

House of Floyd Comes Home

Written by J. P. TRACEY Published: FRIDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2007



Jason Matsuoka

House of Floyd live

Who is Uncle Pat and why is he telling these stories about "...when I was in the band"? What's a House of Floyd and how do we get there from here? These queries and more will all be answered at a concert set for Friday, Oct. 27, at Kofman Auditorium. The gig is a homecoming of sorts for Pat Potter and his band mates, mostly Alamedans who have been on the music scene for years.

Potter, 54, who works fulltime at the Pucci Fish market, writes a monthly column for The Music Scene magazine called "Uncle Pat," (his nickname)

where he likes to reminisce about days of yore when he was practicing in garages, playing social halls and traveling the back roads between gigs. But those days aren't over yet. Potter and friends, in the still-going-strong Pink Floyd tribute band called House of Floyd, continue to make the rounds of music halls and concert stages, playing the music they love so well.

Potter is a local guy, born and raised in Alameda. He went to Porter School and began taking violin lessons in the sixth grade. "There was a cute girl in the class," he remembers. He stuck it out with the violin for six months and learned how to read music before moving on to the guitar and music more to his taste. He remembers first seeing the Beatles at the Cow Palace in 1965, at age 12. "That changed my whole life," he recalls. "I was so jealous. I hated them." He and some friends quickly formed a band. When he was 13, Potter remembers, he got to play his first gig. "There was free food and punch and there were girls there." He says he remembers thinking, "All right!" Girls, food and rock and roll in one fell swoop? Yes, indeed.

He went on to Alameda High, graduating in 1970. Potter played steadily in various bands throughout high school and then beyond, playing gigs at the Oddfellows Hall and Masonic Temple, at the Eagles Hall, Adelphian and at local dances. "They wouldn't let us play unless we tucked our shirts in," he remembers of the Masons. His first band, Yellow Smog (that's right, with just one L), led to other bands and gigs; they played cover tunes from bands of the day: Creedence Clearwater Revival, Cream and Quicksilver Messenger Service, with some original songs as well. Alameda was a more happening place for bands in the late '60s and early '70s, recalls Potter. "There was always something happening at Crown Beach, at Franklin Park, at South Shore Mall."

At AHS, Potter was student body president and involved in drama productions. "I know that stage pretty well — almost too well," he laughs. "I know all the nooks and crannies." He's looking forward to gracing the Kofman stage again next week.

Over the years Potter played with Storyteller, Hooker and the Alameda Allstars with Brad Gillis of Night Ranger and Dan Chauncey of .38 Special. Potter toured the United States with Max Pellicano's "Tribute to Elvis." He shared the stage and wrote with Jan Hammer's sideman, Ivo, and got rave

reviews playing with James Bondo, prompting people to comment on his Pink Floyd-like guitar style. Potter played with members of Meatloaf, Pat Travers, Eddie Money, Greg Kihn, Mink Deville, Gregg Allman and Friends and Joe Satriani, among other musical adventures.

Eventually Potter got married and had a son, who he raised as a single father for many years; that kept Potter off the stage and working hard for a number of years. "It was a struggle, but I did it," he says. When his son got older, Potter started to play guitar again, and soon got together with the musicians of House of Floyd.

House of Floyd consists of musicians Mark Showalter (vocals, guitar, sax), Lou Portela (bass), Doug Canfield (drums), Bill Coonley (guitar, lapsteel, keyboard and vocals) and Potter (vocals and guitar), with singers Sheri Showalter and Mellissa Harley to round out the sound.

"Being in a band is like being on a team," Potter says. "Everyone's got to play their part. And if you mess up, you mess it up!" But he says, "If you stop playing, you'll probably die. If I didn't do it, I'd go out of my mind."

Tickets for the House of Floyd concert at Kofman are on sale now at The Beanery in The Marketplace, or via www.houseoffloyd.com, for \$15. The show starts at 8:30 p.m. and opens with GG Tanaka (aka Jason Matsuoka), another Alamedan, playing acoustic guitar, alternative rock, and covers from Johnny Cash to the Violent Femmes. Want to hear more about House of Floyd? Stop by Pucci's and ask for Uncle Pat.