

# ***The BARELA! Story***

**A powerful eleven piece POP/R&B HORN BAND that hails from the city of Santa Ana, Orange County, California proudly releases their first CD!**

The CD displays BARELA's unique and powerful sound in their original music. Their musical influences are groups such as TOWER OF POWER, CHICAGO, AVERAGE WHITE BAND, EARTH WIND AND FIRE, CAMEO, CON FUNK SHUN, SANTANA, BEATLES, SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE, MAZE, MALO and the Los Angeles based Latin band TIERRA, who continues to inspire the brothers. The brothers BARELA understood and undertook the challenge of performing music of past decades, but more importantly, the burden and dedication it would require of both of them to hold a band of this size together to achieve their dream of recording their original songs. It started in 1989 with Tony asking his brother Richard if he wanted to start a band. The answer was yes, with the agreement that they were not going to stop until they completed an album of their own material and "that they were not going to be a top 40's band, but a powerful horn band playing the difficult material." In the beginning, this meant performing CHICAGO'S Carnegie Hall album and all of TOWER OF POWER'S music! This later proved to be a great satisfaction and at the same time a huge nightmare!

The nightmare for Barela was in the "beginning performances" when the band was young, taking on gigs when they were still on shaky ground and trying to perform these difficult tunes. It would not be rare to find Tony throwing up in one toilet and Richard in another before every performance. For many years before each performance the brothers would always wonder, who was going to make the first mistake? Since this was the period of hiring, firing, and just straight out losing musicians (and it happened a lot!) you knew the mistakes were coming! For the brothers trying to find eleven players who loved the music and who would sacrifice for the BAND was extremely difficult--the strength of Barela was its dedication to performing the classics correctly and making their original CD with their talented friends as a BAND together, and not as a group of studio musicians recording an album.

Keeping with this plan was trying and sometimes extremely discouraging since other groups at the time were performing gigs and Barela was not. The brothers understood that some of the reasons were due to their size, not being perfect during their beginning performance period, and not playing the top 40's music of the time. However, the brothers' ethics and the support of family and friends gave them the strength not to lose their minds or to become judgmental of other bands and musicians. They learned with time that you couldn't judge any group until you've walked in their shoes!

The brothers believed that all bands had families who had sacrificed one way or another for their bands and that without family and friends you had nothing!

Barela believes their common ground with other bands was the hard work and sweating in garages practicing, trying to perfect the music they love and then to perform for their fans and the fans of R&B soulful pop music. Barela believes that the music becomes an obsession that you cannot quit no matter how rough it gets. And when times did get rough for the brothers the advice from their mom was, "Mijos, you boys take a little olive oil and keep laughing you'll be alright tomorrow." As the brothers say, "Moms and Pops kept us in check!"

**Starting the horns** - The Brothers had no clue how to build a horn band and were naive at the time when it came to the style of music they believed all horn players knew and played.

In 1990 Barela had their **first rehearsal** at the Santa Ana Musicians' Union Hall on Main Street. Present were Richard Barela on drums, Armando DeLaCruz on bass, Tony Barela on guitar, a keyboard player, Phil Norris on trumpet, Rick Barthus on trombone, a sax player, and a lead singer named Johnny. Since Armando, Tony, and Richard had been jamming together since the mid 70's to TOP music, the first song Tony called out to play was "What is Hip" by Tower of Power. Richard counted it off and the rhythm section began to play. When the horns did not come in where they were supposed to, Tony stopped the song and asked the horns, "What happened? You guys didn't come in." They replied, "Where is the music, the horn scores?" Tony asked, "What are horn scores and don't you guys know Tower of Power by memory?" They replied, "We've heard of them, but we don't know the music" and that was the end of their first rehearsal (ten minutes) and the beginning of a very expensive period: **paying for the writing of horn scores** for every song they wanted to play. Nevertheless, they paid the price to play the music they loved so much.

Today the Barela horn line up is comprised of the most talented players Barela has ever had, and a great bunch of hard working guys!" The respect for each other's talent and the way they all carry themselves seems to work great and is only getting better!

