

Backbeat: Son of the Famous Father

Robby's grass roots are his supporters

By David Parker

Robby Vee's talent, creativity and perseverance as a singer/guitarist/songwriter for more than a decade is not in doubt. He has shared credits and stages with legends of rock 'n' roll - Little Richard, Everly Brothers, Carl Perkins, Sir Paul McCartney, Dion, Righteous Brothers, Prince, and many other top names.

Robby tours regularly and will perform at roadhouses, street dances, clubs, ballrooms, theaters, casinos, state fairs, festivals, and sports centres across the US and many other countries, in the Far East, Australia and the UK. Performances include one at Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's 50th birthday celebration, his world-renowned Sydmonon festival, and with Sir Paul McCartney in New York and London at his "Buddy Holly Festivals."

Named after his father, Bobby Vee, and family friend, Brian Hyland, the legendary 60s stars, he's entrenched in the traditions of pop, swing, rockabilly and pop.

Robby learned and has been inspired by masters of guitar, including Carl Perkins, James Burton, and Albert Lee, in casual, yet intimate back-stage settings. He has also played guitar for "Dick Clark's Caravan of Stars" rock 'n' roll shows, and with performers such as the Shirelles, Tommy Roe, Ben E. King, Freddie "Boom Boom" Cannon, Buddy Knox, Bo Diddley, and other pioneers of rock 'n' roll and pop music - so many, in fact, that it reads like a Billboard's Top 40 book!

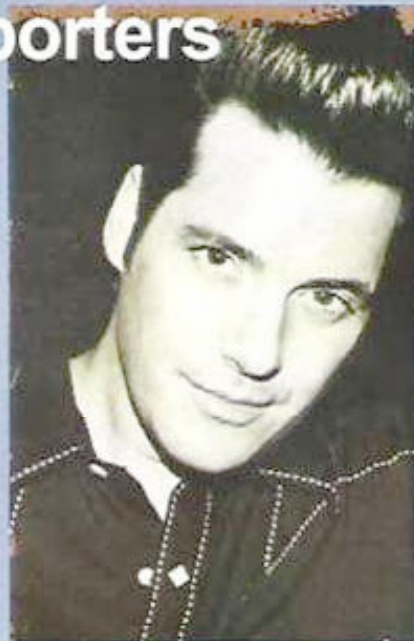
Was he encouraged, or did he just pick up from his dad?

"Growing up in a musical household, there were music instruments everywhere in the house. My father had a studio in the home where he would spend a lot of time working on music.

"From an early age, I realized how front and centre music was in the Vee family. My father would pick up a guitar and sing for hours - one song after another. His claim would be that he knew one verse from every song. I wasn't encouraged or knowingly groomed for this business, music was just part of our family environment.

The Vees - brothers Robby, Tommy, and Jeff - have performed together since grade school. As the lead singer and guitarist, Robby toured with them in support of their six record releases, including their most recent CD release, "Knock Yourself Out."

The Vees also backed their father on tour, and just about every



other living legend from the 50s and 60s on rock 'n' roll shows around the world. They appeared in the movie "Catch Me If You Can" and wrote two songs featured in the movie "Don't Let Go." Robby has appeared on four of his father's records, including a live album recorded by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber at the London Palladium. He also appeared alongside his father and the Crickets on a Crickets tribute album which included Eric Clapton, Johnny Rivers, and the late Waylon Jennings. Recently, Robby recorded with Rolling Stones guitarist, Ronnie Wood, at his London home studio.

Is he being made to 'plough his own furrow' rather than being pushed along and having doors opened for him by his dad, such as making his own current tour arrangements?

"My father isn't a strong supporter. We might get a mention on stage, that's about it. He knows very little about my music and the tours I do. Most of my tours and opportunity come from a grass-roots fan base. I've met a lot of really great people through doing shows. People offer to help me put shows together and get my name out there, much like this UK Tour. This was put together by a wonderful person who saw me in concert with Freddie Cannon back in 2004 and thought I should come back to the UK."

Does he see any hope of becoming a worldwide star like his dad or is he content with being able to make music for his fans and audiences?

"I never got into this business to be a star. That might be my downfall.

"Growing up in a musical family, the transition to stage was as simple as playing in the living

room with family and then, all of a sudden, you're on stage, and this is what you do for a living. I never really sat down and planned it out; I just "keep on keepin' on".

"I put shows on the calendar and record music when I feel I have enough music to put a project together. Music has been the constant in my life.

"My father was a Brill Building singer, the building where the great songwriters of the American pop songbook wrote hits for artists like The Everly Brothers, Dion, The Shirelles, Elvis and others.

My father's career was all about making hit songs and he had a huge support system behind him to elevate his career. I love to play music and I'm very content with the journey I'm on.

"I'm continually getting in front of new people to share my music with. If I'm known as a second-generation rocker who helped keep the great tradition of rock 'n' roll alive, that's good enough for me."

What does he think is the difference between today's music scene and the 1950s/60s days of the Top Twenty singles scramble and excitement?

"These are different times... and yet the same in some ways. Today's state of the industry is more like the 50s and 60s than it's ever been, probably... It's in a state of redefining itself, much like in the 50s when it was in a state of defining itself.

"Artists are getting their music heard and finding audiences in totally different ways than 10 years ago and, in a sense, are writing the new model of the industry as they go.

"I'm a fan of old music from



"I never got into this business to be a star."

Memphis, Chicago... New Orleans - to name a few. The great thing about music from the 50s and 60s was the regionalism.

"The sound coming out of Memphis was different than even the records coming out of Nashville. The way Scotty Moore, or even Carl Perkins, played guitar was very different than how Merle Travis played, or Chet Atkins.

"Memphis was the gateway to the south and you could hear that vibe in those records. Nashville was filled with technical aspects of tradition, from how the records were made to the music recorded.

"Today, with the Internet, it seems like regionalism has come back to an industry watered down by corporate music centres. With file-sharing and social networking, you can hear music from the music scene it's in at its raw form. There is so much great music out there that hasn't been manipulated for a marketplace... Much like the great rockin' roll recordings of the 50s.

"Writing has been a favorite passion of mine, just like painting. I've been a painter my entire life and, to me, writing feels like painting with an imaginary canvas. I take the same creative process into my songs - performance and recording."

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