

ENDORSEMENTS

In 1965 The Tropics were the biggest band in Florida—simple as that. I watched them in awe. Their power was never truly captured on record, but a show beyond belief! No small part of that was bassist Charlie Souza. When my band in 1975 was looking for a bass player, as I was switching from bass to guitar, we asked Charlie to join and he did. Unfortunately, the band folded not long after he arrived. But in that short time I found him to be a great musician and a nice guy. I'm sure his book will be an interesting read for anyone looking for rock & roll adventure.

—Tom Petty
(*The Heartbreakers*)

He hits all the right notes. A great player, terrific singer and a gentleman as well! It's always a pleasure to share the stage with my friend, Charlie Souza.

—Dino Danelli
(*Rascals*)

It is my honor to give a rave endorsement for Charlie Souza's new book. A friend for 45 years is so rare these days. He's such a blessing, more than he knows. Any musician can learn from the experiences of all the highs and lows we've gone through. It's sure to be interesting and exciting reading for anyone. Hard work, persistence and talent make the man. Thank you for being a part of my life!

—Eric Turner
(*The Tropics, Bacchus, Fortress*)

After I left Cactus to join with Jeff Beck and Carmine Appice in BBA, Charlie eventually became the bass player in the New Cactus Band. I came to know him as a good bass player and friend. I'm sure he has some great stories to tell in his book.

—Tim Bogert
(*Vanilla Fudge, Cactus, BBA-Beck Bogert & Appice*)

The thing I love about Charlie Souza's musicianship is that he comes from the heart—that coupled with his great understanding of what he plays makes for great music. You know, I bought my house from Charlie and his good energy is in my wooden beams. That's why I sleep good at night.

—Tim Hauser
(*Manhattan Transfer*)

I have known Charlie Souza for a long time. We played in Cactus together and he has played with some of the best performers in the business. Charlie is one of those guys that are humble, always has a smile on his face, great team/band member and GREAT at his craft. I couldn't recommend a better book whose author is Charlie Souza!

—Duane Hitchings
(*Cactus, Songwriter: Theme from "Rocky IV" and
"Do You Think I'm Sexy" by Rod Stewart*)

I always that knew when Charlie walked into a session it would be a great one, his smile lit up the room and his playing lit up the tracks!

—Larry Brown
(*Drummer for Andy Williams, Emmy award winning
Studio Engineer and Producer for George Harrison,
Jeff Lynne, Bob Rose, Jim Keltner, Nigel Harrison,
Atlantic Records recording group Fortress*)

Not only do I know Chaz as a great musician, bandmate and songwriter but I watched him totally transform himself into a veritable dynamo of positive thought and action! He sets a great example; don't say no to your dreams!

—Harry Cohen
(*Motion Picture and Film Industry Supervising Sound Editor
Sound Designer Soundelux, Los Angeles
Sound Designer at Todd AO/Ascent Media
Keyboardist at Large*)

From when I first saw Charlie playing with The Tropics in Tampa in 1965 to when we invited him into The New Cactus Band on 1973, I have always known him to be a great musician and friend, the kind of guy everyone shares their stories with. I know I did!

—Mike Pinera

*(Blues Image, Iron Butterfly, New Cactus Band,
Thee Image, Alice Cooper Band, Classic Rock All Stars)*

I loved the gospel feel on *Live Your Dream*. It was a flashback for me to my time playing with Charlie in a Christian band.

—Bill Lordan

*(The Robin Trower Band, Sly & the Family Stone,
Fortress, The Charlie Souza Band)*

Charlie and I have been friends since we were teenagers. We played together in Cactus and in many other projects as well through the years. He has always been a hardworking, kind and dedicated musician. And a greater Beatles fan there never was!

—Bobby Caldwell

(Johnny Winter and Captain Beyond, Rick Derringer)

Charlie's work is a kick in your Inspiration—this will get you moving in positive directions in your life!

—Sheryl Roush

(Author/ Speaker, "Heart of a Mother")

Charlie Souza listens to his inner voice. Sharing his love and gift of music with the world, he lives life as the daring adventure it is meant to be.

—Janet Cucinotti

(President, World Sound Productions)

It's such a joy for me to see that you accomplished such an intense and, I hope, liberating process. I admire your dedication to healing.

