

Guitarist PETER PUPPING Gets Back to *Where It Started*

By Louise Julig

"Oh, whoa, listen to the music— all the time..."

— *The Doobie Brothers*

It's 1964 in the Netherlands, and a four-year-old boy with a plastic guitar in his hands jumps up on a stool in his living room, singing, "I love you, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah!" The boy is prolific local classical guitarist Peter Puppig, and the moment is his first musical awakening. Recalling this earliest musical memory, he remembers, "It was all about the Beatles." While he didn't end up becoming the next Paul McCartney, Peter Puppig has crafted a performing career that integrates a variety of musical styles and has enabled him to play and study with many of his creative influences such as Celin Romero of the Los



Romeros Guitar Quartet, jazz guitarist Peter Sprague, and Nuevo Flamenco innovator Ottmar Leibert.

Puppig is known in North County musical circles both as a classical soloist and as the leader of the Peter Puppig Quartet, a classical and jazz combo composed of Puppig, guitarist William Wilson, Bassist Jeff Basile, and percussionist Roy Gonzalez. His repertoire, both in solo work and with the quartet, draws from a wide range of musical influences that he has cultivated over the years. His latest CD, **Where It Started**, released on his own GuitarSounds label, brings together many of these influences in his first recording of largely original works.

The title *Where It Started* is a direct reference to his early love of music and particularly of the guitar — the cover features a photo of him at age 9, guitar in hand. "When we moved to the U.S. my first recollection of trying to play something on the guitar was the 'Bonanza' theme," he recalls. "Then I hooked up with my first teacher and he was a classical guitarist and he introduced me to the classical guitar method and I started to learn to read right away."

Living in Vista in his early teens, he started jamming with friends, playing rock 'n roll while still taking classical lessons. One of his major rock influences was Led Zeppelin, and he dutifully learned "Stairway to Heaven" and played in garage bands with friends. "I'd meet some friends and we'd get into the jam thing, learn some chords, some rock 'n roll and that would be

satisfying, but secretly I'd always go back to my classical thing. It wasn't cool when you're a teenager to tell your friends that you're playing Beethoven or whatever, but I'd always carried a love for that."

His exposure to jazz also came during this time, when he started lessons with a jazz guitarist from the big band era who introduced him to such standards as "The Girl from Ipanema." "I just loved the way he integrated chords and melody and jazz chord substitutions and it was just beautiful and captivating," Puppig said. "The love of that era, the jazz standards, was really born when I was about 15 years old — another thing that wasn't cool to tell my friends about as I'm learning my Aerosmith tunes and what have you."

When Puppig got serious about pursuing a career in music, he chose to go the classical route, earning his undergraduate and graduate degrees from SDSU. The guitar program there is known to be outstanding, and their top-rated music theory program incorporated music history, theory, and application. **Ethnomusicology** classes exposed him to world music textures such as the sitar, Sumatran and Indonesian drumming, and Peruvian and South American music. "Music education really opened me up to loving all styles of music," he said.

Many of these influences find their way onto *Where It Started*. The songs range from a traditional nylon string flamenco style on "Juega" to the multilayered "No More Blues," to the buoyant, lush "Azul Del Mar" with its twelve string background. Indeed, several songs combine more than one style even within their own confines. "**Samba 2 Carlos**" pays homage to two famous **Carlos's** — Brazilian composer **Antonio Carlos Jobim**, and **Santana**, by

marrying a nylon string samba start with a grooving electric Latin rock finish, and "Navajo" brings Indian flute into a Latin jazz base for a fusion of North and South American sounds.

Round that out with two covers, "Lean on Me," and "Listen to the Music," and you've got a veritable Bazaar del Mundo of styles neatly bundled into one tidy package.

Puppig is also getting back to his teaching roots after a five year hiatus. With



twenty years experience teaching over two thousand students, Puppig said "I never thought I'd miss teaching, but I'm looking forward to getting back into it," and has started private lessons open to all ages and levels at the GuitarSounds studios on Manchester Avenue.

The Peter Puppig Quartet will be having another of their popular dinner concerts at Bistro Soleil on **Sunday, April 24th**, and will also be performing **May 14** at the San Dieguito United Methodist Church through San Diego Folk Heritage.

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