

Rock's legendary guitarist Mike Pinera talks about Blues Image, Iron Butterfly, Tom Down and Thee Image

- Posted by [Michael Limnios Blues Network](#) on October 30, 2015

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Mike Pinera: Ride Rock n' Blues Ride

Mike Pinera was born in September 29, 1948 and started professionally in the late 1960s with the group Blues Image, which had a #4 hit in 1970 with their song "Ride Captain Ride". After the breakup of that group, he joined Iron Butterfly, and later formed the group Ramatam. Pinera was then the founding member of the band New Cactus, a later incarnation of the band Cactus. Multi-Platinum awarded recording artist Mike Pinera and the groups he has been in have collectively sold in excess of 100 million albums. Mike Pinera and his group BLUES IMAGE were co-founders and house band at THEE IMAGE, a Miami Beach concert venue they opened and co-headlined on weekends.



There Blues Image performed, met and jammed with such artists as Jerry Garcia & Grateful Dead, The Cream with Eric Clapton, The Yardbirds with Jimmy Page, Eric Burdon & The Animals, Blood Sweat & Tears, Frank Zappa & The Mothers Of Invention, Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, Jefferson Airplane, Ted Nugent & The Amboy Dukes. And many more. Blues Image soon signed with Atlantic Records and soared to the Top of the Charts with RIDE CAPTAIN RIDE, which Mike co-wrote and sang! Blues Image's albums have now reached cult status! Mike then joined IRON BUTTERFLY. Their hit In A Gadda Da Vidda stayed on top of the charts for a record-breaking 52 weeks earning them the first Platinum Record Award ever given! In 1980, Mike joined ALICE COOPER. The albums he recorded with Alice were Special Forces and Zipper Catches Flesh. Pinera co-wrote with Alice and helped produce a national TV Special for France called Alice In Paris. He would open some of the sold-out stadium concerts with his own MIKE PINERA BAND then return to play in THE ALICE COOPER BAND. In 1992, Mike formed the Classic Rock Supergroup, THE CLASSIC ROCK ALL-STARS. The band included lead singers from Rare Earth, Sugarloaf, Headhunters, Monkees, Spencer Davis, and himself. Mike Pinera received the "Legendary Rock Award" at the 2011 Malibu Music Awards!

[Interview by Michael Limnios](#)

How do you describe Mike Pinera sound and songbook? What characterize your music philosophy?

Diverse. Much like my music tastes. My sound has elements of blues, latin, pop, funk, ethereal, Gospel. My music philosophy is to try encouraging those who need it, uplift those who are down while entertaining and bringing some happiness in at the same time.

Which meetings have been the most important experiences for you? What is the best advice ever given you?

Meeting, becoming friends and jamming with Jimi Hendrix and Jimmy Page among others. They were very social and open if you got to know them. To people on the outside they came off as very private almost out of reach. But in quiet, laid back surroundings, you could feel a deep sadness and hunger for true friendship and sincerity.

The best advice came from my mother: "Son, God will help you if you help yourself." But I feel that in these troubled times with so many directions you

can go in, right and wrong, I believe God will help those who even just try..... to help themselves. There is much we just can't do by ourselves.



"The Past is History, the Future a Mystery, the Present is a gift from above. That's why it's called the Present. Pass it on with a whole lotta love!" (Photo: Mike with Blues Image)

Are there any memories from Blues Image and Iron Butterfly, which you'd like to share with us?

So many memories of those times. Mostly all great. Blues Image members were real good friends. We were all united in wanting to be the best we could be. We would reach for musical moments that were way deep inside. Average and mediocre were not acceptable to us.

The Butterfly was a complicated period. I believe the music on the Metamorphosis album which I wrote much of, was good but by the time the producer got a hold of it, the end result was too different a style than the fans were used to hearing. I had recording gear at home which I would use to demo the songs I had written for the band. For some reason I was able to get huge

guitar sounds and thick vocals. I would play it for the band and they really liked it. But after we recorded the songs at the studio the big sound was gone and we lost its originality. Had I known better I would have written more songs like the band had before and not had such a rapid departure from what fans expected? Definitely too abrupt of a change. If you listen to some of the live performances like on You Tube, you'll hear a bigger sound than is on the album. Lastly the producer was always reminding me to let Doug (Ingle) write more on my songs, let him sing more so he wouldn't feel like I had taken over. But the problem was Doug was not available to write with me. I respect that he needed to spend time with his family. But what blew my mind was we would record one of my songs which was pretty much complete and then the producer would work with Doug after the sessions and add new parts of music and vocals without telling anyone. This also made him a co-writer on my songs with new parts I wasn't that thrilled about. This didn't seem right to me. The rest of the band didn't seem to care.

