

# Musicguy247

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Michael Raz - Guitier with Joey Molland and Joe Vitale

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An interview with Michael Raz from "The Raz Band", which includes Joey Molland from "Badfinger" and "Joe Vitale" from Joe Walsh and CSN. "I always incorporate what I learn into songs."



**RAZ**

**Michael Rescigno is a guitarist out of Madison Park New Jersey who now resides in Los Angeles California. His father was a big band singer, so Michael was exposed to a lot of music in his youth. After trying out numerous instruments, he decided the guitar was for him. Living in the New York tri-state area, there was no shortage of world class rock bands playing concerts, so "Raz" and his friends took in many shows and eventually would meet one of his favorite musicians, Joey Molland from The Beatles protégé band Badfinger. When "Raz" and his buddy "Hutch"**

wanted to take their own music a step further, they picked up and moved to Los Angeles to try and sell their originals. Their band "Raz Nasty" was very successful and before you know it, Joey Molland and other well known musicians were jamming with them on stage. Skip to 2015... The Raz Band now has a new album out called "Madison Park" and Joey Molland and Joe Vitale (From Joe Walsh, The Eagles and CSNY) are now in the band. I recently corresponded with "Raz".

R.V.B. - Congratulations on your new album "Madison Park". The name came your hometown in New Jersey... can you describe what it was like growing up there.

M.R. - Thank you very much for taking the time to interview me, I truly appreciate it. Madison Park is a development of about 710 homes with the streets named after Colleges. It's a small town in Central New Jersey located at the beginning of the Jersey Shore area. Madison Park's homes were built in the mid 1950's. We had a local elementary school in the center of "The Park" where we played stick ball, a Firehouse with Volunteer Fireman as well as a Volunteer First Aid Department. Three Baseball Fields. A Little league, Major League and Babe Ruth baseball field, Pop Warner Football. Lots of woods, ponds, turtles, snakes and streams. A church that rang bells at noon and a firehouse whistle that blew at six o'clock. We rode are bikes everywhere. We would play sports in the streets like Touch Football telephone pole to telephone pole. In the winter there was sleigh riding at Suicide Hill in the cemetery. And the best part of it, all the kids that were within a few years of each other in age knew each other. Many great memories of people that I have known my whole life.

R.V.B. - Did you come from a musical family? What inspired you to pick up an instrument?

M.R. - Yes a very musical family. My father Bob was a big band singer. Dad sang under the name Bob Roberts instead of Bob Rescigno. He sang with many big bands in the New York City area in the 1940's through the early



1950's. His last 4 recordings featured Legendary Pianist Hank Jones,( Lifetime Grammy Award winner), Edgar Sampson on Sax, (writer of "Stomping at the Savoy) and members of the Tito Puente Orchestra. Dad also recorded songs written by Ray Rivera.

Interestingly enough, in the current internet age we live in, I've met many Rescigno's and a large majority of them are involved in the music world somehow or someway.

When I started playing for real, I picked up a guitar to put music to the poems I had been writing. I had messed around with Keyboards, Clarinet, Harmonica, banjo. But I'm a guitar slinger kind of guy. I play "Nancy" my 1968 Gibson Les Paul Custom. I am definitely a Gibson Guitar guy with Marshall Amps.

R.V.B. - Was the guitar your only instrument? What kind of songs did you tackle at first? Who were your early influences?

M.R. - My guitar is an extended part of me which allows me to get the music that I see inside my head out. At first I learned chords and wrote my own songs. I would also play songs by The Beatles, Stones, Who, Creedence, Badfinger, Joe Walsh, Chuck Berry. They really influenced me as a guitar player. Later on I got into Hendrix , Beck & Page. I like Slash as a guitar player. I loved Lennon as a Rhythm Guitar player, I love Keith's Open G stuff. John Fogerty's tone, Joey Molland's ability to come up with licks.

