

Generally speaking, music in Fell's Point means the long-lived brand of rockin' blues that goes well with a shot and a beer and makes you want to jump and shout.

There are, however, other flavors to be sampled, including jazz. Stalwarts on the Fell's Point jazz scene include drummer Phil Cunneff, whose New Quartet plays a standing Monday night show at the Cat's Eye Pub, and guitarist Paul Wingo, who leads his trio in regular Tuesday gigs at Bertha's.

And then there's Carl Filipiak. A longtime fixture on the Baltimore jazz landscape, the guitarist brings a unique blend of jazz and rock to the Cat's Eye in monthly doses of what he calls "Jimi Jazz."

What's more, he's recorded it for posterity on a CD entitled *I Got Your Mantra*.

In most of Filipiak's performances, as well as in his past recordings, he hews to a consistent jazz repertoire, mixing original compositions with covers of such classics as Charlie Parker's "Au Privave," John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" and Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat."

All are delivered in the "fusion" style, influenced by rock 'n' roll and other popular genres, that came to life in the 1960s and has since evolved to include funk, rhythm-and-blues and even hip-hop stylings.

Both Filipiak's "Jimi Jazz" performances and *I Got Your Mantra*, however, go a step further. While still grounded in original material, they veer away from the standard jazz template in both style and song selection.

The key, of course, is Jimi.

To those who play the guitar, and those that love to hear it, Jimi Hendrix is the *ne plus ultra* of six-string icons. Filipiak is no exception. In the liner notes accompanying *I Got Your Mantra*, he recalls, "I was fortunate to have had the experience of witnessing Hendrix play live. It's always been an eternal tape loop in my mind's eye."

In fact, his admiration of Hendrix has long been evident in his shows and records. Filipiak covered the Hendrix classic "Little Wing" on his disc *Right On Time* and included a clearly Hendrix-influenced original entitled "Hey Jimi" on his *Hotel Real*.

Actually, the 60-year-old guitarist traces his love of rock 'n' roll and the guitar back even farther.

Growing up in Dundalk, he says, it was the pioneers of rock 'n' roll who first caught his ear.



"Hearing the radio as a kid, listening to Elvis [Presley] and all of those guys, anything with a guitar I thought was cool," he recalls. "But it was the

Beatles that really shined a light on it. That led me to all the others in the '60s – the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds.”

The influence of blues music on those performers, he says, led him to new discoveries.

“Eric Clapton would talk about guys like Albert King, B.B. King and Freddy King, and I would just have to go out and listen to it. From blues, it wasn't a big step into jazz. Wes Montgomery, Kenny Burrell, George Benson, Pat Martino ... when I heard them in high school, man, what an impact!”

