

# P.J. Pacifico...the songs of life

by Chandra Niles Folsom

Getting to know P.J. Pacifico could be as easy as listening to his songs. The singer/composer has been writing them since receiving an acoustic guitar as a high school graduation gift, some 15 years ago — but he's been singing all his life.

P.J., whose initials stand for Paul Joseph, recently released his debut solo album titled, *Well I'll Be*, on Viper Records and is preparing for a national tour this spring.

"Writing songs comes out of nowhere for me," says the artist, who makes his home in Norwalk. "You can't really sit down and say 'I'm going to write a song now' — it just doesn't happen that way for me."

One inspiration is Greenwich Village, where P.J. spent much of his time as a kid. "My aunt lived there in the '60s and '70s, so she was surrounded by great music," recalls P.J. "The Village back then produced all the great singer/songwriters. James Taylor was one of them, along with Dylan, John Denver, and the group Fleetwood Mac, so I was spoiled with great music — it was just always there."

But there was inspiration back home, in Connecticut, as well. "I was spoiled with great music on both sides of the spectrum," explains P.J. "My mom's barbershop quartet rehearsals and my aunt's wonderful taste in folk rock. Put the two

together and what a way to develop music! I didn't even ask to hear it; it was just always there, so that totally influenced me to perform."

When he hooked up a band called Sunflower at age 25, little did he know their first album would land them a string of gigs across the Middle East. The second tour took them south of the U.S. border, all courtesy of Uncle Sam.

"We did two overseas tours for the Department of Defense; they sent us over to entertain the troops," says P.J. "The first was Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and Israel — that one was two weeks. The second was

a month-long tour and included Panama, Haiti, Honduras, Ecuador, Puerto Rico and Cuba."

Sometimes, the downside of success is burnout, and Sunflower bit the dust soon after returning to the states. But two members of the band, Dave Kimball (bass) and Greg Bednar (drums), stayed on, and the band was reborn as *Side By Each* — an East Coast acoustic band.

"We did Amberjack's every Wednesday for three years and *The River Cat* on Sunday's for five years, but those gigs were mostly cover songs," he says.

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But when he started tossing in some of his original songs, people took notice. So P.J. decided to go into the studio and record all his original works, based on 33 years of living.

"I'm mostly inspired by what life brings, I guess," P.J. says. "Love, health, happy, sad — everything. Sometimes they are true stories and sometimes they aren't. Sometimes I can't really tell what I'm saying or where the song came from — songs just happen. I also love to let the listener have his/her own opinion or view on the song. If it works for them, it works for me. But some song meanings I keep to myself."

For P.J., it's more about the process. He starts with a theme, then picks up his guitar and strums until he finds a melody to fit that theme. "Then usually, it's lyric time," he says. "I can either go through my journal and pick something for an idea, or it happens on the spot."

And then there are times when nothing happens at all — no melody, no lyrics, no inspiration. "Like, for example, I just spent the last three days in New Hampshire alone with my dog and came back with barely anything," says the songster. "All weekend long, and all I have is a couple of melodies."

Still, P.J. has been at the game long enough to know that time spent on his six-string is always time well spent.

"Practice is what always comes out of situations like these, so it isn't a total loss, but that's how weird the whole writing process is for me," he says. "The time before last weekend I came home with three full tunes. One of which was *Okay Fine*, which probably took a total of 15 minutes to write."

When times get tough, P.J. remembers the reason why he performs. "One of my highlights was opening up for Little Feat at The Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, N.Y.," he recalls. "Just to play on such a stage that has had so many incredible bands on it was unforgettable."

As a solo act, P.J. plays the Black Goose, in Darien, every Tuesday night. Yet, as an artist, paying the bills can be tricky. So he also tends bar at Darien's Backstreet.



When his path happened to cross with that of a record producer, P.J. jumped at the chance to hitch his wagon to a star. "When I met Jonathan Stuart at Viper Records, he welcomed me to join the Viper Records staff and roster," says P.J. "For that I am tremendously grateful. Without Jonathan, I don't know if I would have gotten this far. The record has already been added to stations across the country. If I weren't on Viper Records, my album probably wouldn't have been listened to at all."

Hence, armed with talent, backing and a new CD, P.J. is looking at the road again. Who knows where this journey will lead?

"Performing and writing is in my heart and is my passion," says P.J. "I'm sure I'll be doing this when I'm 70 years old. Only then I'll be out on a front porch swing, strumming and singing in the country-fat and with a beard, waiting for the cows to applaud. Or moo ... if you will."

To hear the songs of P.J. Pacifico, [www.viperrecords.com](http://www.viperrecords.com).

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