

# ARTIST SUBLIST 2



## The Cheektones!

by Jonathan Hust,  
member of the JNG band

Local Prescott favorites, The Cheektones, feature a lively blend of recognizable covers alongside an array of original tunes by singer/songwriter Don Cheek. You can catch them live every Saturday night at Coyote Joe's Bar and Grill on South Whiskey Row. The Cheektones formed about two years ago when Don joined forces with bassist Marty Love (of Carnuba fame) and drummer Gary Ukura (JNG Band). Their regular lineup also includes violin player Ines Vitols on leads. I've had a chance to sit in on keyboards with The Cheektones a couple of times, and the band has invited a number of different guest musicians to share the stage with them: guitarist Jimmy Hayes (Carnuba), mandolin player Dallas Norman, Anthony Fusco and Anton Teschner (Sweet Nasty), and Tommy Anderson (Ringo McLennonSon) to name just a few.

A typical Cheektones show includes a pretty diverse range of material. "We'll go from the [Rolling] Stones to a JJ Cale tune to Jerry Jeff Walker or Warren Zevon; and about a quarter of any show is original tunes. It's funny, but I never know how to answer people who ask me what kind of music we play; it's just too hard to pigeonhole," says Don Cheek. Staples in the Cheektones' covers catalogue include some familiar favorites, like Tom Petty's "Breakdown" and Jackson Browne's "Doctor My Eyes," as well as a handful of great, somewhat more obscure tunes, including a trio of Austin singer/songwriter Bob Schneider songs: "Medicine," "Metal and Steel," and "Come with Me Tonight." I was curious to hear if Don has a favorite song to cover among the tunes they play live. "[It] probably depends on the night or the mood, but we do a Danny O'Keefe song called "Along for the Ride." I played the original for the

band one night, off my iPod, and it really cracked 'em up, it was so different from what we do with it," he says.

Among Don's earliest influences as a writer and performer was his father, Red Cheek. "He's a singing, guitar-playing storyteller from Texas, and he was holding the attention of a crowd as early as I can remember. Then there were the usual suspects: The Beatles made a huge mark on me...Dylan, Paul Simon, Jackson Browne, John Hiatt, Tom Waits...and recently, players like Bob Schneider, Shawn Colvin, and Keb' Mo'. I think you're also influenced by the musicians you play with, maybe more than anyone else."

Don has been heavily involved in the music at Coyote Joe's for some time, often lending a hand by hosting open mic nights, as well as various benefits and singer/songwriter nights at the bar. He shared a few thoughts with me about the music scene here in our community. "Prescott's a small town with a large music scene, and I'm relatively new here, but it feels like they put out the welcome wagon for you. It seems like it's easy to get people to help out when you need it. Last May, when we did a Cinco de Gumbo benefit [at Joe's], everyone I asked to play donated their time and talent. We had Sweet Nasty, Carnuba, Chloe Stuff, Kenny James, Dallas Norman and Dave Whitley...it was a great time."

I recently had the opportunity to hang out with The Cheektones and hear some tracks from their upcoming record *Razorburn*, due in December. This recording will consist of all original material written by Don Cheek, with the exception of the song "Sweet," written by drummer Gary Ukura. *Razorburn* features long time Cheektones contributor Jimmy Hayes on lead guitar, whose highlights on the record include "Beside That Train" and "I'm Back," a favorite cut of bassist and *Razorburn* sound recording engineer Marty Love. "I think my favorite song that we did on the album was "I'm Back." It was something that Don had just finished writing when we were laying down the rhythm tracks. We had just decided to record it just because, well, who knows let's see what it sounds like...[we] ended up loving it and now it's the first song on the album."

Also adding texture to the new recording are violin player Ines Vitols and Don's wife, Jane Cheek singing background vocals alongside drummer Gary Ukura. Not unlike The Cheektones' live shows, the violin and harmony vocals shine on *Razorburn*. Tight vocals and interesting lead play are two of the band's strengths, and there are plenty of both to go around on *Razorburn*.

Marty believes all the hard work on the new Cheektones' record has really paid off. "It was a fun project, everyone in the band was really lax to work with, and they nailed some really great sounding parts. I was really happy with the finished project and think it is one of my best works to date."

Be sure to check out **The Cheektones CD Release Party** at **Coyote Joe's** on **December 13<sup>th</sup>**, and **New Year's Eve** at **Coyote Joe's** with **The JNG Band**. For more information on Cheektones dates and information, go to [www.myspace.com/cheektones](http://www.myspace.com/cheektones)

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