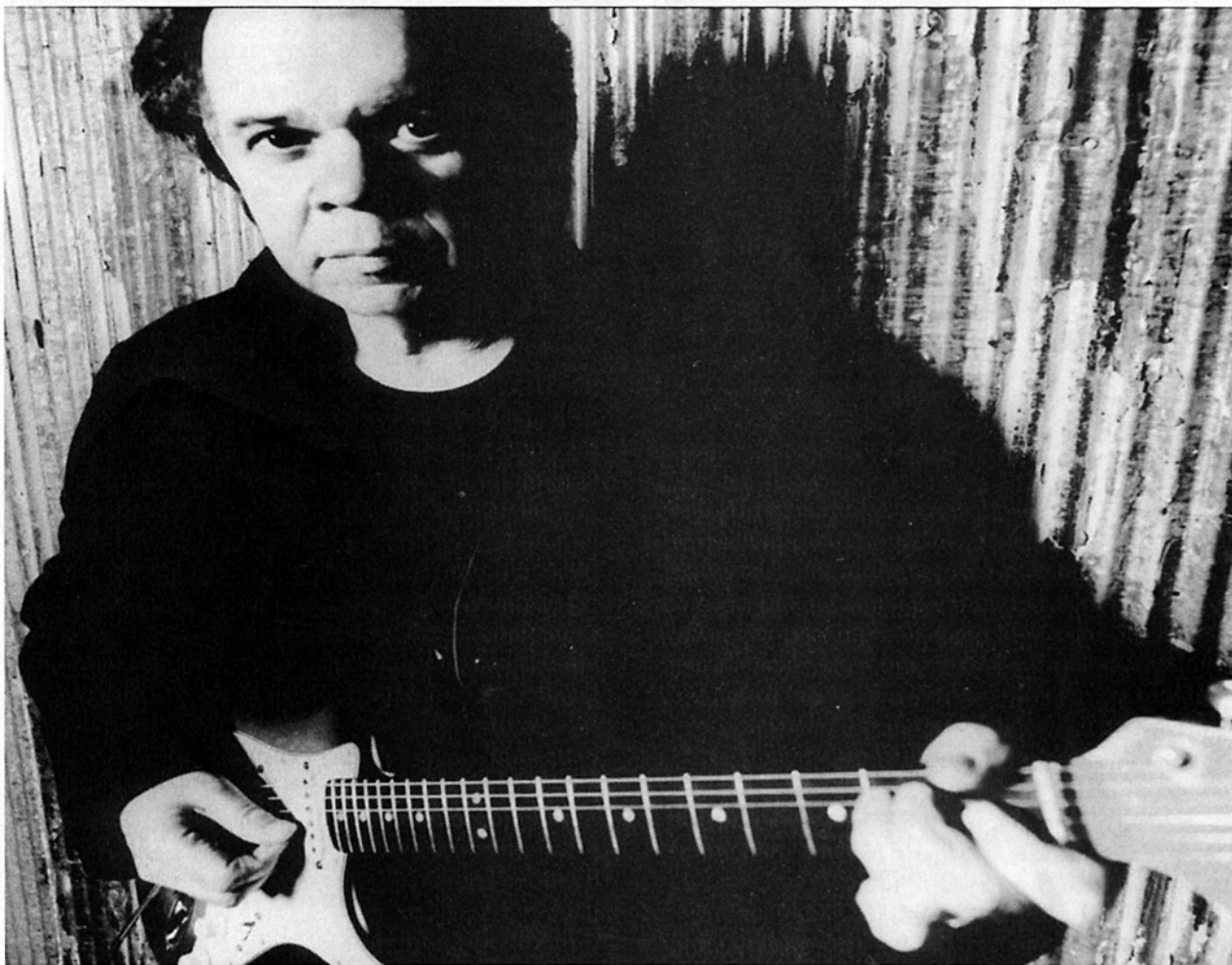
By the time he was in his late teens, he was playing five nights a week in local clubs, developing the style and the technical skill that would become his trademarks. The dates come less readily today, but

Filipiak counts himself lucky to have been able to make a career in music.

“There aren't as many gigs today. That's just the nature of things; the live music scene has changed,” he notes. “But there are always venues. Not a lot of them, but they're all cool. Of course, I'd like to have more.”

He supplements his income from live gigs and CD sales by teaching, not only through one-on-one lessons but in books like *Rock/Fusion Improvising* and, most recently, via his newest Web effort, “Six String Experience” (www.sixstringexperience.com), which features video lessons on subjects including walking bass lines and intervallic harmonies.

Still, his first love will always be performing, and



Local jazz great Carl Filipiak gigs regularly in venues around East Balto.

he says he enjoys the freedom that his current professional situation allows.

"The Cat's Eye is a great venue where we can just do tunes we love," he says. "Sometimes, I'm surprised by what I get away with. I love the whole spectrum – jazz, blues, rock, whatever – and at any given moment, it's some mix of that."

But it is, after all, billed as "Jimi Jazz," and Filipiak is eager to follow the implications of the name wherever they lead.

"We try to keep things in the spirit of that era; we try to capture that vibe," he says. "Bring out the old Marshalls [speakers] and put them on 10."

The "Jimi Jazz" concept was born of Filipiak's propensity to sneak a taste of Hendrix into his regular jazz gigs.

"I've been doing a Hendrix tune here or there since the beginning," he says. "People finally started asking, 'When are you going to do a show of that?' Eventually, I had enough covers and original material to do it."

The next step, of course, was to commit the idea to disc. *I Got Your Mantra* – Filipiak's seventh CD – is the result. He says he grateful to his label, Art of Life Records, for giving him the freedom to record the album.

"The cool thing about [Art of Life] is that I can do whatever I want. There aren't many places you can do that."

Recorded at Secret Sound Studio in Middle River, *I Got Your Mantra* features longtime Filipiak collaborators Paul Soroka (keyboards, saxophone and lyricist) Steve Zerlin (bass) and Dennis Chambers and John Thomakos, who split the percussion duties.

"I've worked with a lot of different musicians over the years," Filipiak recalls, "and these guys are great. And they're really great on this."

The disc opens with an instrumental cover of the

Beatles' "A Day in the Life" that compares favorably with George Benson's interpretation of the Jefferson Airplane classic "White Rabbit."

It also features Filipiak's take on the Hendrix classic "Bold as Love," with vocals by Zerlin and suitably psychedelic guitar work by Filipiak.

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