

Pirates in Paradise

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Interview
by Tracy Lutz

Interview with Jimmy Maraventano

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The crowd is getting settled in for a great night. Drinks are being poured, and the sun is getting ready to set. Jimmy jokes with the Phlock after his first song - "Hey, is anybody out there?" Everyone cheers and yells back. Jimmy and Jimmy, Jr. are just getting warmed up (their first shots have just arrived). Jimmy Jr. comments under his breath, "I hate these Parrot Head things - I always leave drunk." The crowd gives him a knowing cheer.

Jimmy Maraventano is the wonderfully charming and charismatic lead singer/guitarist for Jimmy and the Parrots. And in case you're a Parrot Head who's been stuck in a cave - they are one of the most requested Jimmy Buffett cover bands in the country. As well as playing some really fantastic venues (Margaritaville, Sloppy Joe's, The Rum Barrel, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, the Yea Mon Cruise and many others), he also plays for many charitable events and private parties. We just can't seem to get enough of him! But before the music started, I got a chance to pull him away from his phaitful phans and ask him a few questions.

- Thank you so much for taking a moment to talk with me. You're going on stage again for a flock of Parrot Heads. Tell me, what goes through your head?
 - What goes through my head? That's a good question. Um, not a whole lot. What goes through my head is that we're gonna have a great time, cause they're wonderful, wonderful people. Ah, this is like playing in my living room, because I'm home. This is my home base. The Pirates In Paradise and the Berks County PHC folks, we do a lot of stuff with them. Sometimes the Philly club, but we'll be going around. But it's, it's nice. It's just me and my Son (tonight), we're gonna be mixing it up with a lot of different tunes. And ah - what goes through my head? Having a really good time, cause this is what we do, you know, been playing the guitar for 40 years, it's what we do.
- Well we really enjoy hearing it! We really do.
 - Ah - thank you. I hope so.
- You play for Parrot Heads all the time. But I've gotta ask, what's *your* favorite Parrot Head moment?
 - My favorite Parrot Head moment - was when I was watching Jimmy Buffett film Fruitcakes back in 1993, and he came off and he was trying to go back to his trailer and I said "Jimmy do you mind taking a picture" - *nobody* was around. And he looks around and he says, "alright, come on over." It was myself, my wife, my son and daughter. And Jimmy who's playing the guitar with me, (tonight) who was like maybe 9, yeh, it was '93, he was 11. I'm good at math. And ah, and we go by and Jimmy says "How ya doing" and I say "good, do you mind taking a picture, but I don't want to bother you." It was like 900 degrees - August in Florida, that's when I was livin' in Florida. Anyway, he puts his arm around my whole family and takes a nice picture. It's hanging on my wall. He goes, "You want one too?" So I say, "I'd love one!" But I didn't want to bother him. And he goes "Awe - no - come on over." Then he starts talking - "Where are you guys from." Ah, oh my God. *He wouldn't shut up.* He was wonderfully, wonderfully hospitable to us. We actually left, he was still standing there because I felt embarrassed, the guy just wants to go into his trailer and he was just very, very nice. That's my favorite Parrot Head moment. Now - Parrot Head? He's the King Parrot Head.
- What an experience! But besides Jimmy Buffett, if you could, who would you like to perform with?
 - Me? If I had my choice? Anybody besides Buffett?
- Yep. Anybody but Buffett.
 - Ah, boy. That's a tough question! I thought this was gonna be easy. Who would I play with? -- My Son Jimmy!! How's that! That's it. Nah, I, well my God, I'm a Beatles fanatic and things like that but I've gotten to play some tunes with Doyle (Grisham), and Jimmy Buffett's band, who's the greatest guy. And with Nadirah

(Shakoor), the Berks County club put that together ("Christmas in the Caribbean" concert), and I think we're doing it again - they better! It's pretty cool.

