



5 QUESTIONS WITH LITTLE FEAT'S PAUL BARRERE

The guitarist and singer talks about the band's 50th anniversary, lessons learned from listening to Miles Davis, and the new iteration of Funky Feat—which has a gig at Fortify Music Fest in Delaware City on Aug. 10

A Little Feat side-project, Funky Feat features (l-r) Fred Tackett, Gabe Ford, Paul Barrere and Kenny Gradney. Photo courtesy of Funky Feat

By Jim Miller

"Music's about a conversation," says Little Feat guitarist and vocalist Paul Barrere. "You're having a conversation with anyone who's listening. And you want them to get a reaction from it."

On the phone from California, his voice sounds aged and sun-baked, his delivery relaxed, as if his thoughts and words are drifting in on a Pacific breeze.

Soon the 71-year-old musician will be on the opposite coast, in our neck of the woods, playing the Fortify Music Fest on Saturday, Aug. 10, with a relatively new Little Feat side-project called Funky Feat.

Joining Barrere in the project are Little Feat stalwarts Fred Tackett on guitar, Kenny Gradney on bass, and Gabe Ford on drums.

"Funky Feat really just grew out of the fact that Fred and I had been touring as an acoustic duo," Barrere says. "And we just thought it would be fun to bring in electric instruments, crank up and just have at it."

Being on the road is a welcome change for Barrere. Four years ago he was diagnosed with liver cancer. Although he was able to beat it, the fight meant giving up touring—and, really, playing music much at all—for a while. During the hiatus, other Little Feat members had to find other ways to keep busy.

But that's all changed now. Thankfully.

"This is the first year [in a while] that Little Feat has toured with any consistency," Barrere says. "This will be Little Feat's 50th anniversary."

His voice takes on a comedic, incredulous tone, as if he can't believe his own words: "*Fiftieth anniversary?*"

The remark prompts the question of how a band reaches such an impressive milestone. Barrere resists the opportunity to wax philosophic or resort to esoteric mumbo-jumbo.

"It's the music and it's the players," he says. "That's why we do it. It's pretty simple. The music is great; it's interpretive; people can jam to it, y'know? [laughs]."

O&A: I think the question that a lot of Little Feat fans will have is: What music can we expect to hear with this lineup of Funky Feat?

Barrere: Well, we play a lot of Little Feat songs, obviously. But we kind of add a little more funk to it. There's a little more interplay between Fred and myself—the two melodic instruments. Kenny and Gabe are holding it down underneath.

It's been going really good. Last year we did a little tour with Los Lobos. It's just a lot of fun. We play a lot of songs that Little Feat doesn't do. Which is cool.

We'll do "Clownin'" [from their 1991 release *Shake Me Up*]. We do a killer version of "Fat Man [in the Bathtub]" and "Keepin' Up With the Joneses." We do a couple of songs that The Band did: "Long Black Veil" and "The Weight."

I can guarantee you're gonna have a good time. ►

THE QUEEN WILMINGTON

**METAL FEST - TRIBUTES TO:
METALLICA, MOTORHEAD,
MOTLEY CRUE & SCORPIONS
FRIDAY, AUGUST 9**

**BEYOND ICONIC:
BOYBANDS VS. GIRLGROUPS
FEAT. LARGER THAN LIFE &
INDEPENDENT WOMEN
SATURDAY, AUGUST 10**

**GASOLINA REGGAETON PARTY
FRIDAY, AUGUST 16**

**WSTW PRESENTS:
HANSON
THURSDAY, AUGUST 22**

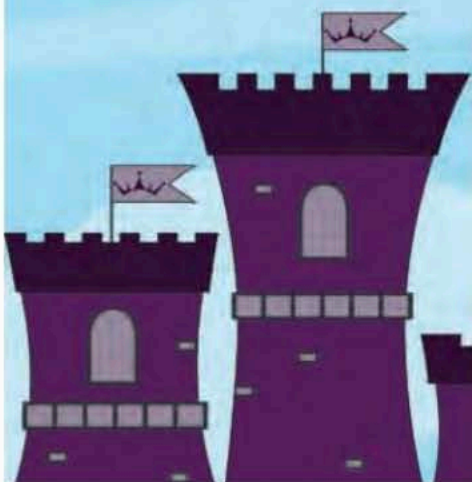
**MICRO-WRESTLING
ALL STARS
FRIDAY, AUGUST 23**

