

Paul Guzzone and Neal Shulman put new twists on old songs

Jenny Higgons, jhiggons@lohud.com 2:46 p.m. EST November 9, 2015



(Photo: Paul Sunday Photography)

Paul Guzzone has been a professional singer, songwriter and music producer for most of his 62 years, and he's *still* experimenting with his craft.

On Nov. 13, the pop-rock musician who lives in Pomona will team up with Neal Shulman, one half of the legendary folk/blues/rock duo Aztec Two-Step, at The Turning Point Café in Piermont. The result will be Guzzone and Shulman's unique vocal and acoustic-guitar renditions of some of their favorite songs from the same music scene in Greenwich Village in 1970s and '80s.

The duo will pick tunes from Shulman's long list of popular songs from some of those decades' most popular artists — such as the Rascals and Ray Charles — and put their own acoustic and vocal spins on them.

Guzzone writes and releases songs on his own and with a variety of co-writers, and serves as a bassist-vocalist in the Bacon Brothers band. Here, he talks about his relationship with Shulman, how their upcoming Turning Point gig came about and what the audience can expect.

How did you and Neal get together for this event?

He and I have been friends for about 25 years. Last spring he called me to try to adapt his and my favorite songs from the 1960s and '70s — songs we love but don't want to hear the original versions we've been hearing on the radio for years. As musicians and songwriters, Neal and I dig into the songs, find their essences and play them on acoustic guitars. I've always thought a song should be able to stand on its own without any of the usual production, and the best songs can do that.



Paul Guzzone (Photo: Paul Sunday Photography)

Is this the first time you two have done this together?

We'll be testing the waters at The Turning Point, hoping it will evolve into a show he and I can play from time to time, starting in the New York metro area clubs — and maybe even make a record together some day.

What will you guys' mixture create?

Both of us like to play live. Neal likes to improvise; I play solo. You'll hear me laying a really solid rhythm guitar and Neal exploring his guitar style. He'll interject his folk and blues style into what were pop songs. We'll turn them into folk and blues songs, and harmonize on them. Everyone will recognize the songs, but we'll interpret them in different ways. I was honored he called me to do this.

I'll first do a solo set — my fourth time playing alone at The Turning Point — of favorites from my album "Chasing the Moon" and some brand-new tunes, and then Neal will join me in my second set. His and my musical chemistry and energy complement each other.

Is there a significant music scene in the lower Hudson Valley?

Definitely, but it's underground. A lot goes on at Daryl's House, which used to be the Towne Crier, in Pawling. We do the Pomona Music Festival every summer and gather musicians, including local kids, from around the area. North Rockland High School has some great kids.

Why do you like playing at The Turning Point?

It's intimate, and the audience really listens to the music. I use a microphone, and the guitars are plugged into P.A. system; it's called sound reinforcement, not amplification. It reminds me a lot of some of the Greenwich Village clubs I played at when I was in high school. It has a warm woody feel, a great vibe and a great sound system. It's wonderful to play in a place that seats 90 or 100 people.



If You Go

What: Paul Guzzone and Neal Schulman

When: 8:30 p.m., Nov. 13.

Where: The Turning Point Café, 468 Piermont Ave., Piermont. 845-359-1089, turningpointcafe.com.

Tickets: \$15; advance purchase suggested.

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Paul Guzzone (Photo: Paul Sunday Photography)