**R.V.B. - How did some of your early gigs go? what type of venues did you play?**

**M.R. - As a kid I would play anywhere we were allowed. We always thought we were much better than we were. We played High Schools, Swim Clubs, parties, Colleges, live on College radio.**



**R.V.B. - Did you go to New York city a lot to catch concerts? Who did you see there?**

**M.R. - I saw so many great concerts in New York City. I saw John Lennon at the Garden from the 15th row. Bowie at Radio City as Ziggy. Lou Reed at The Academy for "The Rock & Roll Animal" concert recording. Todd Rundgren Jamming with Joe Walsh & Barnstorm at the Academy of Music. The first time I saw Dave Edmunds, Nick Lowe & Rockpile was at The Bottom Line. The Stones at the Garden when Clapton came out on the encore & played Sympathy For The Devil & Keith played Bass. I saw Electric Light Orchestra go from playing little places to selling out the Garden. Joe Vitale & the Madmen at the Academy of Music and Flo & Eddie at the Bottom Line. Badfinger at Central Park. I've got lots of these.**

**R.V.B. - Why did you move to California and how did you network yourself into the music scene there?**

**M.R. - I asked Hutch if he would go to L.A. We wanted to start playing our original songs live so it was either N.Y.C. or L.A. It was October and we**

knew it would be warm in L.A. We also thought L.A. would have a cool music scene, (which it did) and of course Joey Molland was there. And we were going to find him.

When we first got to L.A. we hung out on the Sunset Strip and we met many people in the music business and in bands. We started a band with three girls, then we ended up recording with a cool cat named David Della Rossa. David had been in a band "Bandit" who I believe were signed to Casablanca Records. After nine months we met Joey, some of our New Jersey buddies moved out to L.A. so we formed a band, "The Contents", then Joey Molland produced The Contents. Over an eighteen month period The Contents played many gigs in and around Los Angeles including Gazzari's, The Troubadour & Madame Wongs in China Town and West L.A. We were also working with Mark Richardson at Sound City and that was our home base. After The Contents broke up I formed "The RAZ



Nasty Band"

R.V.B. - The RAZ band... how did it originally form and did you concentrate on originals from the start?

M.R. - I have always concentrated on original songs. I have been writing since I was as kid. After The Contents broke up I formed "The Raz Nasty Band" with Hutch and a few other guys. We cut the "Criminals Off The Streets" EP which featured songs I had written. We recorded & mixed it at the legendary United Western studios in Hollywood. It was mastered by Bernie Grundman at A & M Studios.

Over the next couple of years the RAZ Nasty Band had a very fluid membership. After several incarnations of "RAZ", we eventually evolved into today's version of The RAZ Band. One of the really cool things is while

the five of us have been playing together forever, "Madison Park" is the first album by us as The RAZ Band.

**R.V.B. - Where did you meet Hutch?**

**M.R. - I met Hutch in a sandbox when we were 4 years old. We were in the same classes from Kindergarten through fifth grade, played Little League together, went to Cedar Ridge High School and we were both on Gymnastics for all four years. Hutch was the team Captain and I was the troublemaker. From the time we were little kids through today we've been friends.**

