

José Najera and the Bernal Beat



THE authentic neo-classic, post-modern, original San Francisco Mission District Latin Funk band.

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Straight outta the streets of San Francisco, The Bernal Beat is born of Mission neighborhood block parties, with flavors steeped in the musical melting pot of the Bay Area.

Their distinctly latin grooves draw you in with undeniably funky hooks. And it's no wonder — collectively, José Najera and his band have an unparalleled musical pedigree spanning the essential Bay Area music scenes over the past 50 years. Rooted in classic Latin grooves, you'll hear the band's jazz, funk, rock, blues, soul, reggae, hip-hop, psychedelic, African and zydeco *experiences* emerging at various times during a performance. And

for this band, it's very real experience, not just influences.

José has played with luminaries like Pete Escovedo, Etta James, Billy Cobham, Narada Michael Walden, Chaka Khan, Elvin Bishop, Merl Saunders, David Grisman, Carlos Santana, Jim McCracklin, Malo, El Chicano, The Rowan Brothers, Martín Fierro, and Zero.

The band members have equally impressive credentials, playing with Sly & the Family Stone, Graham Central Station, and even a performance at Woodstock. But the real magic is in the band chemistry and compelling live performance.

About the Band Members



Bandleader José Najera's story reflects the quintessential Mexican-American heritage — growing up post-WWII in a musical family tin New Mexico with tejano, rancheras, polkas, and Norteño music in the air, with rock and roll providing his high school soundtrack. He was already playing trap drums and saxophone. In 1966 the Navy took him to San Francisco, when the music scene was starting to explode. The Navy then took him to Vietnam, but as soon as he got back in 1969, he settled in San Francisco for good.

Starting out as a roadie for the legendary band, Azteca, whose members included Pete and Coke Escovedo, and eventually earned a spot in the band playing percussion, and touring for 5 years. From there, his career took off in many directions, working with Bay Area-based jazz, latin, blues and rock bands for the past 40 years, recording on a dozen albums and playing more street fairs, benefits and festivals than you can shake a maraca at.

José handles lead vocals, plays congas and saxophone, and a plethora of percussion instruments. Also a retired mailman, everyone knows that when it comes to great music, *José delivers!*

Guitarist and vocalist Gail Muldrow, a native San Franciscan, is an electric funk and blues force of nature. By age 20 she was recording with Sly Stone, and by the late 70s, with Graham Central Station. Gail also leads her own band, The Brides of Funkenstein.

Dr. Loco is, in fact, a real Ph.D.! Jose B. Cuellar, Ph.D., is an authority in U.S. Mexican multicultural antropology, teaching at local colleges. Not to mention a badass sax player. For years Dr. Loco and his Rockin' Jalapeño Band brought its ethnocultural music experience on the road, educating and entertaining with high-energy performances. A longtime friend of the Najera family, Dr. Loco plays sax and sings with the Bernal Beat.

José's son **Eloy Najera** is the youngster of the group. Playing keyboards and contributing some Hispanic hip-hop to the mix, Eloy keeps the music fresh for the younger crowds. When he's not playing music, Eloy works in the local production crews for major touring acts when they come to the Bay Area. He sees **EVERYBODY**. And just like he did growing up, he soaks it all in, to squeeze some great ideas out with the Bernal Beat.

A notable semi-regular band member is famed guitarist **Harvey "The Snake" Mandel**. Harvey made his first splash as the guitarist in Canned Heat, playing Woodstock in 1969. He's recorded with the Rolling Stones and gained tremendous acclaim as a psychedelic blues guitarist extraordinaire.

Rounding out the band are a cast of longtime friends and collaborators.

Daniel Dawkins on bass has been a family friend for 40 years.

Ronnie Mesina on timbales, congas and percussion, who Jose has known since he was 17.

Joe Lopez, the alto sax player, knows his game has to be strong, as he's working with

John Molly on trap drums is not only the keeper of the Bernal Beat but the smilingest member of the band. Both the beat and his smile are extremely infectious.

Longtime friend **Jimmy Bratt** on guitar and vocals.

