

# Your Neighbor

BRIAN CONIGLIARO

## Library to host free concert with jazz great

BY SARA DUNN  
OF MAHOPAC NEWS

There isn't enough space on this newspaper page to tell you about all the cool things jazz guitarist and Mahopac resident Brian Conigliaro has done throughout his life.

But let's start with his free performance from 2 to 3:30 p.m. this Sunday, March 21, at the Mahopac Public Library.

The quartet will include Conigliaro on guitar, Michael Goetz on the upright bass, Bill Pernice playing the piano and drummer Chris Parker, who in the past has accompanied Bob Dylan and Aretha Franklin.

This is Conigliaro's latest installment to what has been a colorful, storied and multi-tiered collection of his lifelong musical endeavors.

After growing up in Hastings-on-the-Hudson, Conigliaro lived in New York City for a decade where he did what he called "pit work," playing in the orchestra of Broadway shows, including "A Chorus Line" at the Schubert Theater.

He later moved to Los Angeles, where he lived for 14 years and worked as a music publisher, a music teacher and eventually, as a voice over artist in television commercials, which included singing and playing guitar in a national spot for Toyota.

For a time, Conigliaro had what he described as "a little TV show" on a public cable station called "Hurry Up and Wait" that featured interviews with musicians. Often, he would play with the artist live on air, including a jam session with the drummer from The Motels.

A live performance by Conigliaro received high praise in the pages of the Los Angeles Times from jazz critic Leonard Feather.

"Brian Conigliaro is a great down home jazz/blues harmonica player who must be seen," Feather wrote.

This reputation stuck and word of Conigliaro's prowess on the harmonica made its way to rapper Snoop Dogg, who was looking for a harmonica player to record on a track for his album "Dogg Father." Conigliaro took the job.

Conigliaro has also hit the stage with many other famous musicians.

He sang backup for Ray Charles at a NAACP awards show at the Pantages Theater in Hollywood and played guitar in a big band in New York that had an occasional guest trumpeter – jazz great, Dizzy Gillespie. He's also performed with Lou Rawls, Gregory Hines, and Patti Lupone, among many others.

One of Conigliaro's quirkiest stories involves his experience touring with singer Tiny Tim.

Both musicians were part of the 30th Anniversary of Rock n' Roll cross country tour, and spent many hours on a bus. Conigliaro remembers the late singer as being very religious and still has a bible Tiny Tim gave him. Even with what seemed to be very traditional beliefs, Tiny Tim would rush from the bus and into a store at every stopover to buy a tabloid magazine in search of the latest Elvis sighting, he said.

"He truly believed Elvis was still around," remembered Conigliaro, who said he will perform a song on Sunday that Tiny Tim taught him titled, "Wicky Wacky Woo."

It's with all of these experiences and memories that Conigliaro headed back east with his wife and children, finally settling in Mahopac 12 years ago.

"I love my neighborhood," Conigliaro said, who added that he appreciates small town life after his time in big cities. "I blend the two and if I didn't, I'd go crazy without the other."

Conigliaro now teaches guitar, bass and harmonica at The Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, as well as at the Putnam Music Center in Mahopac, the owner of which, Gus Wieland, is his partner in the group, Two Guitars. The pair have recorded two albums together and perform locally.

He is delighted the library provides a much needed venue for the many local musicians in the area.

"I was pretty thrilled personally when they built the library and cultural center there," he said. "It was one of the things you look for in a town."

While performances hosted by the BMM concert series are free, attendees are asked to donate a canned food item that will benefit the St. John's Food Pantry in Mahopac.

### Can't make it to the library on Sunday?

Brian Conigliaro will perform with his group Two Guitars, along with vocalist Leslie Gore, at 8:30 p.m. Saturday, April 3, at the Town Crier, 130 Route 22, in Pawling. For more information, call 845-855-1300.

Brian Conigliaro will perform with his jazz quartet Saturday, April 17, at the Division Street Grill, 26 North Division St., in Peekskill. For more information, call 914-739-6380.

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Photo courtesy of Brian Conigliaro

Brian Conigliaro on the harmonica has previously sung backup for Ray Charles, played guitar in a big band in New York that had an occasional guest trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, and he's also performed with Lou Rawls, Gregory Hines, and Patti Lupone, among many others.

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