The horn arrangements of **Greg Haake**, a Graduate of UCLA and a fine talent who works with Tony smoothly during the writing of the horn scores allows the creativity to take over. Greg's talent is a great gift to himself and to Barela. The writing of the horn scores for Barela is extremely difficult and remains a constant challenge to stay original. Greg joined the band in 2000 as the group's trombone player.

**Tower of Power's** eternal question is; "What is Hip?" **Barela's** eternal question is: How do you write a horn line that Tower of Power or Chicago hasn't already done 20 years earlier? And now most recently, the Los Angeles based Band **Tierra led by Rudy Salas** has taken their music to a soulful place, with their fresh horn arrangements and the beautiful song writing of Rudy Salas and Tierra's new band writing members really raises the bar and motivates Barela to continue to evolve with their music. It reminds the writers of Barela just how new they are to the world of creating new and good music. This only pushes the writers to create new challenging and unexpected surprises in their writing of their originals.

In the beginning one of our biggest blessings to the Barela Family was the introduction of **Armando DeLaCruz**, a graduate from Santa Ana Valley H. S. In **1978**, while the brothers were in their room listening to Tower of Powers album "Bump City" Richard was practicing on a drum pad (that was a bunch of books for his Snare and Toms and a metal world globe as his cymbal, Chicano style) jamming to his musical idol, David Garibaldi, the original drummer of Tower of Power, when their Dad Andy came in and said, "There's a guy I work with that plays the bass on the rake (gardeners rake) to that same stuff you guys are listening to!" They could not believe it until Tony finally heard Armando play at the laborers hall in Santa Ana with a group called "Choice Cut." Armando was bad! Armando's greatest influences were TOP bass player Rocco Prestia and the great Larry Graham. After that encounter, the brothers became the best of friends with Armando playing and jamming music when and wherever they could. In **1989** when Tony told Armando of the brother's intention to start a band, Armando agreed to join.

During the building of the horn section many of the good players would not take the band seriously since they did not have a Lead Singer that could cover all the bases of music they wanted to play. It was then that the search for a **Total Lead Singer** began. The brother's made it their mission to find a well-rounded lead singer by searching through the O.C Recycler for singers who were looking for work along with searching for advertisements of live entertainment. They searched from Orange County to the Inland Empire to Los Angeles. Finally, a break came in **1990**. Tony met a singer named Jim Bob Campbell who was performing with a soul band at Jaspers Bar on Bristol Street in Santa Ana. During a break Tony explained to him about the project they were doing and asked Jim if he was familiar with this type of music. He said he was, but said he had a partner (**Andy Nemchek**) who knew all of that material. Jim Bob said he would make the introduction but the deal would have to be only if Tony took Andy in addition to Jim Bob. It was a package deal. Later that week Tony heard and met Andy, who was performing at a small club in La Mirada, California and was blown away. He couldn't believe this guy's voice and how Andy could be singing in such a miserable little rock band? He sounded great! Tony asked Andy if he was familiar with Tower of Power and Chicago? Andy replied, "I know every TOP and Chicago Tune!" That was it! They exchanged numbers and Andy has been a part of the Barela family and Barela ever since. Andy, who hails from Philadelphia, performed in many acts on the East coast. Some of his many influences were the Spinners, Chi-lites, Chicago and many of the other soul singing acts. In September of 2000, Andy won the 99.5 KLOS Mark and Brian Singing Talent contest for the entire West Coast. His prize was to sing the song "Old Days" with Chicago at the Greek theater in Los Angeles, California. His performance was powerful, receiving a standing ovation from the beginning to the end of his performance.

Since the beginning of Barela, the **keyboards** in the band always fell short in talent for what was needed to play in their style music. That ended in November of 1994. A young 26-year-old keyboard player out of Laguna Hills, California answered an ad in the OC Recycler that Barela had placed. This was the talent that they needed. His name was **Carl Nelson**, a young man who was looking for a challenge--and now he found it.