**REWIND 80S PARTY
FEAT. THE REAGAN YEARS
FRIDAY, AUGUST 30**

**THERE, THERE:
RADIOHEAD TRIBUTE
SATURDAY, AUGUST 31**

**APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION
GUNS N' ROSES TRIBUTE
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6**

**THEQUEENWILMINGTON.COM
@QUEENWILMINGTON**



LISTEN

**5 QUESTIONS WITH
LITTLE FEAT'S PAUL BARRERE**
continued from previous page

O&A: Looking at the lineup with Funky Feat, you've been playing with Fred for a while and with Kenny since you both joined Little Feat in 1972. After all these years, after all those records and tours, are you still able to grow? Are you able to find new territories to explore?

Barrere: Oh, yeah, absolutely. One thing about being a musician, to me, is that you're always exploring, you're always growing, you're always enjoying playing the music.

There's a wealth of jazz combinations that Miles Davis put together. He would play "Kind of Blue" or "Round Midnight," and it would always be different. [He and his band mates] always had a different interpretation on it. So we kind of kept that same ideal with Little Feat. We're not changing players all that much, but we're changing how things get done.

O&A: I remember identifying with Little Feat the first time—hearing "Skin It Back" on WMMR in Philadelphia—and wondering "What is this music?" My dad listened to country and jazz, and my mom was really into R&B, soul, and rock & roll. Little Feat sounded like all of that. I love bands like that—that explore lots of genres and defy categorization. But I wonder: Is that a double-edged sword?

Barrere: It's a big time double-edged sword in terms of being promoted. Back in the days when there were record companies, it was extremely hard for them to figure out which bin they would put us in, y'know?

It's like: "Do we put them in rock? Do we put them in hard rock? Is this a country band? No. Is it jazz? Well..."

It's pretty funny when I think about it. Because you'd think they would just promote you as what you are: a band with great songs. That's why I think musicians love us so much.

O&A: On that note, it sounds like you got a chance recently to play with some younger bands. Does that give you a sense of pride that there are younger musicians out there that kind of idolize you or at least look to you for guideposts on a road map?

Barrere: Kind of like the grandfather that should be put away [laughs]. No, it's very flattering, first and foremost.

Last year when we did The Peach Music Festival [held annually at Montage Mountain Ski Resort in Scranton, Pennsylvania] with moe. and the Turkuaz horn section, we did *Waiting for Columbus*. And we had our three horns and Turkuaz's three horns, so it was one big horn section. We kind of had a backstage rehearsal, and at one point, they said, "What do you guys do here?"

And I said, "We improvise." [laughs]

"Follow me, boys, I'm going off a cliff!"

O&A: I went to my collection of Little Feat records and dug up *Time Loves A Hero*. The album sleeve has these great photos of everyone in the band recording in the studio. There's this photo of you with your Stratocaster, you're turning up the volume on your amp, you've got a cigarette hanging out of your mouth and you look ready to rock. I wonder: If you could go back in time, what words of advice would you give that younger version of yourself?

Barrere: Don't destroy your body like I did. [laughs]

It's a known fact that drugs and alcohol have permeated a lot of rock & roll, a lot of music, period, through the last century. People drank and they'd make music. Or people smoked and they'd make music. It's more of a question of: "How long do you want to stay on this planet and continue to make music?"

If you do, you better take care of yourself [laughs gently]. I mean, that's what I tell myself at this point.

Paul Barrere and Funky Feat will perform at Fortify Music Fest in Delaware City on Saturday, Aug. 10. Tickets and more information are available at FortifyMusicFest.com.



Paul Barrere of Little Feat and Funky Feat.

Photo courtesy of Funky Feat