

# RI Music Hall of Fame Is Poised to Honor the Best



Arthur “Pooch” Tavares, with nearly 60 years in the music business, continues to reach out to his old fans and to new generations as well. The 70- year-old Tavares is still performing about 75 concerts a year all over the world with three of the brothers (Perry “Tiny,” Antone “Chubby” and Feliciano “Butch”) who made up the original quintet which became know worldwide as simply Tavares. (Fifth brother Ralph retired from the road in the 1980s.)

The brothers grew up in the Fox Point and South Side neighborhoods of Providence and Tavares says, “The good Lord has seen fit to keep us all together.” The most notable moment he remembers from his long career is when The Bee Gees gave his group “More Than A Woman,” one of the key songs in the score to Saturday Night Fever, for which they won a 1977 Grammy Award. But running a close second is being inducted into the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame.

“It’s quite an honor to be recognized for your music in the place where you were born,” states Tavares.

With just two weeks to go until the induction of this year’s class into the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame (RIMHOF) on May 4, at The Met at the historic Hope Artiste Village, Vice Chair Rick Bellaire gives this columnist the details about those who are being recognized as Rhode Island’s best.

In announcing the RIMHOF Class of 2014, Bellaire says, “This initiative provides a great opportunity to acknowledge Rhode Island’s musical greats and celebrate their achievements and now we finally have an organization whose primary goal is to promote and preserve our state’s rich musical heritage. With actual exhibit space, coupled with our online archive, we have in place the tools to curate and showcase the best of Rhode Island’s musical artistry.”

Bellaire notes that it’s sometimes easy to forget, and even hard for some to believe, that such world-acclaimed artists actually have roots right here in Ocean State. “For the smallest state, Rhode island has produced an inordinately large number of truly great, successful and important artists, and their devoted local fans helped to place them on the world stage. Tavares is a case in point.”

According to Bellaire, from their earliest days in the Fox Point neighborhood of Providence, it was clear the seven Tavares brothers were born to make music. They are recognized as pioneers in the evolution of R&B from the soul era into the modern funk and disco movements of the ’70s and ’80s. They had over a dozen major hits and won a Grammy for “More Than A Woman,” their contribution to Saturday Night Fever. “But,” says Bellaire, “the best part of the Tavares story for me is not about how great they are or how successful they are. Everyone knows that. For me it’s about their journey. They worked really hard

to get to the top. Their story will continue to inspire young musicians for decades to come." Tavares will appear in concert on May 3 at Lupo's Heartbreak Hotel.

Bellaire provides some background on the other new RIMHOF inductees:

The Castaleers are recognized as the state's rhythm and blues trailblazers. They came together in the mid-1950s when members of various groups formed a permanent lineup consisting of Richard Jones (later replaced by Joe Hill), George Smith, Dell Padgett, Ron Henries and Benny Barros. In partnership with songwriters/producers Myron and Ray Muffs, they had four national releases and paved the way for the rest of Rhode Island's R&B greats.

Paul Gonsalves of Pawtucket started out playing tenor sax in big bands including Count Basie's. As a master of many styles, he became a pivotal figure in the evolution of post-war modern jazz. He joined Duke Ellington in 1950 and provided a crucial ingredient in the modernization of Duke's sound. His place in the history books was guaranteed by his famous 27 chorus improvisation on "Diminuendo and Crescendo In Blue" at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival.

Randy Hien of Woonsocket entered the music business in 1971 when he took on the job of reopening the old Loew's State Theatre as The Palace in downtown Providence to present rock & roll concerts. When the Palace closed 1975, Randy purchased the original Living Room on Westminster Street by trading the keys to his Jaguar XKE for the keys to the club and the liquor license. He kickstarted Rhode Island's original music scene by instituting a policy that welcomed bands who performed their own music. The club became the center of the state's music scene and Randy its biggest supporter.

Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra founder and conductor emeritus Francis Madeira initially came to Providence to teach music at Brown University in 1943. Finding no professional symphonic orchestra, he created one, bringing together a 30-member ensemble that would bring the music of the European masters to the Ocean State. Maestro Madeira will be inducted into RIMHOF on May 10 during a performance by the Philharmonic at Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Providence.

Winston Cogswell of Warwick was literally present at the birth of rock & roll after moving to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1954. At Sun Records, as a guitarist, pianist, songwriter, arranger, producer and recording artist under the name "Wayne Powers," he collaborated with some of the most important figures in music history including Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Roy Orbison. He returned to Warwick in 1960 and began working with pianist/composer Ray Peterson. The duo formed Wye Records with a third partner, engineer Ken Dutton, and their debut release as The Mark II, "Night Theme," became a national hit. Wye remains the only Rhode Island label to score a Hot 100 hit.

By the end of the 1960s, Duke Robillard of Woonsocket had already earned a reputation as one of the finest blues guitarists in the state after stints with the short-lived original lineup of Roomful of Blues and Ken Lyon's Tombstone Blues Band. In 1970, he reformed Roomful with a three-piece horn section to play jump blues and under his leadership, the band practically single-handedly revived the genre with two albums for Island Records. In the early 1980s, Duke began to pursue a solo career at Rounder Records. His jazzier side emerged with the release of *Swing* in 1987 to critical acclaim. "Duke recently told me he feels that, in music, blues is the universal language," says Bellaire. "So I say, Duke Robillard is fluent in many languages!"

Freddie Scott of Providence moved to New York in 1956 and began his career as a songwriter for Don Kirshner working alongside Carole King, Neil Sedaka and Paul Simon. His songs from this period were

recorded by Ricky Nelson, Paul Anka, Tommy Hunt and Clyde McPhatter. Freddie entered the charts as a singer himself in 1963 with "Hey Girl," written by his friends Carole King and Gerry Goffin. It hit Billboard's Top 10 and is considered a classic today. In 1966, he scored a #1 R&B song with "Are You Lonely For Me." His last album was *Brand New Man* in 2001.

In 1976, Cheryl Wheeler moved to Rhode Island to pursue a career in music on the Newport folk scene. She was quickly recognized as one of the finest songwriters and singers to surface in a decade or more. In 1986, her first album brought her national attention. Her song "Addicted" was taken all the way to #1 on Billboard's Top 40 Country chart by superstar Dan Seals in 1988. Since then, she has released a series of albums of her comic and emotionally intense songs, which are considered singer-songwriter classics around the world. Says Bellaire, "Cheryl is a treasure. Her songs are perfect; every note and every word propels the story forward. She's also a masterful performer. She can have you in tears one minute and rolling in the aisle the next. Every show is magical."

RIMHOF Chair Bob Billington says, "This year's honorees are amazing. Their histories in music are superior. Rhode Islanders should meet and greet them in person at our events. They will not be disappointed."

Tickets for the Saturday, May 3 Tavares concert at Lupo's and for the induction ceremonies and concert on Sunday, May 4 at The Met can be purchased at [rhodeislandmusichalloffame.com](http://rhodeislandmusichalloffame.com).