

***The Public Ought to Know:
“It really is the material, stupid.”***

I like live music. Last year I attended as many live shows by original artists or bands fronted by originals than my college years. I also notice more and more shows that use great music by other artists. Who can get a ticket now (without going to brokers or scalpers) for [Jersey Boys](#) anytime soon? Remember [Beatlemania](#)? The question: What matters most? The music played live and fresh or the original artist(s) or some combination thereof playing and singing the stuff?

Two emails moved this column. One concerned changes in my favorite band. Another discussed the importance of the music rather than who performs it. Coincidence?

It all started as an email to [Poco](#) listserves maintained by fans of the band. The listserves really represent communities and most of us met, attended live shows together, visited each other or plan to. I rarely post to [Poconuts](#) and [GoodFeelintoKnow](#) listserves and follow each via digest. Many follow via individual emails and still others follow via the website. In digests from each listserve received Friday and Saturday, I learned of changes in the band as currently configured.

It moved me to post to both sites. I wrote that I found it “a bit surreal reading the emails about the changes with [Poco](#) and [Paul Cotton](#)'s departure from one of our fave, if not favorite bands.”

Many know [Poco](#) is my favorite band and that I advocate their [induction](#) into the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#). There were times in the late 80s and 90s that I thought the band was no more. Yet, key members plugged on, including a reunion recording ([Legacy](#)) and tour featuring the original five members that spawned a hit (“Call It Love”) and then various configurations led by founding member [Rusty Young](#) since the mid 1990s through today.

Last winter, a number of long-time fans talked among ourselves that with the key members reaching Social Security age, they might be winding down soon. To this day, I often describe [Poco](#) to the unknowing as the source of bass players/ vocalists for the [Eagles](#). [Poco](#)'s original bassist, [Randy Meisner](#) (lead on “Take It To The Limit) was a founding member of [Eagles](#) and his [Poco](#) replacement, [Tim Schmit](#) (I Can't Tell You Why) joined the [Eagles](#) in 1978 when [Randy](#) made his exit.

The possible wind-down made me glad I took in the summer show with founder [Richie Furay](#) (in the Rock and Roll Hall as a member of Buffalo Springfield), original drummer [George Grantham](#) (who stopped performing when he suffered a stroke at a 2004 Massachusetts concert I attended) and briefly founding member [Jimmy Messina](#) (who left the band in 1970 and went on to bigger fame as a duo with Kenny Loggins) joining [Poco](#) at Jones Beach opening for Loggins & Messina.

Those Poconuts who saw [Poco](#) in various post [Jimmy](#) (replaced by [Paul Cotton](#) in 1970), post-[Richie](#) (left in 1973) and post-Tim (1978) configurations enjoyed the music and the performances.

Those who saw [Richie](#) in the (Eagles songwriter [J.D. Souther](#)-([Chris Hillman](#) (of the [Byrds](#))-[Furay](#) Band and later solo enjoyed his takes on [Poco](#) songs he wrote and the tunes by [Paul](#) and [Jimmy](#) that he included in the sets – not to mention the [Buffalo Springfield](#) tunes (not just his but songs [Stephen Stills](#) and [Neil Young](#) have rarely performed since going solo or performing as [Crosby, Still & Nash](#)/[Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young](#)).

Heck, many Poconuts even enjoyed the [Neil Young](#)-penned but [Richie Furay](#) lead vocal [Buffalo Springfield](#) tune, “[On The Way Home](#)” performed without [Richie](#) by [Poco](#) (memorialized on bootlegs and of course “[Bareback At Big Sky](#)”).

Which brings me to this e-newsletter I came across when its writer followed me on twitter and I just subscribed to it. The writer made this point in his March 12 email, “Roundup” which I then shared with my friend and sometimes professional colleague “Big Al” [Siowitz](#) who plays in a cover [band](#) that does great versions of songs by the [Rolling Stones](#), [Steppenwolf](#), [The Doors](#), [Sam & Dave](#), the [Allman Brothers Band](#), [Free](#) and others (You have to hear Al do The [Doors](#)’ “[Roadhouse Blues](#)” and [Steppenwolf](#)’s “[Born to Be Wild](#)”).):

In “CLASSIC ALBUMS,” Bob Lefsetz (<http://lefsetz.com/wordpress/>) discussed the [Pink Floyd](#)/[EMI](#) [skirmish](#). He then moved to a discussion about a [Genesis](#) tribute band, “The Musical Box,” and suggested the time is now to “elevate the tribute bands “concept into the equivalent of a Broadway show.” As Bob points out:

They bring back "South Pacific", why not bring back "Sgt. Pepper", "Beggars Banquet", even "Rocket To Russia"? "It's the music that survives, unlike many of its makers. License the rights from the original band or its heirs and tour it, playing a classic album from start to finish for a fair price, in the neighborhood of \$40-\$50.

