

# The Remains in 'Village': Long-Haired Dropouts



Barry Tashian



Vernon Miller Jr.



William Briggs 3d



Rudolph Damiani

Ed Freeman

By ROBERT SHELTON

Four Boston University undergraduates have decided to spend their junior year in rock 'n' roll.

These typical, but hairy American boys, who call themselves The Remains, are making their local debut at Trude Heller's discothèque, Avenue of the Americas at Ninth Street.

Before the quartet traded the grooves of académie for the grooves of music, they had to persuade their parents to allow them to drop out of school. After some spirited debates, "silent arguments" and earnest talk the parents of the three 20-year-olds and one 19-year-old acquiesced, with the proviso that they would return to college next fall if they had not achieved a certain amount of national success.

With a recording on the Epic

label and a growing reputation in the crowded, competitive rock 'n' roll field, The Remains may remain in show business beyond their junior year. These far-above-average musicians make the honor roll for their joyfully noisy "hard rock" music, heavily influenced by the Rolling Stones and Chuck Berry.

With their voices and \$6,000 worth of electronic equipment that can blast out a total of more than 500 watts of amplified beat, they keep the patrons at Trude Heller's smiling and dancing.

Behind the rocking wall, surging rhythm and long tresses of The Remains are the sons of some rather solid citizens. Barry Tashian, lead singer-guitarist, is the son of a Westport, Conn., advertising agency art director. William Briggs 3d, who plays electric piano, is the son of an-

other New York advertising executive from Westport.

The father of Rudolph (Chip) Damiani, the drummer, is a physician and surgeon from Waterbury, Conn., and the father of Vernon Miller Jr., electric bassist, teaches classical music in New Jersey.

To add a final note of respectability to the group's background, their long-haired manager, Bert Yellen, is the son of Manual Yellen, chairman of P. Lorillard & Co., the cigarette manufacturer.

The Remains were organized about a year ago at Boston University, where they began playing at fraternity parties and one-nighters at The Rathskellar, a student hang-out. In search of a catchy name for the quartet, they gave a party to poll their friends for suggestions.

A female premedical student suggested they call themselves The Cadavers or The Neo-Sapiens. These names were quickly buried, but the student's final idea for a group title, The Remains, caught their fancy.

At least one self-conscious parent would not go out to dinner with her long-haired boy and the executive offices of P. Lorillard was agog at a visit from the outrageously hairy group. But the youths are determined to prove themselves to their families, and the world.

"Our folks all understand this is a lesson in independence," Mr. Briggs said. "Since we go into the entertainment world, we are all financially secure on our own," Mr. Yellen added. To trim their expenses, The Remains have their hair styled by their piano-player.

# The Remains

Their first in-person appearances  
outside New England with  
the current Beatles tour —  
and the first reports are in!

**'...They were the best of  
the curtain-raisers...  
(The Beatles) weren't any bigger...'**

CHICAGO AMERICAN, Saturday, Aug. 13th



Photo By Jerrold Schatzberg

**WATCH  
THEM  
TONIGHT!**

NBC-TV's  
Hullabaloo

**SEE  
THEM  
TOMORROW**

Shea Stadium,  
New York City

**HEAR  
THEM  
ON**



A brand new hit!

**'DON'T  
LOOK BACK'**

5-10060

## ***AMERICA'S LOST BAND***

In June 2007, highly-regarded rock journalist, Mark Kemp, gave perhaps the ultimate compliment when he wrote: "Had these Boston bad boys stuck it out beyond their 1966 debut, we might today be calling them—and not the Stones—the World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band. As it is, The Remains most certainly are America's greatest *lost* band."

40 years earlier, Jon Landau, who was a well-known rock critic before he became Bruce Springsteen's manager, wrote these immortal words after the breakup of The Remains: "They were how you told a stranger about rock'n'roll."

In the years in-between, The Remains not only consistently generated widespread acclaim from the critics; their songs continued to be performed by garage bands in North America, Europe, and Asia even though The Remains never had a Top 40 hit record.

In 1998, due to their reputation in Europe, they received an invitation to appear at the Mod Festival in Spain and reunited. Since that time, they have generally performed 1 or 2 concerts a year, and they recorded their first album in 36 years. In 2006 they toured for the first time—including stops in London, Paris, Berlin, and Los Angeles—since opening for the Beatles in the summer of 1966.

