



“Bruce meets the East Village”

Maybe Pete's Pure Rock 'n' Roll

By Lisa Iannucci

For those of you who don't already know it, the next big thing down here on the Shore is a North Jersey-based band called Maybe Pete. What they do is not particularly daring or radical—in fact, their influences are fairly obvious—but if you can't stand what's on the radio, are tired of the hyper-marketed “indie” rock aimed at the youngsters but love a well-crafted song and some loud guitars, this is the band for you.

Husband-and-wife team Frankie and Kelly McGrath head up this outfit, and their repertoire is chock full of hook-laden original material, much of which can be found on their 2005 independent release, *From the City to the Stratosphere*. With a rock-solid rhythm section featuring Johnny Macko on drums and Keith McCarthy on bass, this is truly a band that will satisfy your craving for rock music made the old-fashioned way: stinging guitar leads, a pounding backbeat, finely wrought lyrics and an intense vocal delivery that commands attention.

Frankie, known amongst his friends as an excellent mimic (his Little Steven as Silvio Dante imitation will have you doubled over laughing), is captivating onstage. He delivers powerful moments of vocal drama interspersed with caustic, self-deprecating asides or the odd one-liner, while Kelly plays the perfect foil, her unassuming demeanor the perfect counterpart to her spouse's onstage antics. They have a small but devoted following that shows up pretty much everywhere they play, and they are regulars at such Shore venues as The Saint in Asbury Park. The band spent much of 2007 in the studio, working on their second self-produced record which they expect to release this summer.

Frankie is half Italian, fond of cigarettes, Sambuca, and cheap beer. He is well over six feet tall, with the lankiness of Joey



Ramone, a thick North Jersey drawl, and a gravely singing voice that echoes a certain other Shore denizen. Kelly, Irish to the core, has a face full of freckles and a ready smile. She plays a pink DiPinto electric guitar as well as the mandolin, and she co-writes the band's material. In addition to their passion for rock 'n'roll, the McGraths also share a love of baseball, red wine, and the Rolling Stones. High school sweethearts, their favorite hangout spots when not at a show include the soon-to-be-razed Astroland amusement park at Coney Island and nearby Keyspan Park, where they take in the occasional Brooklyn Cyclones game.

Asked to describe the band's sound, Kelly says, “Someone once described us as Bruce Springsteen meets the East Village, and I'm comfortable with that.”

“Our sound is a product of our environment,” adds Frankie. “I think we definitely sound like a Northern Jersey band, like a cross between the Jersey Shore and New York City.”

The McGraths are strong supporters of the New York/New Jersey live music scene, as is drummer Macko, and the three of them can often be found hanging at the Wonder Bar or the Stone Pony taking in the sights. They have participated in numerous local benefits, too, including several appearances at Bob Benjamin's Light of Day event. It's a tight-knit group of musi-

cians here at the Shore, and the McGraths are well thought of by their peers.

“What I love most about Maybe Pete is their pure rock 'n' roll sound,” says Lou Montesano lead singer/guitarist for Shore favorites Status Green. “Even though they reside in North Jersey, they are recognized in the Asbury music community as one of its most important contributors to the scene. You really can't find a nicer group of people.”

“The Jersey Shore scene represents a lot of what we grew up on, what we were raised on, and it's really an honor to come down here and play in Asbury Park, says Frankie. “And I think the scene is really much more nurturing down here than a lot of other places. Asbury Park gives you a chance to develop as a band. If they like what you're doing, they'll give you helpful hints, try to build up a following. As opposed to New York or Hoboken, where that type of attitude seems to have gone away in the last couple of years. Like if the place isn't packed, you're not going to play there again. Asbury gives you a chance to grow, which is cool.”

Kelly adds, “Another thing that we've noticed too is that like in Hoboken or New York, you'll see them put five bands on the bill that make no sense together, where like down here at The Saint or The Pony or whatever, they try to put bands on the bill that go well together.”

Even after all the hours they have spent playing on the Shore, they are still awed by its history. “It never really gets old,” says Kelly. “Every time we walk on the stage at the Stone Pony, it crosses my mind. It's like I'm walking in the footsteps of greatness. You think of it every time.”

“We had Bobby [Bandiera] onstage with us at the Pony,” Frankie adds, “and I gotta say it's still kind of surreal that I'm playing with people I was going to see when I was like 16 years old. It's kind of mind-boggling.”

You can occasionally catch the ubiquitous Tony “Boccigalupe” Amato sitting in on keyboards if you see Maybe Pete enough times. Frankie does a mean imitation of Mr. Amato, and the repartee between the two on such occasions is worth the price of admission.

Frankie and Kelly often cover their favorite artists as part of their live show—one might hear Replacements, Ramones, Neil Young, or Mr. Springsteen on any given night. Their influences also include—somewhat surprisingly—'80s stalwarts The Alarm. “I think The Alarm played with total working-band, punk rock energy, and it was like the ultimate marriage of the two. It was like punk rock mixed with the E Street Band—which, in my brain, is just kind of perfect,” says Frankie.

“They played every show like it was their last,” adds Kelly, “and there's just not that many people who do it well.”

Count Maybe Pete in that company—this is live music the way it's supposed to be. And though they humbly scoff at such notions, the Maybe Pete folks are in truth a sublimely entertaining and tight-knit bunch that really will make you believe in rock 'n' roll again. 🎸

Visit myspace.com/maybepete or maybepete.com for more information, merch, and upcoming gigs, and more importantly, to find out how the heck they named the band.

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