Carl, a classical trained pianist who could play the music of the DOORS to perfection, came into another world when he was introduced to Barela and the Tower of Power sounds of Chester Thompson. He loved it! Carl was embraced immediately by the band due to his talent, humor, kindness, and just an overall beautiful human being to everyone he met. Carl is a great inspiration to the brothers and lifted their hopes that there was still fresh talent out there that could contribute to improving the band. In 1997 Carl surprised the band when he wanted to sing a James Brown tune called "Sex Machine". Tony agreed and they rehearsed in the garage. It sounded ok but the band was leery about Carl performing in front of an audience. At there next show Carl took to the microphone and blew the band away! Nobody new this guy could DANCE! He did all the James Brown moves even the splits! The crowd loved him and took the band once again to another level. Carl, known to his Band Brothers, as OPEE, turned out to be a real crowd pleaser and loved by all his Band Brothers.

In 1990 the band found a young guitar player named Bart Davis out of Manhattan Beach, California. Bart was a fantastic talent. He could play Santana with ease. In 1993 Bart left Barela to pursue a solo recording career in Hollywood and this left Barela with a large void to fill. After some years of playing with OK players and auditioning single faceted lead guitar players, Barela could still not find the total package: good attitude, committed, complete top player. In August 1995, the Band was introduced to a **fine Lead Guitar Player** named **Chris Hodges**. Once again the band was blessed by the introduction of this fine talent but more so, a fantastic and kind human being who lived and breathed music. It was quite evident from the beginning that Chris's strength was his ability to put forth the effort to perfect whatever he played, and he did, from Santana to Earth Wind and Fire.

In 1997 Chris, a talented jazz and gritty strong Blues player, surprised the band during a concert at the Orange Street Fair in Orange California performing Chicago's "25 or 6 to 4" guitar lead part. Chris mesmerized the crowd that subsequently led the Fire Marshall to stop the show because the audience grew so big that they blocked all walkways to see Chris Hodges shred the guitar solo! It was one for the Barela books. Chris, who now displays his own creative talent on the Barela CD, is getting ready for the next one.

In the early days, it was not uncommon for the Barela Brothers to play without being paid, in order to afford talented horn players that could play the difficult scores; the brothers began to understand that while some of these talented players were primadonnas, the majority were just hard working musicians with music being their only bread and butter. The searching had to continue for the right players.

As the Band improved, talented horn players who understood Barela's commitment and the real meaning of the word "BAND" (i.e. a group of musicians sticking together and moving forward in good times, hard times and bad times) a united band began to emerge.

Beginning in 1994, Barela was joined by the Mighty **Jim "Crawdad" Crawford**, a talented tenor and alto sax player with an edgy and gritty style of playing, only matched his gritty, edgy and rough personal! Since the rhythm section through the years became used to horn players who were too cool for school and a little too sensitive to constructive criticism and dirty jokes, Jim could bring the entire band to a laugh with one dirty comment! Jim was a much-needed addition to the band: a cross between an educated refined and kind musician to a hard charging bar player! Jim brought a balance to the band that was so needed and through the years has become loved and a reliable comfort to Barela. Jim performs a gritty sax solo on the Tower of Power tribute song "TOWER POPS." As Tony says, "Jim is the man!"

In 2002, a talented baritone sax player named **Rial Gallagher** joined the band. Rial brought to the Barela table his years of experience in the professional field of the music-recording scene, which was still new to the band. A great sense of importance and urgency was revived by Rial to get the band into the recording studio and record Barela's original songs, which the brothers welcomed with great enthusiasm. Through the years Barela has never had the touring information or recording background experience that Rial brought with him. Rial, a hard hitting, bottom thumping baritone sax player completes the Barela horns with knee dipping slams that Richard Barela drives on!

In the summer of 2004 The Barela band was blessed again with the arrival of two excellent trumpet players, **Brian Mantz** (1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet) and **Carlos Villa** (2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet). The Barela trumpets, in the horn section, always fell just short of being able to hit the high "C" and hold on to it. These seats are the most demanding and hardest to fill in a horn section that loves performing Tower of Power music, especially "You're Still A Young Man." The trumpet intro on this song always seemed to separate the good players from the great players, and Barela found two of the great ones. Both students from the great music program at Cal State Fullerton and both filled with energy now found themselves in a young horn musicians' rare opportunity, to be permanent players in an established POP, R&B, Funk and Soul band that carried a five piece brass section. But once again with each new addition Brian and Carlos stepped up and raised the bar and have completed this great horn section to complete the band today known as "BARELA".