AMERICA'S LOST BAND is a documentary of The Remains' return to LA and Dodger Stadium after 40 years, a film that follows a group of 60-year-old rock musicians, who were once on the cusp of fame, still pursuing their passion. Through the voices of group members and '60s flashbacks, the film explores the highs and the lows they have experienced, including reflections on their emotional roller-coaster ride during the Beatles tour.

And what ultimately emerges in this story is that even though The Remains came this close to the brink of greatness without making it over the final hurdle, they don't dwell on the "what ifs." They do not harbor any bitterness about what might have been. Instead, they immensely enjoy playing together, and creating new music, more than ever.

Finally, this is a portrayal of the value of long-term friendships, and of a special bond that has lasted more than four decades.

The film should potentially appeal not only to the vast majority of individuals in any artistic endeavor who can relate to falling short of their ultimate goal, but especially to those who haven't given up on their dreams and are still following their passion.

Producer—Fred Cantor conceived and produced “All Good Things,” the rock musical based on the story of The Remains. The stage version of “All Good Things” had its world premiere at the 2004 New York International Fringe Festival. In a preview piece on the Festival, *Time Out New York* magazine featured “All Good Things” and praised The Remains’ original songs as an “all-but-lost catalog that is part Fab Four, part Stones, two parts Zombies and all rock & roll.”

The show ended up being a hit with both audiences and critics: “Had the audience on its feet...All Good Things has a heart the size of Madison Square Garden.” *nytheatre.com*; “The show is remarkably fresh in spirit... We were riveted by The Remains’ great, timeless songs played with power and flair.” *The Gothamist*; “A very poignant story of lost possibilities.” *New York Cool*; “If you love great rock & roll, and especially The Remains, you just can’t miss this musical...Any artist who feels perpetually on the verge of success will easily relate to this story.” *hybender.com*.

Cantor is a graduate of the Commercial Theater Institute’s 14-week program, “Producing for the Commercial Theater,” sponsored by the League of American Theatres and Producers. He is also a graduate of Yale University and the University of Connecticut School of Law.

Producer & Director—Michael Stich has received consistent recognition for his outstanding directorial achievements, including 2 Directors Guild Awards, 1 DISCOP Award, 5 honors for his contributions to Emmy Awards in categories such as “Live Tape Sound Mixing and Sound Effects,” and 9 other nominations from The Directors Guild of America and The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

For the past 20 years, Stich has been a senior director on *The Bold and the Beautiful*, one of the most watched shows in the world with an audience of over 300 million people in 98 countries. His directing experience includes not only other popular daytime television shows; Stich also directed a 6-hour, prime-time mini-series, *Secrets*, based on the Judith Krantz bestseller, which had a \$7 million budget, was shot on location in Italy and France, and aired in Europe and Asia. He also has an extensive background in music-related projects ranging from directing music videos to serving as a cameraman at prominent events such as “The Grammy Awards” and a Rolling Stones concert.

## **America's Lost Band—Excerpts from Reviews**

**“America's Lost Band is a fascinating retelling of one of the great what-might-have-been stories of American music of the '60s....it's all but guaranteed to have a long and well deserved success on DVD.”**

**Steve Simels, BOXOFFICE**

**“While the documentary screening Sunday at the Chicago International Movies and Music Festival bears the title ‘America's Lost Band,’ to some of us the Remains were never lost at all—just sadly overlooked. With fans from critic Jon Landau to Beatle John Lennon, this airtight Boston quartet missed fame for many reasons, all covered in this fine hourlong movie.” Rating: 3 stars**

**Louis R. Carlozo, CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

**“A great documentary....Through the brilliant work of director Michael Stich and producer Fred Cantor, not to mention Tashian, Miller, Damiani, and Briggs, ‘America's Lost Band’ is beginning to be found.”**

**Abby Kingston, SUFFOLK JOURNAL**

**“America's Lost Band does an excellent job of proving...The Remains were—indeed still are—very significant players in rock's storied history....The closing montage of a present-day Remains' concert interspersed with black and white clips of each member from the Hullabaloo performance provides a touching, sentimental and more than fitting denouement to a band, and a film, that very ably demonstrates the true power of music.”**

**Mike Dugo, 60sgaragebands.com**

**“America's Lost Band is a labor of love and as such is a breath of fresh air. Where as most of the documentaries and books about 60s rock ‘n’ roll bands are chock full of overdoses, lawsuits, and long festering resentments, ALB is a charming, heartwarming story about four close friends who enjoy making great rock ‘n’ roll together more today than ever before.”**

