

HOME NEWS TRIBUNE Community Life

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2009

ARIZONA'S GRAPES
OF GOOD HOPE

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SECTION B

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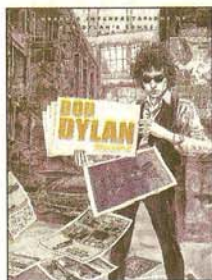


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How the musical 'Memphis' made it to New York
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STAFF PHOTO: JOE McLAUGHLIN

Charles and Pam Horner show a few of their classic doo-wop records. "We're trying to preserve and promote the vocal groups and the harmony groups, specifically from the '50s," Charles said. "There's a rich history in the area as so many of the groups are from New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia and the whole East Coast."

Sweet Songs

Somerset couple strives to keep doo-wop music alive

By CHRIS JORDAN
STAFF WRITER

There's Harmony in the lives of Charles and Pam Horner of Somerset.

That's because the two are the driving force behind Classic Urban Harmony, which strives to make sure the stars of the doo-wop era of rock 'n' roll are not forgotten.

The two give talks and presentations in local libraries, hospitals and community centers.

"We're trying to preserve and promote the vocal groups and the harmony groups, specifically from the '50s," Charles Horner said. "There's a rich history in the area as so many of the groups are

CLASSIC URBAN HARMONY

WHO: Charles and Pam Horner

WHAT: Couple strives to make sure the stars of the doo-wop era of rock 'n' roll are not forgotten

INFORMATION: www.classicurbanharmony.net

from New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia and the whole East Coast. I spent a number of years on the radio in Philadelphia and I interviewed a lot of singers and I've written articles on them, and what we're trying to do is pre-

sent their stories in their own words."

Charles, 59, formerly worked at Philly's WXPN-FM.

"We have multimedia presentations and we'll show pictures of old groups or show the sheet music and we'll play song clips, and usually everyone starts singing along," Charles said.

Often the Horners' work is a bit more high profile than the local library. Charles interviewed Deborah Chessler, the creative force behind the vocal quintet the Orioles, before an audience at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland earlier this year.

He'd like to see a few more doo-wop groups in

the rock hall.

"They recognized Little Anthony and the Imperials last year, and this year the Chantels are nominated," Charles said. "We'll have to wait and see."

Doo-wop is a harmonic vocal-based style of music that has its roots in rhythm and blues. Doo-wop groups — mostly from the industrial Northeast — such as Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, the Penguins and the Platters ruled the charts from the mid '50s to the early '60s.

The Horners work to expose still-active groups that did not have multiple hits.

"Some people use the term one-hit wonder, and these groups may have had

one hit, but they've been singing for many, many years," Charles said. "If only one or two songs makes it, it would be a shame not to know about the group where the music came from."

One such group would be Barbara English & the Clickettes, an all-female group from the '50s that released regionally known tracks such as "A Lover's Prayer." English and the Clickettes are performing Saturday, Nov. 28, at the Lodi Boys and Girls Club, with Willie Winfield & the Harptones, the Solitaires and the Devotions.

The Horners, who travel the world to listen to vocal

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Harmony

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harmony, will be there. Charles devoted himself to music full-time after a career in chemistry.

"I have a Ph.D in organic chemistry, and for most of my career I've been researching chemistry, and I retired about a

year ago and a half ago," Charles said. "I decided when I was very young that I had two loves. One is music and one is chemistry, and I pursued chemistry for my career and made music my hobby."

Pam is a former school teacher who taught in Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island.

"I've always been a fan of music," she said.

The two met through the North Jersey-based United in Group Harmony Association oldies group.

"We got married in 2005," Charles said. "We had the Solitaires come to our wedding. In 1955 they had a hit called 'The Wedding' and then at our wedding, they stood up in the front row and sang it."



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