The Brothers Barela, hailing from Santa Ana, California, had music in their blood from the beginning coming from two musical families. Their father, Andy Barela, played guitar in trios during the

50's in Santa Ana bars, church revivals, and a number of times on the radio at the KWIZ radio station in Santa Ana with Trio Embajador. All of Andy's brothers and sisters had beautiful singing voices, especially his sister Dolores who could sing Angel Baby perfectly and beautifully but stopped short of pursuing a professional singing career due to the times.

The Brothers' mom, Annie Barela, loved music and is still the Brothers' biggest fan and supporter of her sons. Growing up Annie always had music in the Vargas home, and the strength of that music was Richard and Tony's grandmother Sally. She loved music and would support any of her family who played an instrument from the guitar to the accordion. For the brothers, spending the night at their grandma's was their joy and twice as fun if you got to sleep in grandma's room so you could bother her until she threaten us with a beating by broom or varra! But once Grandma Sally knew that her kids and grandkids were in bed asleep or thought they were, it was not uncommon to find her with her head under the blankets with a tape recorder, flashlight, paper and pen writing lyrics from the Mexican music she loved. Grandma Sally would do this so she could sing these songs with her sister Antonia Serrano, being accompanied by her Son in law Andy Barela and Richard and Tony's nino, Victor Mello on the guitars. The songs poured out when the families would get together for camping at the La Jolla Indian Reservation which she loved so much.

During the 1960's, Richard and Tony were greatly influenced by their Uncles, the Vargas brothers. They would sneak into the back room at their Grandma Sally's house and watch them rehearse in their band and every chance they got during the bands breaks Richard would sneak onto the drums and Tony would grab a guitar until they would get screamed at to get the hell off the equipment. To the brothers it was the greatest. This was when the Mid-niters were coming out. The Brothers first attempt at a band was in the early 1972. Grandma Sally would let the brothers sneak out their uncle's equipment from the shed with a promise that they did not say anything and put it all back before their uncles got home. Their song line up at the time comprised of three songs "**Born on the Bayou**" by Credence Clear Water Revival, "**It's Alright**" by BJ Thomas, and "**Them Changes**" by Buddy Miles and that was it! Over and over! Until their Grandma got tired of the same music and told the brothers and their cousin Gilbert Magana (keyboards) they needed to put the equipment away because she didn't want them "wasting the equipment!" To the Brothers it was funny. Their Grandma Sally was the beginning of the bands for the Barela Brothers and Vargas family. This Album is dedicated to her: Celestina Jacobo Ramirez (Sally or Granny).

#### **From Tony and Rich:**

We are proud to have finished what we set out to with our friends Andy Nemchek, Armando Delacruz, Carl Nelson, Chris Hodges, Greg Haake, Jim Crawford, Brian Mantz, Carlos Villa and Rial Gallagher. To us this is what it's all about in music. When we think of the good times and hard times we went through during our 16-year run as brothers performing in a band together, the paths we've crossed and the people we've met we are blessed, especially for the opportunity to have met or enjoyed the music of brothers doing music together. We have great respect for them and can appreciate their accomplishments. During the building of this band we have fought with each other, drank with each other, fought for each other and always took care of each other. But best of all we got to play music together as brothers.

Much respect to the other brothers:

Henry, Jojo and Ringo Garza of LOS LONELY BOYS  
Maurice and Verdine White of EARTH WIND AND FIRE  
Carlos and Jorge Santana with SANTANA and MALO

Billi and Eric Mondragon with DOWN WITH THREE  
Bruce and Artie Soto with SOTO  
Ruben and John Aceves with SOUL INCORPORATED  
Rudy and Steve Salas of the SALAS BROTHERS  
Rudy Salas of TIERRA  
And to all the other brothers who we did not mention

We hope you all enjoy the CD!  
Respectfully,  
BARELA