**Nancy Foster, MUSIC BUSINESS MONTHLY**

**“The complete lack of bitterness and genuine affection the band have for each other is refreshing, and if the stated goal of Cantor and Stich was preserve a special moment from a sinfully under appreciated band, they've succeeded with flying colors. Peter Wolf, himself a Boston rock legend, introduced them at a reunion gig by recalling ‘When you're sitting backstage at the Boston Garden with Bruce Springsteen, all he wants to know about is The Remains!’ If you have any interest in the history of rock and roll, you'll want to know about them too, making America's Lost Band essential viewing.”**

**Erik Taros**

## America's Lost Band

by Steve Simels

posted December 30, 2008 8:41 PM

### The Remains of the Day



A love letter from two fans—writer/director/producers Michael Stich and Fred Cantor—to a semi-obscure rock group, The Remains, *America's Lost Band* is a fascinating retelling of one of the great what-might-have-been stories of American music of the '60s. Those who saw them back in the day have long insisted that

The Remains could have been as big as the Rolling Stones. This new documentary on their brief career is unlikely to do as well in theaters as the recent Scorsese directed Stones vehicle *Shine a Light*, but it's all but guaranteed to have a long and well deserved success on DVD.

The Remains were more or less a footnote to rock history until relatively recently. Formed by four Boston University students in 1964—guitarist/singer Barry Tashian, bassist Vern Miller, pianist Bill Briggs III (the group's preppy heartthrob) and drummer Chip Damiani—they quickly became the most popular live act in New England thanks to a prescient combo of volume, high energy, British Invasion smarts and American R&B moxie. Over the course of the next year and a half they had a couple of regional hit singles, got to strut their stuff on TV (notably an appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*) and eventually wound up as the well-received opening act on The Beatles 1966 tour, just in time for the release of their one and only album. They broke up soon after, for reasons that have never been clear (and *ALB* does little to clarify). Over the years since, however, their name started to loom large in garage rock circles, and several critics—including future Bruce Springsteen producer Jon Landau, who was an early and frequent booster—helped keep the flame alive. Their album was finally reissued on CD to some interest in 1991, but it was the 1997 release of an often bootlegged studio audition tape—demonstrating that they really were the fire-breathing live act the legend suggested—that convinced people there was more here than nostalgia. The band subsequently reformed for the occasional live gig, and they've been recording and touring off and on—these are middle-aged guys with families and day jobs, obviously—ever since.

*ALB*, narrated by the J. Geils Band's Peter Wolf (another early fan), tells the story with what little archival footage survives—grainy 8mm stuff from the Beatles tour and that *Ed Sullivan* appearance in psychedelically vivid color—and with new behind the scenes footage shot over a period of two days in 2006, culminating in a rousing live performance at an L.A. record store. The Remains themselves come across as regular guys, simultaneously bemused by and proud of the fact their music has survived, and their enthusiasm for it and for each other is infectious. If the film has a problem, however, it's a certain lack of drama. All four Remains today are happy, healthy, apparently prosperous and, in general, unscathed by rock-and-roll, which is nice for them but something of a let down for anybody expecting Behind the Music style dirt. (Tashian in fact has had a long and productive musical career, including a ten year stint as guitarist in Emmylou Harris's backup band.) If you can get beyond that, however, you'll probably be charmed by the story's happy ending—rock pioneers getting the respect they deserve after all these years—and the warmly affectionate way that Stich and Cantor let it unfold.

**Distributor:** Sales through Manhattan Productions Inc.

**'AMERICA'S LOST BAND' ★ ★ ★**

# Remains' fab rock story found in 'Lost'

**By Louis R. Carlozo**

TRIBUNE REPORTER

While the documentary screening Sunday at the Chicago International Movies and Music Festival bears the title "America's Lost Band," to some of us the Remains were never lost at all--just sadly overlooked.

With fans from critic Jon Landau to Beatle John Lennon, this airtight Boston quartet missed fame for many reasons, all covered in this fine hourlong movie. Riding Beatlemania's crest in 1966, as the Fabs' opening act no less, the Remains saw up close that band's last tour. The cost? The muscular music of Barry Tashian's band, a mix of Rolling Stones thrash and garage pop, drowned in the screaming.

Likewise, the bandmates who met as Boston University students signed to Epic, a label that lavished more attention on soft crooner Bobby Vinton. A failed May 1966 audition at Capitol (The Beatles' label) never panned out. In a slight misstep, director Michael Stich never excerpts those tantalizing demo tapes, finally released in 1996 on Sundazed Records.