But when a song writer spends over a week writing and crafting a song and someone comes in for a few hours with a song writing partner who we hardly knew and adds his words and music to the recording without the knowledge of the principal song writer because the producer wants to keep him happy, you can expect a compromised album. Doug is very gifted and talented but if you listen to his acoustic songs on Metamorphosis you can hear a totally different sound. There were great acoustic songs coming from Led Zeppelin, Yes, both who by the way were opening bands who toured with us, but it was not like folk music. It was progressive.



"My sound has elements of blues, latin, pop, funk, ethereal, Gospel. My music philosophy is to try encouraging those who need it, uplift those who are down while entertaining and bringing some happiness in at the same time." (Photo: Mike with Iron Butterfly)

If you could change one thing in the musical world and it would become a reality, what would that be?

If I could change anything in the music world it would be that the record labels stop telling the artists to be more "commercial." Let them be themselves to write and record what they love rather than what is selling at the moment. There probably would be less drug overdoses.

What are the lines that connect the legacy of Blues with Rock n' Roll and continue to Folk and Acid Rock music?

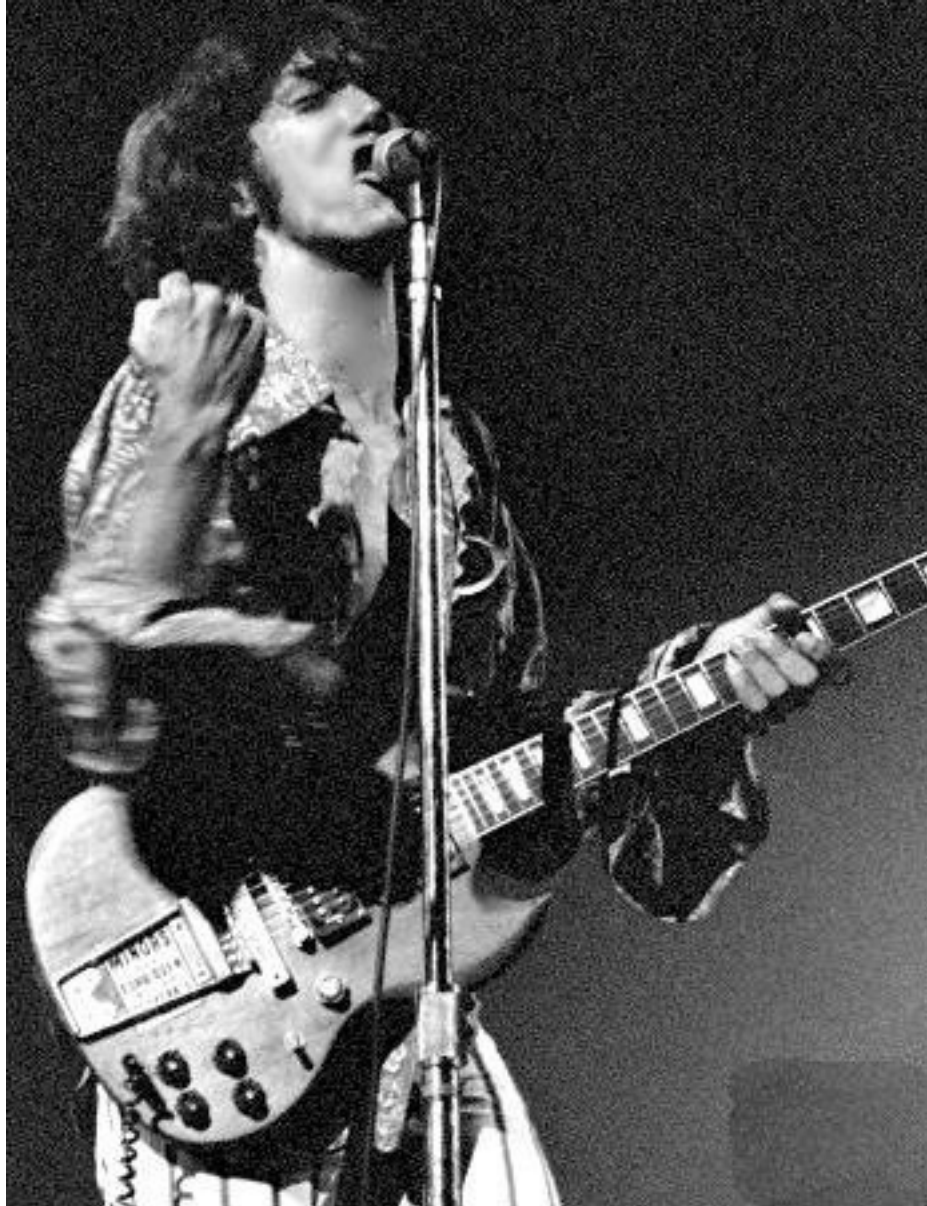
The lines I see connecting the different styles of music such as you mention, are the ability to connect with the listener and communicate their real feelings about life and love. Music that transcends and rises above the mundane is a beautiful thing. I love to listen to songs like "Mrs. Brown You've Got A Lovely Daughter." But do you remember what you felt when you first heard "House Of The Rising Sun?"