—Ellen Faulk, M.A. Professor

(Phillips Graduate Institute Encino, California)

Back in 1976 my brother Ken and I snagged a double album deal with Fantasy Records via our Production company with Herb and Mutt Cohen who handled the business end of things under Fifth Floor Music/Third Story Productions. Wayne Henderson (*Jazz Crusaders*), producer told us to find a better bass player so we started auditions. Charlie Souza came in and started popping his funky bass lines and great singing voice! We knew he was *The One!* He contributed a nice tune on our first album *Gale Force* called *Baby Would You Like To Be Home*. It was a nice, simple melodic tune and we added a funky bass drum/bass line. I got to work on arranging some Eagles type background vocals because I really liked the tune. Ken and I went on to record a second album called *Gale Force 2* with Chaz and Roche Grace from Joe Walsh's band. Charlie penned another tune on that record that I liked so much I asked to sing lead vocal when it was recorded. After that Charlie and I played in a couple of "cover bands" until 1995 when we all called it quits.

—Lennie Gale, Gale Force

*(Operations Manager, Dole Fresh Fruit Company San Diego Terminal,
Drummer/Vocalist 'Mid Life Crisis'—Orange County, CA)*

Charlie is a natural. He's a naturally gifted musician, singer and songwriter. He has that "thing" that can't be learned regardless of the amount of years at Berkley or wherever. And naturally...he's a great guy! It's always good news anytime I get to see or play with Charlie.

—Mike Arturi
(Lovin' Spoonful)

Charlie hits ALL the right notes! If it be written words or music, he tells it like it are! The man is straight shooter, a gentleman, and puts his heart and soul into everything that he does! I love this guy and wish we could work together more often. Who knows what lies in wait around the corner. I'd say a whole lot more but paper's expensive. Now buy me lunch! Love you Charlie!

—Joe Lala

*(Percussionist/Vocalist with Crosby, Stills Nash & sometimes Young,
BEE GEES, Firefall and many others)*

Charlie Souza, Eric Turner and Bill Jordan were the best power trio I ever had behind me, and Charlie is still to this day my favorite “all time” bass player no exception! I pray someday we can record an album together.

—Darrell Mansfield

*(The Darrell Mansfield Band, Eddie Van Halen,
Jon Bon Jovi, Raphael Saadiq Band, Blues Hall of Fame)*

Charlie and I met in 1969 and with other ex Tropics member Eric Turner formed Bacchus, a group that had an on and off career for about five years. We made some great music together and had some wonderful times on the road. I know I'll enjoy reading the book.

—Bill Peterson

*(Bacchus, White Witch, Mainstream,
Exceptional Ed. High School Teacher, Hillsborough County and
Oblate, Order of St. Benedict Monastery, St. Leo, Florida)*

Holy cow, I've wanted to talk to you for forty freekin' forevers, like since I was a 13 year-old bass player in a local band from Lakeland, and you guys, “The Tropics,” would play at the high school there and at the old Lakeland Civic Center. We wound up doing some gigs together when I was in a band called “Power” and you had “Bacchus.” So to have played in the same freekin' band (Mudcrutch) at different times is kinda one of them Twilight Zone moments. This is cool!

—Danny Roberts

(Guitarist/Mudcrutch, Power)

Charles, my lifelong friend, you always were a dreamer. I knew you would go after your dreams. I remember as a young boy you were always at the top of the class with your musical talents. What great childhood memories I have.

—Vernon Clark

*(Hillsborough County Sheriffs Office
Photo Lab Technician/Photographer)*

Charlie and I go back to Monroe Jr. High School in Tampa. I don't recall how we became friends but it wasn't long before he was staying with us at MacDill AFB. He was one of the family and was treated as such. We'd get up at 4 a.m. every day for the trip to the donut shop on Dale Mabry to pick up the 250 Tampa Tribunes we delivered. We had to be nuts! Most of the papers were delivered to apartment buildings with two doors up and two doors down on either end of the unit. The trick was to go half way up the first flight of stairs, turn and slide the paper between the banisters for the upstairs units. Usually our shoes were wet from the dew so it wasn't unheard of to slip and fall down the stairs and through the screen door! I'm rather pleased we lived through the experience!

