

■ MUSIC SPOTLIGHT

If you happened to be walking or biking between downtown Mill Valley and the Blithedale Park on a Saturday afternoon last month, you likely stopped in your tracks to identify the pleasing music emanating from Miller Grove – a magical slice of forest nestled alongside Arroyo Corte Madera Creek. If so, you were treated to a Masked-Up, Pop-Up musical performance, courtesy of *The Jamie Clark Band*. With little opportunity to sharpen his live music skills before a non-virtual audience during the pandemic, band leader and sensational vocalist **Jamie Clark**, a proud Mill Valley resident, has found a way. Respectful of the limitation on gatherings and mindful of local COVID protocols, the mask-wearing Jamie Clark Band has “popped-up” at Miller Grove on several occasions during the lockdown without publicizing the shows – thus playing before small groups of lucky folks who assembled to appreciate the soul-touching music. Onlookers typically included those who stopped for a listen, a few folks in-the-know reclining on blankets, and encouraging neighbors viewing from balconies. Those in the Grove practiced social distancing and wore masks, as encouraged by Clark, and were obviously delighted by the band’s Americana-Pop sound.

Two things were evident from the special moments The Jamie Clark Band provided during the Pop-Up shows: people are starving for live

music; and “Jamie Clark is the real deal”! Though we agree about Jamie, the quoted words are not ours, but that of **J.M. Berry**, music writer for *Sonoma Magazine*, whose columns have acclaimed Clark for an exceptional style, “giving his voice a character that is unique to him, yet hauntingly familiar.” **Paul Liberatore**, Rock Music Columnist

THE JAMIE CLARK BAND

by Dennis Strazulo



Pictured from left to right, Grant Harrington, Jamie Clark, Stephen La Porta, Chris Fure. Photo by Misti Layne Photography

for the *Marin IJ* punctuates that sentiment, having referred to Clark as “one of the finest singers on the Marin County music scene.” The Miller Grove audiences also concurred. One passerby visiting from Seattle was compelled to return to the scene of the music after checking into her nearby Airbnb. She told us the band’s rendition of Clark’s original, *Mother Mary*, “tugged at her feels”, adding “so few artists have such a great groove and voice and lyrics that work. What

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a perfect sound!” In fact, at any **Jamie Clark Band** performance, virtually all songs played are original, with lyrics and music written and composed by Clark. This may explain why the band’s virtuosities have existed somewhat under the radar, notwithstanding high praise from music critics. In a way, the pandemic has put the band on a level



Jamie Clark, Photo by Misti Layne Photography

playing field with fellow musicians struggling during these times, allowing it to capture the attention of music enthusiasts with Clark’s original compositions. “Before COVID”, says Clark, “we were often fighting for attention with local cover bands. As all bands experience the limitations of the lockdown, I thought we’d try the Pop-Ups to not only showcase my original music, but to give the band an opportunity to play live for our community.” The band is also using the downtime

to take inventory of its music and prepare themselves to come out of COVID ready to assume a place on the local music scene, and beyond, alongside those who currently have more notoriety. Mostly, Clark said, he is “having fun,” adding he is not necessarily seeking fame; but is more intent on “shedding illusions” and allowing his band “to just be themselves, and know they are that good.”

Writing original songs is nothing new to Clark. He has been making beautiful music since he was a youngster when he started writing, composing, and singing to a growing audience. He wrote his first song when he was eleven. With recording stints in San Francisco, Hollywood, San Rafael, Chicago, Nashville, and Toronto, Clark has produced albums, EP’s, and several singles; and created a plethora of music not yet recorded or available to the public. Along with his band members, and a new management team, Clark has identified a list of laudable songs “in the vault”. In mid-March, The **Jamie Clark Band** will be recording those pristine choices – this time at *Sanctuary Sound Studio* in Sebastopol which according to Clark “is a perfect place to capture the vibe of the music.” Clark has assembled an incredible group of talented and dedicated musicians for the project who together feel and create the reverberation that is Jamie Clark Music.

These musicians rightfully expect renewed success from the recording sessions, and to lift the profile of The **Jamie Clark Band** as soon as live performances again become the norm. In the words of Grammy Award-Nominated Producer, Mark Needham, “Jamie is a real talent and here’s hoping more people will be able to experience his music.” (For more info on the band and bookings, go to JamieClarkMusic.com.) ■