**R.V.B. - How did you meet Joey Molland and did you record in the studio or**

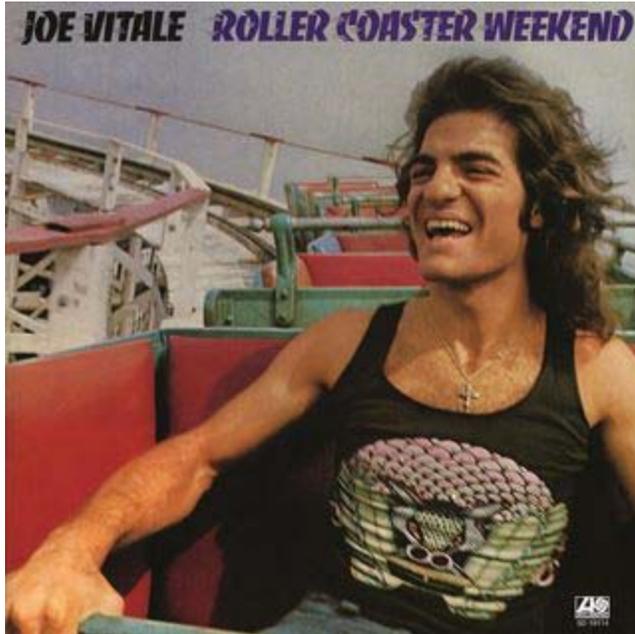


**play live with at first?**

**M.R. - I met Joey when I was 16 at a Badfinger show in Atlantic City. After that I would say hello to him at Badfinger shows. I re-met Joey after a Badfinger show in Hollywood at The ROXY. They did four shows, two each night, I went to all four and was backstage hanging out both nights. At the time Joey lived on Coldwater Canyon. As much as possible I hung out at the Coldwater Canyon house. Joey and I would jam, we'd talk about song writing, arranging, things he learned over the years. His recording experiences with John Lennon & George Harrison. My early recording experiences with Joey were at the Coldwater Canyon house. We recorded on his Studer Revox sound on sound two track that Apple Records gave each member of Badfinger when their hit song "Day After Day" went gold. Then I borrowed the Revox and we went to Hutch's house and set up in the garage and stuck the Revox on the outside of the garage door. Our friend Joe Reisman was the engineer and we recorded five songs with a makeshift band including the late great Dr. Billy Lemas. When I brought the Revox back to Joey and played him the songs he told me to get some**

of my friends together and form a band and he would produce us. So that's what I did and then Joey produced our band "The Contents". Joey would also jam with The Contents at some of our early shows.

R.V.B. - How did Joe Vitale work into RAZ? He's a multi talented musician... does he contribute on other instruments other than drums?

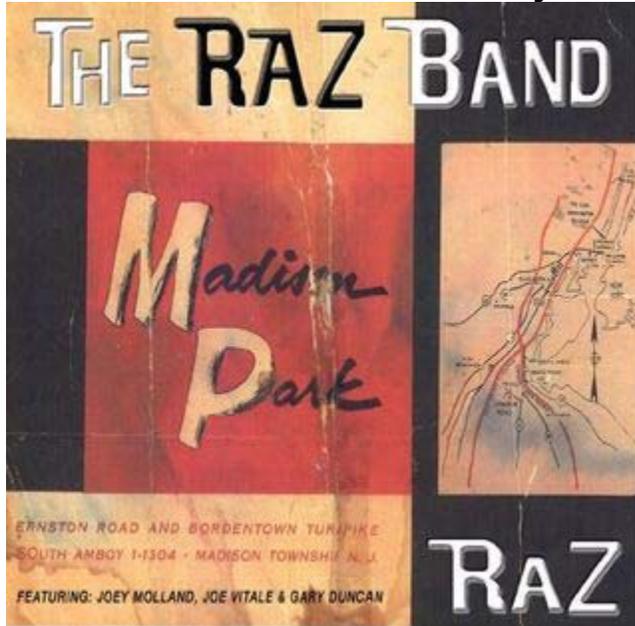


M.R. - I first met Joe Vitale at a Joe Walsh and Barnstorm concert when I was 17. Same thing as I did with Joey Molland, almost every time Vitale was playing in town, (N.J./N.Y./Philly), I would go see him play and make sure to say hi. A few years after we moved to L.A., I re-met Vitale at a C. S. & N. show. From there we started to hang out whenever he was in L.A. Then Joe offered to produce RAZ. At that time RAZ was a three piece band...me on guitar, Hutch on drums, Jim on Bass and the songs were reflective of what we sounded like live. Joe was our Producer on our "Tough Love" cd plus he played keyboards, flute and sang. Joe also played drums on the song "Only Forever". Joe has played on all RAZ albums since. The current version of The RAZ Band formed from years of playing together live and on albums.

R.V.B. - How is it playing live with punk legend Carla Olson?

M.R. - Carla Olson is very talented singer songwriter, guitar player, producer etc. I originally met Carla and Kathy Valentine in Hollywood shortly after Hutch and I moved here. They were both in the Textones at the time. However, after the early LA years Hutch and I re-connected with

Carla in the late 90's. It was a blast performing with Carla, she rocks. Working with Carla in the studio is also great. She sings lead vocals on the song "Sitting On My Bed" which will be released on "The Best of RAZ" by Gonzo MultiMedia after the new year.