As I think about [Poco](#), I can't help but think Bob it so right: “There's no hype, no smoke and mirrors, it's not the original band, it's an experience, that mimics the original, that reminds you if you were there and clues you in if you were not.” (subscribe to the LefsetzLetter at <http://www.lefsetz.com/lists/?p=subscribe&id=1>)

Should it be about the music even more so than who sings? Broadway revivals rarely feature original performers.

When I took my wife, daughter and sister-in-law to see [Bruce Springsteen](#) last summer at [Madison Square Garden](#), the night I selected or selected me (you know Ticketmaster), [Bruce](#) performed “[The Wild, The Innocent and the E-Street Shuffle](#)” in its entirety.

Others may be familiar with the [Fab Faux](#) and other [Beatles](#) cover/ tribute bands – Shelly and I also saw [Strawberry Fields](#) this past summer.

Last November, I saw [Brian Wilson](#) mainly performing [Beach Boys](#) hits and gems and it was a wonderful show.

Ditto seeing [Yes](#) (with a tribute band [singer](#) "subbing" for [Jon Anderson](#)) and [Asia](#) on the same bill (with [John Wetton](#) singing the lead on the [King Crimson](#) classic, "[The Court of the Crimson King](#)," originally sung by [Greg Lake](#) who later replaced [Wetton](#) in [Asia](#) – [John](#) and [Greg](#) sound so alike to my keen ear).

A few years ago Shelly and I attended a "[Doors in the 21st Century](#)" concert with Ian [Astbury](#) ([The Cult](#)" on lead vocals) and no [John Densmore](#) on drums -- it was a great performance and (guitarist Robby) [Krieger](#) and (Ray) [Manzarek](#) (on keyboards) were amazing. The same bill included John Kay and [Steppenwolf](#), the original [Vanilla Fudge](#) and a "modern" (my term) grouping of [The Yardbirds](#) which sounded as good as the old records.

There was also a [Tommy James and the Shondells/ Felix Caviliere's Rascals/ Flo & Eddie & The Turtles](#) concert that focused on classics from those performers we took in last October.

Also last summer, one bill with [Creedence Clearwater Revisited](#) (sounded great but I am a devoted [John Fogerty](#) loyalist), [Mountain](#) (with [Corky Laing](#) and [Leslie West](#) but obviously no [Felix Pappalardi](#) and [Leslie](#) taking [Felix's](#) lead on "[Theme for an Imaginary Western](#)"), and [John Sebastian](#) (with no voice but I knew that but loved his [Lovin' Spoonful](#) and solo songs and we all sang along).

[The Lovin' Spoonful](#) fronted by no longer drumming [Joe Butler](#), original bassist [Steve Boone](#) and [Zal Yanovsky's](#) replacement as lead guitarist [Jerry Yester](#) (also as musical director).

Those who follow Classic Rock DJ [Pete Fornatale](#) on [WFUV-FM](#), [XM-Radio](#) or via [Internet](#), or perhaps otherwise know that [Aztec Two Step](#) now performs concerts in its entirety where they [cover Simon and Garfunkel](#) that sound fresh and delightful.

One can argue that the [Allman Brothers Band](#) with original drummers [Jaimoe](#) and [Butch Trucks](#) fronted still by [Greg Allman](#) (but if you attend shows, guitarist [Warren Haynes](#) plays front man as much or more) is more a cover band -- and they've done great covers during the Beacon shows I attended, including wonderful versions of some of my fave [Derek & The Dominoes](#) tunes ("[Why Does Love Got to Be So Sad](#)", "[Keep on Growin'](#)", "[Tell The Truth](#)" and "[Any Day](#)" in addition to everyone's favorite but less so mine, "[Layla](#)"). My now grown son and daughter join me and fellow Poconut Gene to take in the [Allmans](#) this week at the Palace Theatre.

And [John Fogerty](#) not only continues to perform [Creedence](#) tunes (that sound better than the originals) but in "[Blue Ridge Rangers Rides Again](#)," and the songs performed live from that CD, does justice to great material written and performed by others.

So maybe that explains the selections when [Poco](#) with [Richie](#) performed for the DVD/CD (Belcourt) set, "[Keeping the Legend Alive](#)," and for [Richie's](#) "[Richie Furay Band Alive](#)" CD and his recent solo performance sets.

So maybe it is the music that matters. I guess this Bob (a knock at a local political Bob who I will not post about here) gets it. Do we?

– *Corey Bearak*