But credit Stich for nailing the Remains' story, through excerpts from a diary Tashian kept during the 19-show Beatles tour. As Tashian narrates atop rare footage and photos, we hear the frontman grapple with being a witness to history rather than the history-maker: "If I've learned anything from this tour, it's how insignificant I am in this whole scenario."

Not so drummer Chip Damiani, who sat out the '66 tour. Asked if he has any regrets, he replies as only a burly, no-nonsense roofing contractor can: "Am I sorry about it all? I'm sorry I didn't go because I keep having to answer that stinking question."

Yet Damiani instigates a reunion 40 years on; "Lost" is shot in 2006 over two days in Los Angeles. Stich shows not so much how



A documentary rediscovers long-forgotten rockers the Remains; drummer Chip Damiani (from left), frontman Barry Tashian, bassist Vernon Miller and keyboardist Billy Briggs.

great the Remains were, but how great they *still* sound. At venues such as Amoeba Records, a mustachioed Tashian, with his tropical shirt and cap, looks more like a science teacher on casual Friday than a near rock legend.

But boy, the Remains can still rock. His tenor growl undashed by age, Tashian shows fearsome guitar dexterity that puts him firmly in the Chuck Berry-meets-Dave Davies camp.

Certain details get short shrift; we learn in the closing that Tashian, far from "lost," played with the Flying Burrito Brothers and Emmylou Harris (with no word about his son Daniel, himself a musician of merit).

But all of that, perhaps, should fill a movie of 90 minutes versus 60-plus. Like a hit pop single, "Lost" as it stands feels just about right.

*No MPAA rating. Running time: 1:05. Plays 1 p.m. Sunday at St. Paul's Cultural Center, 2215 W. North Ave. Director Michael Stich will attend.*

*lcarlozo@tribune.com*

## WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT THE REMAINS

“Good as Mick and Keith were at reimagining rhythm & blues as hard rock on The Rolling Stones’ 1964 debut, they didn’t hold a candle to what The Remains would deliver two years later. Had these Boston bad boys stuck it out beyond their 1966 debut, we might today be calling them—and not the Stones—the World’s Greatest Rock ‘n’ Roll Band. As it is, The Remains most certainly are America’s greatest *lost* band.”

Mark Kemp, *Paste*, June 2007

“They were magic. They were how you told a stranger about rock ‘n’ roll.”

Jon Landau, *Crawdaddy*, January 1967

“A strong contender for the finest overlooked American band of the mid-‘60s...mid-‘60s American rock & roll at its best.”

*All Music Guide*

“They were the most exciting American band of their time.”

Jon Landau, *Spoonfed Records* 1978

“New England legends who toured with the Beatles and played The Ed Sullivan Show but never scored a hit record, the Remains have long been touted by those who were there as *the* great American hard-rock band of the mid-Sixties. And guess what? This previously unavailable...live-in-the-studio set justifies the hype. In fact, on the evidence here, these guys were an absolutely lethal combination of R&B moxie and Brit Rock panache.”

*Stereo Review*, 1997

“For more than 30 years, the May 1966 Capitol Records audition tape by the REMAINS has been one of the great unreleased wonders of rock & roll—a legendary studio performance...of such explosive exuberance and muscular force that it has been, for those lucky enough to hear it, a religious totem of all that was manic and marvelous about mid-‘60s pop.”

*Rolling Stone*, March 20, 1997

“Nobody’s replacing them. Bands like the Remains are living history, and one of our most valued American treasures.”

Springsteen guitarist Little Steven Van Zandt, quoted in the  
*Boston Herald*, September 29, 2002

“In the mid-60s, The Remains were the example story of the band that woulda’-shoulda’-coulda. Simply put, they may have been the best live rock act of the mid-60s, period...Their new release is a fitting return to their old sound, one that was originally influenced by the Yardbirds, Rolling Stones, Beatles, Dylan and classic R&B. It’s all here, with a little honky-tonk country influence as well.”

*The River Reporter*, October 24, 2002

“Fresh, unpretentious, energetic, and mature, *Movin’ On* will only enhance the band’s fabled reputation.”

*Discoveries*, January 2003

“The Remains songs—an all-but-lost catalog that is part Fab Four, part Stones, two parts Zombies and all rock & roll.”

*Time Out New York*, August 12-19, 2004

“Garage heroes.”

*The Guardian* (London), April 8, 2006

“Les legende americaine.”

*Sud Ouest* (Bordeaux), April 16, 2006

“Back in my beloved hometown of Boston, this quartet is spoken of with reverence normally reserved for the likes of Ted Williams or Larry Bird.”

*LA WEEKLY*, August 11-17, 2006