R.V.B. - The song "\$1.50 for your Love"... isn't that asking for a pretty cheap date?

M.R. - The song is very tongue in cheek. The message is that we'll do anything for our loved one. You know, jump in front of a train, jump off a bridge, move mountains. However it's not about the money, (yeah sure lol).

"\$1.50 For Your Love" came about when we were rehearsing at the Alley Cat Studios in North Hollywood. Jim Manzo the bass guy in the RAZ Band said, "I got a \$1:50 for you" I immediately said "I got a \$1.50 for your love", then I came up with the chords. When we recorded the song, Joe Vitale was there to ensure that the back tracks were recorded properly. I asked Joey Molland to come up with a Keith Richards guitar lick. Like Keith did on Happy or Tumbling Dice. Actually that Stones time period, "Let It Bleed", "Sticky Fingers" and "Exile On Main Street" was very influential in my thought process for this song. As usual, Joey came up with the perfect lick and played a superb slide on the bridge. Vitale added piano and backing vocals. Then we brought in Paulie Cerra to play multiple Saxophone parts. I explained to Paulie what I was looking for with the horns and once I mentioned the Stones , Paulie said he knew a guy, Paul

Literal who played trumpet in the Stones touring band. So at midnight Paulie calls Paul, Paul comes down and then they started working out the parts to fit the idea. I really like this song and honestly think the Stones could have a hit with this if they recorded it.

R.V.B. - How was the experience of re-recording the great songs "Love Me Do" by Badfinger and Joe Vitale's "Shoot Em



Up"?

M.R. - As a big fan of the two Joe's, I had to separate myself the fan and myself the artist. I knew that we had to create our version of their songs in a way that stayed true to the original. We had to "Razify" their songs. We had been playing "Love Me Do" for years so when we went in to cut it we knew what to do. However, the great Gary Duncan from Quicksilver Messenger Service joined us on the recording and with his guitar playing he added another cool dynamic to the song.

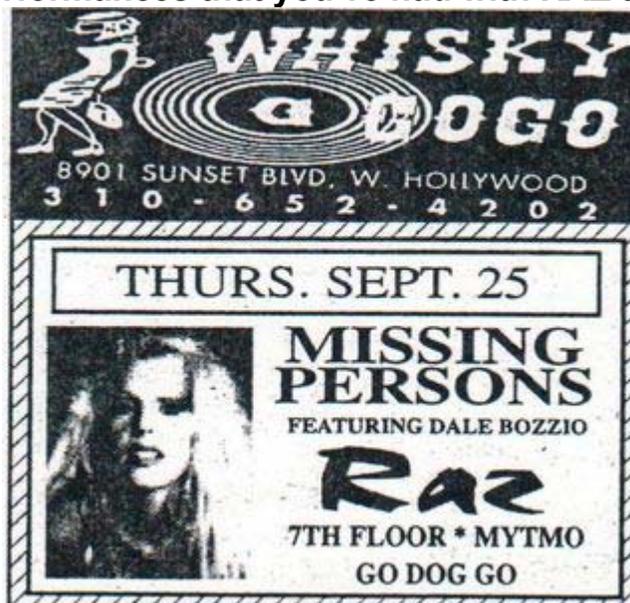
"Shoot Em Up" was different. We knew that we had to make Vitale proud of our version. So we worked really hard to come up with a great arrangement. When Joe played his piano part, which was the same piano part he played on his great recording of "Shoot Em Up" from his killer album "Roller Coaster Weekend" it was one of those moments in time where you're just in the perfect place. Watching him play it and dig it was the best feeling.

R.V.B. - Although the title is about your hometown, there are a lot of song titles with the word love. Why is that?

