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# The Newport Daily News

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Newport, Rhode Island - America's First Resort



## ARCHIVES

### Three Cowsill siblings hit the road

By James J. Gillis  
Daily News staff

NEWPORT — More than 40 years since their heyday, The Cowsills are more in demand than they've been in years.

The group — minus brothers John and Richard — plays the Newport Blues Cafe on Thursday night, kicking off a small tour that includes gigs in Boston and New York City. "There are all these venues, these festivals and casinos that are looking for bands," Bob Cowsill said by phone this week. "We'd be crazy not to take advantage of it. We're finding that people like good songs, good singing and good performances."

The Cowsills grew up in Newport and Middletown; hit the charts with four Top 40 hits between 1967 and 1970, with songs including "The Rain, the Park and Other Things" and "Hair." They played "The Ed Sullivan Show," then the major entertainment show on television, and were featured on ads for the American Dairy Association.

The group, managed by father Bud Cowsill, included Bill, Bob, Barry, John, Paul and sister Susan, along with mother Barbara, dubbed Mini-Mom. A sixth brother, Richard, was not in the group but has performed with his siblings in recent years. The hits ended after 1970, the group broke up and the Cowsill children found most of the money they'd earned was gone, allegedly from financial mishandling.

For years, some family members did not speak to others. The Cowsills — Barbara died in 1985 and Bud died in 1992 — began playing occasional Newport gigs in the early 1990s, with all the siblings performing together at the 2000 Taste of Rhode Island festival at the Newport Yachting Center.

Brother Barry died in New Orleans in 2005, a victim of Hurricane Katrina, and Bill died in early 2006 after a long illness.

"When family members die," Bob Cowsill said, "I think the rest of you tend to tighten up. That's what's happened with us. We're playing together more than we have in a long, long time and it's just great. I think it's great that we'll be playing right on Thames Street, right in the heart of Newport. Barry and Bill would've loved it."

Bob, Paul and Susan Cowsill have toured with other oldies-flavored groups as part of the Original Idols show, appearing with Bo Donaldson and Heywoods, the Bay City Rollers and Leif Garrett ("He didn't make it through the tour but he's a nice guy," Bob said).

But mostly The Cowsills — augmented by Bob's son Ryan on keyboards, drummer Russ Broussard and bassist Tad Armstrong — play their own gigs. John performs primarily with Mike Love and his edition of the Beach Boys.

Bob Cowsill, who works as a medical computer program specialist, said The Cowsills shows bring in old fans and younger listeners.



#### Also TO GO

**Who:** The Cowsills and Bloody Knuckles.

**Where:** Newport Blues Cafe, 286 Thames St.

**When:** Thursday, 9 p.m.

**Tickets:** \$15.

**Info:** Call 841-5510 or visit [www.newportblues.com](http://www.newportblues.com).

"Now with the Internet and YouTube and all that stuff, they have access to historical things that we never dreamed of," he said.

Opening for The Cowsills will be Bloody Knuckles, a local group of teenagers who primarily play classic rock tunes. "I don't know much about them," Bob Cowsill said. "But they sound like fun. I like that name, Bloody Knuckles. I'm looking forward to seeing them."

Bob Cowsill, 58, said he is glad to see younger faces, but realizes his group's demographic is fans who grew up hearing them on the radio. "The range is between 50 and dead," he joked. "And believe me, we're right in there with them."

Send reporter James J. Gillis e-mail at [Gillis@NewportRI.com](mailto:Gillis@NewportRI.com).

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