



Asbury Park Press

Tony Palligrosi (left) and Carlo Novi, musicians who rose to local prominence as members of Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes, toast the success of their new band, The Shots.

Two Jukes Form Their Own Band

By STEVEN L. LUBETKIN
Special To The Press

ASBURY PARK- Even the most successful musical groups are not immune to the winds of change. What has been common knowledge on the street for some days, has now become fact: Two members of Southside Johnny's Asbury Jukes have left the band to pursue a separate musical career.

Tony Palligrosi, 22, and Carlo Novi, 28, were members of the Miami Horns, and always had the dream of starting their own band. This weekend they discussed the reasons they left the Jukes.

"Nothing mysterious, nothing shady went on," explained trumpeter Tony. "Finding my own musical direction after many years of looking for one, I simply decided I would like to put my own band together. There were no hard feelings, there was no other reason. There are certain things I have to catch up on that I couldn't do if I were travelling, but the primary reason was that I wanted to put together my own band."

"Every band in the world that's on the road has internal struggles," explains Carlo, "I'm not saying that the Jukes were pie-in-the-sky all the time, but it wasn't that we got canned, or we got fed up, nothing like that. I had been with the Jukes for two years, and I had progressed with them from just a bar band to where they are now. Tony had been with them for over a year, too."

"It was the type of thing," says Tony, "where I even broke in the new trumpet player. I was on the road with him while he was still learning the new material."

TONY AND CARLO are not concerned with a large amount of original material just yet. "At this point, we just want to put together a wroking club band," Tony explains. "Whether it develops from there or not, we'll have to see."

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CARLO'S REASON FOR leaving the Jukes dovetails with Tony's. "I wanted to put together a band as a vehicle for original material, because I've always had the bug for writing music myself. I couldn't do it with the Jukes, because there wasn't the time, and it wasn't quite the right type of material anyway. I had been with the Jukes for two years, and I was finding less time to write music, take arranging lessons in the city, and so on. We both had the same idea, and it turned out a lot better than we thought. We thought it would take a lot more time to put something together. We've got a good, tight eight-piece band."

The band Carlo and Tony came up with is called "The Shots," and features several musicians noted for their work in other groups. Drummer Mike McCabe comes to the Shots from Days; singer Donny Burdelson is formerly of Honky, and Dave Nunez of Tenafly is currently touring with Gary "US" Bonds. Orange resident Bill Hector is on guitar, and Steve Rava from Morris-town is the bassist. Tony only remembered the saxophonist's first name.

"It's Mel something," he laughs, unable to remember. "This band's only been together for a week."

"This is basically a band Tony put together," explains Carlo, "but I found out that it would be a good band to introduce some original material of my own.

"I NEVER EXPECTED it to come together this quickly," adds Tony. "As a matter of fact, I was just going to lay low for a little while, and pick up an odd gig here and there. It just so happened that the people I knew and wanted to get something together with for years were free."

The Shots are beginning intensive rehearsals this week in preparation for a July 9th gig at the Gangplank in Long Branch with Dean Friedman. On July 12th, they'll be coming home to debut the band at the Stone Pony.

Tony and Carlo say reaction from Jukes' fans to their departure from the group was mixed. "Some couldn't believe it," says Carlo. "I even got a couple of aggressive reactions, like 'you're kidding, man!' " While he speaks he is gesturing menacingly with a clenched fist. "Everybody thought there was a fight or something."

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The Shots will have their roots in rhythm and blues, like the Jukes, and, according to Tony, have Miami Steve's permission to use his arrangements of some of the R&B tunes the Jukes performed several years ago.

"We'll do some of the club stuff that they don't do any more," says Tony.

The duo is confident that they can continue to live from the business they've spent so many years in.

Tony started playing trumpet in grammar school. He says he was forced to play that instrument because of an overabundance of drummers.

"He's still saving up for a drum set," Carlo confides.

Tony's first band was a high school group called Train, which included the present bassist with Days, Vernon Hankins. After two years with that band, Tony went to college in Boston, but dropped out to play with a Cambridge blues band. He returned to the Shore and played with Amusement, a Toms River band. He met the Shots' drummer when the two played in a band which never got out of the cellar.

When that band folded, Tony put his horn away for two years, and just happened to be sitting in the Stone Pony when he met a friend who knew the Jukes. He put Tony in touch with Johnny, and Tony auditioned for the Jukes shortly after that.

"I was driving down to Lavallette every day to teach him his parts," recalls Carlo.

Carlo, who was born in Mexico City, started out playing with the top R&B group in Mexico, with singer Xavier Batiz. He dropped out of high school to play with the Batiz group, where he stayed for about six years.

Difficulty in becoming successful in Mexico led Carlo, like many other Mexican musicians, to the United States, where acceptance was more easily attained. Like Tony, he detached himself from music for two years or so, and after getting married, he settled in New Jersey because of its proximity to New York.

He met Clarence Clemmons of the E Street Band, who introduced him to the Blackberry Booze Band, the original incarnation of the Jukes. The group lost its tenor sax player, and they asked Carlo to join when the Jukes were born.

Now Carlo and Tony are on their own, starting a new and untested band after having enjoyed the comfort of the Jukes' celebrity. Meanwhile, Asbury Park waits for the newest entry in the SOAP Sweepstakes.