quirky, massively entertaining. John is a story teller, a shanachie." Dan Regan, Founder, Kansas City Irish Festival.
- "[John] writes catchy, heartfelt folk-pop songs with the bonus of actually meaning something." The Sunday Business Post (My Dark Rosaleen & The Island of Dreams).
- "He's carved a niche writing melodic, compelling, simple songs. Spillane is at his best when his delivery is unforced and lyrical." Oliver P. Sweeney, The Ticket, Irish Times (My Dark Rosaleen & The Island of Dreams).
- "glorious technicolour hues that transcend linguistic boundaries; world music for a new world." Siobhan Long, Irish Times (The Gaelic Hit Factory).
- "these tracks exhibit Spillane's remarkably prolific output of gorgeous, peaceful tunes." Lisa Coen, Hot Press (Hey Dreamer).

I had the good fortune to catch John's February 21 show in Jackson, MS. It was everything I had been promised and more. He was humorous, witty, endearing, touching, and entertaining. The capacity crowd at Fenian's Pub was laughing, crying, and singing along and really didn't want to let him leave. John will perform for us on Sunday March 7, 2010. There will be a pot-luck lunch starting at noon. Katie Gosnell, an Austin-based singer-songwriter, will open the show. Doors open at 12:30 PM and the show starts at 1:30 PM. Advance tickets are available at Things Celtic (1806 W. 35th St. in Austin) and at St. Andrew's for a \$10 suggested donation. Thanks to Vicki at Onion Creek House Concerts for helping set this up.

## Tom Pacheco – April 9



We are honored to host Tom Pacheco in a rare visit to the south from a legend of the folk underground. He has written songs with and performed with the likes of The Band, Doug Kershaw, Flaco Jimenez, Pete Seeger, Stephen Bruton, and many others. He will perform on Friday April 9 at 7:00 PM. Suggested donation \$15. Visit [www.tompacheco.com](http://www.tompacheco.com) or [www.myspace.com/tompacheco](http://www.myspace.com/tompacheco) to listen.

Tom played at the Cactus Café about a year ago, as well as two sold out shows at Songbird Sanctuary in Houston. Tom Yeager, of Songbird Sanctuary, did a lot of research and wrote a couple of excellent articles about Mr. Pacheco. The following paragraphs are excerpted from his work. Many thanks to Mr. Yeager for introducing me and many others to this amazing songwriter, for helping kick-start arrangements for this show, for his excellent writing, and for letting us borrow his work.

Tom Pacheco began studying Flamenco and classical guitar at age 10 from his father, Tony Pacheco, a jazz guitarist who played with Django Reinhardt and performed solo throughout the clubs of Europe. At 19, Tom released his first album of original folk songs and began playing in the Greenwich Village basket house clubs in New York City. That was in 1965 and well before the arrival of Jack Hardy or David Massengill, our other heroes of the post folk revival era in the Village, who are no less diminished in my mind by not being there first.

That dangerous folk scare of the late fifties had died down or rather had morphed into folk rock. Tom rode that wave then and still does, but he has always kept one foot firmly cemented in the early part of that period embracing the influences of Pete Seeger, Phil Ochs, and early Bob Dylan. Tom's compassion for our world and for what it should be and his condemnation for those who prevent that while pocketing the proceeds guides a strong current of Tom's work. Two of Tom's best lines in this style come from "Rebel Spring" and speak well to this: *"Somewhere we've lost the reigns of our destinies/to the sweet songs of shepherds we don't see"*. We must think of Tom as one of the great protest singers, but he is much more than that in the same way that Woody Guthrie was much more.

*"A Master craftsman... In many ways [Tom's] is a voice crying in the wilderness, just as Guthrie's was back in the time of the great depression, and Seeger's was in the fifties - and Dylan's was, when he gave voice to those unable to express their own fears and frustrations in the early sixties. In many ways, Tom Pacheco is continuing that great tradition of putting into words those thoughts and emotions which many of us feel but are unable to express with the eloquence and conviction that he does."* - Maverick Magazine, United Kingdom

Tom's populist approach and his condemnations of the clueless also contribute to the comparisons with Woody Guthrie and with Bruce Springsteen. Note these words from "Nobodies": *"I'm nobody. Who are you? Maybe you're nobody, too. The world was made for the fortunate few. Nobodies just struggle on through. I'm nobody. Who are you?"* And from "South Beach": *"Everybody's beautiful on South Beach. Tan bodies that will knock you out, / Everyone is going to have their teeth bleached or get silicone tits that shout. / The bartenders pose like Greek gods. The waitresses are all sublime. / Everyone lives to be looked at. They've got only one enemy, TIME."*

Tom excels in several styles and musical forms but some of his most compelling songs are his story songs and folk ballads. Some are well-researched histories. Others are speculative. Pete Cronquist says Tom can write a song about anything and the canon of Tom's stories proves it.

