

**H**aving originally performed in a “hair band” throughout the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, Central New Jersey native Joe Haley was looking for a new place to go with his musical talent, after the music scene changed with grunge music taking the spotlight. He turned to friend Dave “The Snake” Sabo of Skid Row and his cousin Ron Haley and decided to start a new band. Hence, The Kickback Band was formed.

Over three years later, Joe is the lead keyboardist with Ron as the drummer, and they are joined by guitarists Joel “The Doctor” Fischer and Danny Dee, bassist Tony Guerriero, and lead vocalist Dean Martinez, as they tour around the New Jersey area performing at many bars and clubs in their effort to just have a good time and provide a fun atmosphere for their fans.

Martinez is a “bull with energy,” according to Joe, and frequently interacts with the audience, sings directly to the girls and stands and performs on the bar.

“They like that type of thing,” Joe says. “It’s a fun band. I was in the music business for years. I was in the professional part of it, when we would travel on the road. When it becomes a business, it takes the fun out of it. We have our differences, but if there’s a problem, we’re all older now—in our 40s—and we sit down and talk about them and straighten things out.”

He continues, “My motto is ‘Once it stops being fun, I’m done.’ Right now, I take care of the web site and I book the band, but I don’t consider myself a leader. It’s a democracy.”

Joe also mentions that everybody in the Kickband Band is a veteran of some sort, including the band’s bass player who performed in Motown bands in the 1960s and 70s.

While The Kickback Band doesn’t perform original songs, it has a gargantuan repertoire of cover songs that they enjoy performing, primarily covering the gamut of the 1960s, 70s, 80s and the 90s.

“We have a good mixture of guys,” says Joe. “Tony is the oldest member, and he gives us the Motown music we do. I’m a big rock and 80s guy. Ronnie’s a Southern rock guy. And, Dean’s a singer who is into the danceable stuff, like the Temptations. It’s a really good blend of music. We all sit

down and decide on a really strong mix of songs. We don’t want the crowd to just stand there and think it’s a concert. We want them to dance.”

Joe says that each band member has his own favorite cover to perform, and then they also perform songs that some of them like, and some don’t. They are known to perform hits by John Cafferty, Journey, John Mellencamp and the Romantics, including a medley that features most of those artists all bundled up into one song.

“We get a good response because we do Santana. Once we get them up in the middle of the set, we keep them going right until the end. It seems to work. We usually start our first set to warm people up, and the second set enlivens the mood.”

The band cites some of its influences as Journey, The Eagles, The Allman Brothers, Eric Clapton, Mark Knopfler, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Led Zeppelin, Vanilla Fudge, Sammy Hagar, Thin Lizzy, Todd Rundgren, and Freddie Mercury.

Some of the Kickback Band’s favorite venues to perform include Bello’s Sports Pub in Sayreville (the bar that gave the band its start), Moby Dick’s Bar & Restaurant in Sewaren and The Cambridge Inn in Spotswood. Joe states, “We’re trying to move near the shore more, to perform in places like The Cabin. We’re also going into the studio at the end of September to record our new demo.”

All in all, the band just looks to have a good time.

“We all get along really well, unlike a lot of bands we see out there,” Joe describes. “We have a really good work ethic. It’s a six-piece band, but it’s six personalities and everybody’s different, and we highlight everyone. Joel is a perfectionist He’s got to get it note for note. Dan is an improvisational player, so he can pick anything and improvise on anything, from Michael Jackson to the Allman Brothers. They’re both unique in their own way. It’s a lot of different influences within the band, which is what makes our band unique. We’re willing to play anything.”

For more information, visit the band’s official Web site at [www.thekickbackband.net](http://www.thekickbackband.net).

By: Steven Le Vine

# The Kickback Band