M.R. - That was not planned. Each of the songs with the word "Love" in the title is a separate story. When we decided to be The RAZ Band, I was speaking with Joey and he told me to write a song that would reflect what

we sound like. I then wrote "What Love Can Do" and it's a story about when I met my wife Jenny. "Say Ya Love Me" is about getting dumped. "The Road of Love" is about old girlfriends that later became friends and how we'll be there for each other. The idea for "You're The Magic" came to me when I saw a billboard with a girl on a Magic Flying carpet and the headline was , "It's Not Magic, It's Hard Work". From there the song evolved to be about people having long distance relationships. Both Joey & Vitale came up with really great parts that helped bring out the depth of the song. Joey helped me with the arrangement and spacing. He also added awesome harmonies. Joe Vitale came up with the most haunting 'Eagles "like oohs during the verse and super keyboards. So we have six songs with the word "Love" in the title, six flavors of love. We also feel that the world needs more love. "All you need is love"

R.V.B. - Are there any performances that you've had with RAZ that really



stand out in your mind?

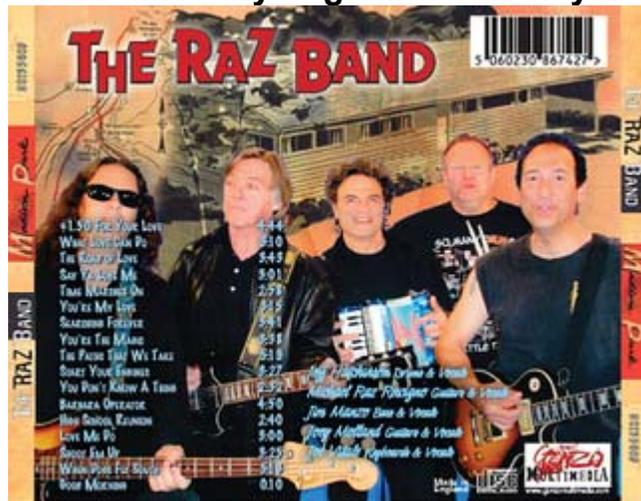
M.R. - Honestly there have been so many of them. Off the top of my head, Sharing a dressing room with The Chambers Brothers when we opened for them in 1985. Hanging with Dale Bozzio when we opened for Missing Persons at The Whisky A GoGo. Dale enjoyed rubbing my fuzzy red pants.

There are so many Whisky shows that were amazing and special. Having Joey Molland, Gary Duncan, Carla Olson play live with us for the cd release party for our album, "It's All About Me". Every show with Joey Molland is always an awesome and fun rocking show. All the guests that have

performed with us over the years. Opening for Badfinger when Mike Gibbins, (the original drummer) was in the band with Joey was great.

R.V.B. - Do you feel the writing process has matured or is different from previous records?

M.R. - I have two different answers for this question. I always incorporate what I learn into songs. As I've learned more chords and styles over the years my songwriting has grown. I feel that right now I am writing some of the best songs I've ever written. Hutch and I were just talking about how we already have the songs for our next album ready to go and that they are



another evolution of The RAZ Band.

Starting with "Tough Love" the last three RAZ albums, each had it's own theme. We were a three piece and "Tough Love" was recorded to reflect what we sounded like. The songs on "It's All About Me" were all recorded as individual pieces and what and who was best for the song would be added. On some songs we used 47 tracks. We had many special guest players on "It's All About Me". "Razfinger" is a collection of songs that Joey & I have recorded together over the years. "Razfinger " will be re-released in the spring. It has been updated with newer songs that have been recorded by us as The RAZ Band. Our new album, "Madison Park" is probably the most varied album we have ever made. It truly takes the listener on a musical journey. Also in Jan/Feb Gonzo will be releasing "The Best of RAZ" which features RAZ recordings from 1984-2015. With many special guest performances throughout the entire cd.

R.V.B. - How do you plan on supporting the new release?

**M.R. - With live shows, interviews, social media etc. The support of our record label Gonzo MultiMedia. We plan on recording/filming our live show for a cd and dvd release. Honestly our set is killer. We'll be performing lots of RAZ songs, Joey Molland songs, Badfinger songs, Hits that Joe Vitale has co-written, plus some solo Joe Vitale songs and more.**

**Thank you very much for considering answering these questions.**

**Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you!**

**Interview conducted by Robert von Bernewitz**

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