The song and Eric Burdon's voice filled with raw emotion would come together and lift me up to as Stevie Wonder says to "A Higher Ground."

What do you learn about yourself from the blues and what does the blues mean to you?

I learned that the blues are a good vehicle to bring out passion and emotion from within.

What were the reasons that made your generation to start the Psychedelic Rock searches and experiments?



People felt that there was a higher reality which we were all part of but couldn't quite get there on our own. So they looked to Psychedelic Rock, meditation, Eastern Music and alternative life styles to expand their consciousness to accommodate the vast realms they began to discover. In Blues Image Manny Bertematti and I began learning meditation techniques, vegetarian diets, fasting and treating everyone we met like they were our family. When the band moved from Miami to the mountains of Los Angeles we learned from highly respected natural teachers scientifically how to fast on distilled water for two weeks then eat only fruits and vegetables, nuts and grains. Wow! We discovered dimensions of well-being that had us glowing from head to toe. Our music expressed levels of spontaneity that had us

playing the very same thing together at the same without knowing how or why!

Which memories from gigs, jams, and open acts in famous Thee Image, Miami Beach, FL makes you smile?

Memories of Thee Image in Miami include playing and jamming with Grateful Dead with Jerry Garcia, The Cream with Clapton, The Yardbirds, The Doors and so many great groups. Friendships began then that are still alive today. When I run into those guys I can't stop smiling.

We like to share stories of those fun-filled days. We took a bowling alley on Miami Beach turned it into a concert hall and opened for the greatest groups in rock.

What has made you laugh lately and what touched (emotionally) you from the music circuits?

Today I laugh when I hear people say the music of today does not compare with the sixties and seventies. That today's artists have no talent. Ha Ha! There are so many great bands out there, great songs, singer songwriters, many of who have their own unique style and also those who come close to re-creating our music from back then. Signed and un-signed artists are taking music to new heights.

I am on tour a lot and discover new artists all the time. Besides being a singer songwriter, recording artist and tour performer I also am a music producer. I have discovered, produced and gotten record deals for artists as recently as a few months ago. Some of them have already sold millions of albums and are currently on major tours. Next week I will be producing a very talented lady from the Ukraine in our Los Angeles Studios.



The studio is here in Hermosa Beach near Malibu and Santa Monica. Just blocks from the ocean. I am so grateful to be doing what I love to do and make a good living doing it. I just finished playing several outdoor festivals and have some time off before going back on tour.

So my lovely wife Valerie (*photo*) and I spend quality time together and then make the artists which I am producing feel at home. We welcome everybody. These are the memories of tomorrow. These are some of the things that make me smile.

Are there any memories from the late Tom Dowd which you'd like to share with us?

Tom Dowd was the happiest producer I ever worked with. He had a sailboat in Miami and it seemed like he couldn't wait for the sessions to be over so he could go sailing. Yet he was very serious and knew exactly what he wanted. He

liked to see artists who really wanted to improve. Many times when the sessions were over I would ask if I could stay and work with the recording console so I could learn how it worked. Eventually I started recording my parts alone late at night. Much of which he liked and kept it for the album. After a while he would arrive at the studio, peek in the door, and listen to what we had done, then leave saying "Mike has it under control I'll be back later."

Let's take a trip with a time machine, so where and why would you really wanna go for a whole day..?

If I could travel in a time machine I would go back to my hometown Tampa Florida and visit my mother and father. Their encouragement and support is why I made it in music and am here today. I really miss them.

Remember to tell your loved ones how much you love them. Every day.

Then I would put the time machine in fast forward to the future. Hopefully I would see that my music and my life touched others in a positive way. That their lives are better because of it.

The Past is History, the Future a Mystery, the Present is a gift from above. That's why it's called the Present. Pass it on with a whole lotta love!



Mike Pinera is still Rockin' the Universe