—Tim Cleary

(Senior Projects Control Engineer Savannah River, SC)

The Fabulous Tropics—The best years of my life by Margie Sexton



It all began in the year of 1964. We were planning to open a teenage night club for ages 13 to 20 years named the Surfer's Club at Maderia Beach, Florida, and we were looking for a house band. My late husband, Dick Sexton, and I auditioned many bands until finally these five heartthrobs, Mel Dryer, Charlie Souza, Buddy Pendergrass, Eric Turner, and Bobby Shea, auditioned. Without a doubt this was going to be our house band. From that time forward we would spend endless nights and days grooming the band for the opening night at Surfer's Club. We had so much fun with them. They would listen to our ideas with enthusiasm and eagerness. They were only 16 to 18 years old then, and of course, at those ages, they listened. I remember even at rehearsals they were so incredible. I could not believe how great they were instrumentally, vocally and visually. They had it all. At rehearsals we would choreograph their steps, determine who would sing, decide what songs to play, and so much more. One thing we

emphasized was to smile and to look at the audience, and that they did. The name "The Tropics" was selected for the band and was picked because they were a Florida Band. Opening night came in July 1964 at the Surfer's Club, and needless to say the crowd came in droves to see them. This was just the beginning for the Fabulous Tropics.

They all dressed alike in these elaborate outfits that were especially made for them. They would say, "Oh, do we have to wear this?" and of course the answer was "Yes." In fact, The Tropics were furnished in writing the attire to wear to the different gigs.

In a short time The Tropics went to Criteria Recording Studio in Miami and released several songs on the Thames Label, including the very popular *For a Long Time* and *Black Jacket Woman*. They received radio airplay throughout the State of Florida and even nationally.

The Tropics had many golden opportunities. I remember telling them at their early stage of development that they really needed to go across the state for Fifty Dollars (which barely paid for gas even then). I knew they would be asked back over and over again and then we could set our fee. This is exactly what happened. They traveled throughout the whole State of Florida and the South. I became a concert promoter while at the same time owning and operating the Surfer's Club. At every opportunity I would use The Tropics as the opening artist. Their very first exposure was with Dino, Desi & Billy at the Curtis Hixon Convention Center in 1967. They brought the house down. I remember telling Bobby Shea, The Tropics' drummer, he had to do *Juanita Banana* in falsetto. He would call me "Mom" and he said, "No, Mom, please don't make me do this in front of a sold out crowd." Well, Bobby sang it and I never heard such a roar from the crowd. Then they opened for the Young Rascals, Grand Funk Railroad and the list goes on. The Tropics were in such great demand. Everywhere they played they broke house records. The girls were so attracted to them that I had to enforce the "no girlfriends" rule on the gigs. At that time I even inserted in the contracts that the promoter was responsible to feed them and more.

Seeing the great potential for The Fabulous Tropics, I entered them in a national contest of over 400 bands at McCormick Field in Chicago, Illinois. I will never forget that night at Surfer's Club when I received a phone call from them that they came in first place. They were offered a recording contract with Epic Records, but we elected to go with Columbia Records.

Following the release of the recordings on the Thames label, they recorded in Tampa, Florida at Morrisound Recording Studio. One of the songs was *Summer Time Blues*. This was always a huge hit on stage, so we thought this song could be a hit if The Tropics released it. When they auditioned for Kit Lambert of The Who at the then Curtis Hixon Exhibition Center, we played the songs that they had recorded at Morrisound, *Summer Times Blues* being one of them. I remember telling Kit that this would be the song for The Tropics to release, as every time they performed the song on stage, the crowd would go wild. Kit went back to England and we did not hear from him for awhile.

Then, in speaking with Clive Davis of Columbia Records, he gave The Tropics the opportunity to perform on stage at the Columbia Records Convention in Miami Beach, Florida. We were elated.

Teo Macero of Columbia records was one of the producers of Columbia Records who saw their performance and wanted to work with them. We mentioned *Summer Times Blues* to Teo and played him our version of the recording—and he elected to record it at Columbia. Ironically, it was released almost at the same time that The Who released it.

The time spent managing The Tropics were some of the best years of my life. I loved each and every one of them. The loss of Buddy Pendergrass was devastating. They were family to me. Some of the memories were relived at The Tropics' Reunion and now Charlie Souza will keep The Tropics' memories alive.