- Now everybody asks this question, right. What did you want to be when you were a kid?
 - What'd I wanna be?
- Yeh, when you were a kid, when you grew up?
 - *A very handsome, sexy man!* NO, I ah, what'd I want to be? I like baseball a lot, but I was a terrible baseball player. *Not this!* I never dreamed of doing this! What did I wanna be? Um, that's a good question. Ah yeh, baseball was my thing. I was a Mickey Mantel nut. I was born less than a half mile from Yankee Stadium, *so all you Yankee Fans, "Hey."* But baseball, yeh. But every dream came true for me. I've got a beautiful wife, healthy children, everything. I want for nothing, I've got everything.
- Well, speaking of kids. How great is it playing with your son?
 - (Jimmy shouts so that his son may hear) - "HOW GREAT IS IT PLAYING WITH MY SON?" He can't hear me. Ah, it's cool. He's a wonderful kid, he really, really is. He puts up with a lot. He knows more songs than I do all from the 30's, 40's and 50's, we're singing songs from a Bluegrass band from the 60's on the bus ride coming up here. It's thrilling. He's got so much energy.
- I've heard he (Jimmy Jr.) had to come out of his shell a bit.
 - Oh, when we first started, he would stand there like a pole going (Jimmy stands like a straight pole) and now he becomes some kind of maniac up there. He drives me *crazy*.
- Crazy good, right?
 - No! He drives me crazy bad *and good*. Hittin' me, pinchin' me, throwing things at me. Yeh, but he's wonderful. It's really a dream come true that he did that. It's funny, today my daughter, before I knew about computers back in the early 90's, late 80's, she's writing down the lyrics to Buffett so that I could learn it, cause we fell in love with Buffett in '93 after he was so nice to us.
- You guys do seem to have so much fun when you're out there.
 - Yeh - well beer helps!
- You've said that all your dreams have come true. But what's your dream for yourself and your family beyond this?
 - Beyond this - health, well obviously. You know, just uh, good relationships, they are both married. Again - be healthy. Money - eh. You need it but... if things keep going the way they're going for me - I am ecstatic. But you know, really, we don't need anything. We're all doing *okay*. We're not rich people; we don't have to be rich people to be okay. It's fun. We get together periodically, my pain in the ass manager who is making fun of me over there, Mary Beth (Jimmy shoots her a *look*). What do I want? Just that we keep seeing each other and having some good times together.
- Fantastic. So, I've got to know. What's your favorite Jimmy Buffett tune? Old or new.
 - Boy oh boy. My favorite Buffett tune? That's really almost impossible. I mean I would say,... oh so many. You know the major ones, you do them so many times you kind of forget how great they are. And they are great! There's a bunch of guys like me, we'd write a couple of songs here and there. There's writing a song like we do and then there's writing a song like Jimmy does. The guy is an artist, he's a genius. I'm examining the other day a song and okay, it goes bop bop - rhyme, bop bop - rhyme, bop bop - no rhyme, bop bop... And I'm trying to figure out how to find that magic. Okay, yeh, what was the question? No, no, my favorite Buffett tune - it is unanswerable. I could play the Captain Tony song. What the hell is the name of the Captain Tony song??? *"I went down to Captain Tony's"* yeh yeh yeh, LAST MANGO IN PARIS, every day of the week. But then again, I'm playing African songs, folk, he's got so many. He's got like 400 songs! And 90 percent of them are great! *Zydackakononmobile* - that you could throw out the window. I don't like that one, whatever that is. Not one of my favorites.
- What's on your iPod that people wouldn't expect? You know, Laura Bush, former First Lady, just said publicly that she listens to Bob Marley!
 - Bob Marley, really? That's great. That people wouldn't expect? Let's see. What do I have? Well you'd expect Zac Brown and those guys, who's a genius by the way! He really is. He's something else that guy. He was playing Buffett's guitar the other night too. Let's see. I like some newer stuff. I say newer but it's still from the mid 90's. Like Sublime, some of the newer stuff. Well, newer to *me*. To kids it's ancient. But Sublime where they mix up some reggae and grunge and they do it their way. I have that. Ah, ZZ Top, I love crazy rock and roll stuff. I've gotta see them in concert. They are amazing. And then I have like Italian things from the 1940's. I love the Big Band stuff. I have some of that on there. Boy oh boy, these questions are

killin' me! I like almost anything, I can listen to anything.

- After you're done playing tonight, if you could get on a boat, or a plane, where would you go?
 - One of two places. I've dreamed of always going to Bali, (I've never been over there, just to go somewhere really far away). And I went to St. Barts. If you've never been - GO. Go to St. Barts. I've been to St. Maarten and all the Buffett stuff is there.
- Well he (Buffett) is big on St. Barts right?
 - Yeh, well he's always there, but (St Barts) is amazing. It's so different than every other island that I've been to. But my Wife and I went there and we rented a little car and we drove. It's just so... You're not gonna find McDonald's. You're not gonna find KFC there. It's so classy. *But money - Whew!* But I've got to get to Italy and China. I've gotta do a whole bunch of things.
- But your favorite tropical is St. Barts?
 - Right now I've got to say yeh. St. Barts is my favorite place. That and the Gulf Shores of Alabama! Where I own a house, with some nice *free* oil (the BP oil catastrophe had just recently occurred in the Gulf).
- Okay, I'll let you off the hook for now. We are all looking forward to the show. Have a great evening, it's a beautiful night, and thank you so much for everything!
 - Thank you so much and I'm looking forward to it!

What a great interview! Thanks Jimmy for all the fun! Just before Jimmy and Jimmy Jr. were about to hit the stage, I grabbed Jimmy Jr. and asked him this question...

- Hey Jimmy (Jr.). Before you start playing, can you give me one thing about your Dad that you didn't expect was gonna happen when you started playing with him?
 - I did not EVER expect a woman to *want* to take his shirt off! There have been times when people will come up to him and he'll start playing the Rod Stewart song "*If You Want My Body*" and he'll unbutton his shirt and girls will come up and finish undressing him! Never in my wildest dreams - not that I care - good for him, because I mean the guy's not...ya know...the most handsome fellow in the world. So I'm looking at this and wondering "*are these women okay?!*" But no, I'm kidding (sort of). I love the guy! But yeh, just the fact that women would want to undress him! That was the most surprising thing, and shocking and scary as well.
- Well thanks for that little nugget!
 - No problem!

Well Jimmy Jr. sure didn't have to think very hard about what was unexpected about performing with his Dad. Hey Jimmy, it doesn't matter what your kid says - we all still think you're pretty great!

Now I know what song to request next time!!

Colleen Miller
Pirates in Paradise

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