The Journal of Graeme Livingston is about the man who killed Jack the Ripper, and Jessica Brown is about the woman who killed the grassy knoll gunman. The friendship of Woody Guthrie and Jack Elliot is chronicled in Woody and Jack, and there are fun tributes to Jerry Garcia and the "Last Rolling Stone." Tom takes a mind expanding ride with Hunter Thompson in Riding with Mr. Thompson. There is a dramatic 10 minute epic about Che Gueverra, a heart tugger about the bus boy who served Robert Kennedy's last meal, and an exposé on the expansionist campaigns of Teddy Roosevelt.

In his 40+ years as a professional songwriter, Tom has issued 23 LPs and CDs. His songs have been recorded by Richie Havens, Jefferson Starship, The Band, Rick Danko, Norwegian superstar Steiner Albrigton, and others. Last November to commemorate his 3000th!! copyrighted song, Scotland's Loudon Castle hosted Tom in a splendid celebration concert. Tom wrote many of his songs in the years he lived in Europe, and he is far better known there than in our country. Tom's long association with The Band include them indeed being his band on one of his records, and it brought forth some co-writes and production credits by several members on Tom's recordings.

*"Tom Pacheco deserves to be mentioned in the same tones of reverence as John Prine, Townes Van Zant, Guy Clark and Steve Earl...Tom Pacheco is one of the most impressive singer/songwriters of our times."* - Hugh Gregory, Folk Roots

For a year I have been collecting stories about Tom from various sources. Most are from early in his career, but I'll share one with you I've pieced together from the Spring of last year. It's quite a tale.

It seems the worker bees in a bull-pen office of a southside Chicago organization were playing what's on your I-Pod one day and got a bingo when it was discovered that everyone had a copy of Tom's 2005 song Rebel Spring marked as a favorite. They thought this beautiful song about our devolved culture but which includes a hopeful and encouraging ending explained exactly why that organization existed. Apparently the boss's wife walked through and was so impressed upon hearing the song that the idea came up to use the song in their work.

So someone called Tom and told him that they wanted to use the song. He agreed. Then they told him that they needed him to come play the song. Not hesitating a moment, he agreed, again. Easing into it like that, they then dropped the kicker and told him to start packing. They needed him tomorrow.

In the middle of the night a black Suburban picked Tom up and whisked him to a New York airport. Tom is not certain where they landed, but he thinks it was in Pennsylvania. Tom was led into a busy hotel room so he could play the song

for the boss's wife. Being a very polite group, introductions were made before hand: "Mr. Pacheco, may I present to you, Michele Obama?"

Tom played Rebel Spring and the room was stunned. "Will you wait here a moment, Tom", Michele asked, they all being on first name basis by that time. She returned in a minute with a calm but very busy Barack Obama. Instead of repeating "Rebel Spring", Tom played "The Man from Illinois" a song he had just completed on the plane. The jaws dropped. The song is a classic hero ballad and captures the whole mood of Barack's life and campaign including the minutia from his books and the overall hopeful message that the Obama campaign represented. Barack and David Axelrod decided right then that Tom would accompany the campaign through a few states to warm up the crowds with his songs and to finish off with "The Man for Illinois" before Tom introduced Barack to the cheering crowds.

## Upcoming Shows

**Saturday May 1 – Leonard Cohen Hoot Night.** Performers to be announced. Email us at [info@openearsconcerts.com](mailto:info@openearsconcerts.com) if you would like to participate.

**Saturday August 21 – St. Andrew's Variety Show and Silent Auction.** An open mic of sorts, in which all are invited to share their enthusiasm and experience the joy of performing. No talent required! Also, a fundraiser to help keep the series going and growing. Email us at [info@openearsconcerts.com](mailto:info@openearsconcerts.com) if you would like to participate.

**Friday September 24 – Austin Lounge Lizards.** The masters of satire and bluegrass overcome the shallow end of the gene pool to enlighten and entertain us.

**Friday October 15 – Sara Hickman.** Need we say more? She is amazing. The Flyin' A's open.

We are working on some other exciting shows which we hope to announce soon!