

## *Note worthy closing*

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**Byline:** By Paul Guzzo -- Times Staff Writer

**Highlight:** After more than half a century of serving area musicians, Paragon Music has closed.

## **Body**

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Ladies and gentlemen, Dick Rumore has left the building.

Saturday, more than half a century after buying a business with \$500 he didn't have, Rumore locked up his Paragon Music store at 2119 W Hillsborough Ave. for the final time.

Paragon Music, which sold, repaired and rented instruments, is closed for good.

Rumore's son Santino Rumore might open a rental shop under the Paragon name at another location later this year.

But Rumore is retired.

"I go to all these reunions and my classmates have already retired," said Rumore, 73, who graduated from Jefferson High School and the University of Tampa. "I might as well try it."

Part of his plan, in typical musician fashion, is to grab his alto saxophone and put the band back together.

"Dick Rumore and the Jazz Cellar Underground Orchestra," he said. "We played when I owned the Jazz Cellar in Ybor City in the '90s. It's a big 13-piece band - three saxophones, two trumpets, a trombone, full rhythm and female vocals."

Longtime customers have taken the news hard.

Bill Preece, 52, said Paragon was his hangout when he was a teenager and he remained a regular ever since.

"This place is iconic," he said while visiting Paragon for the last time. "It won't be the same going somewhere else."

Rumore told of one customer who was sobbing when she heard the news.

"She bought her first guitar from me," he said. "She came by to buy one more."

"There's been a lot of reminiscing going on lately. I keep thinking about how my phone bill is still in my dad Angelo's name because in the 1960s I didn't have enough money to get one."

## Note worthy closing

All these years later I get to retire comfortably. I'm blessed."

The Hillsborough County school system introduced Rumore to music, but it was his grandfather Giuseppe Rumore who taught him.

"He played soprano saxophone," Rumore said. "He was from Sicily and spoke very little English. But I'd be practicing, and he'd say, 'No, no, no,' and teach me by singing the notes like, 'Do, Re, Mi.'"

The Mystics were the first popular group Rumore joined. They were the house band at the Clearwater Auditorium, he said, and played alongside legends such as Roy Orbison.

Next came The Paragons. They toured the country and recorded an album for the Scepter Records label that also represented Dionne Warwick.

"They made us change our name for the album to The Promise because there was already a Paragon recording group," Rumore said. "We toured as The Paragons but our album said, 'The Promise.'"

That band broke up in 1966 following a gig in Kentucky.

A year later Rumore met accordion shop owner Angelo Guida who mentioned he was ready to sell the small business on Hillsborough Ave.

"I said that's great because I want to buy it," Rumore said.

Bankers laughed when he tried to get a loan to cover the \$10,000 asking price, Rumore said, "so Mr. Guida asked what I had.

"I told him \$500, he shook my hand and said you have a deal. There was one problem. I didn't have \$500. I had to borrow \$50 here and there."

He renamed the store after his old band, diversified the inventory, and later purchased the adjoining lots to expand the business from a tiny shop to a 14,000-square-foot building.

In 1985 Rumore partnered with Yamaha musical instruments to open a school in the store.

"They wanted to call it the Popular Music School," Rumore said, and then laughed, "I told them PMS won't fly in Tampa. So, we called it the Rock School."

Over the years he expanded to five stores throughout Florida and opened the Jazz Cellar in Ybor.

Around 20 years ago he sold his music school's curriculum to the Patel Conservatory. He also closed his music club and retracted back to one store.

On social media, locals lamented Paragon Music's final note.

"That is where my son started taking bass lessons and was part of their early Rock School program," said Mary Frances Leto Granell, who owns Frank Rey Dance School.

Retired radio personality Tedd Webb said he bought his first karaoke machine there.

"During the winter of '95, my grandfather and I walked from my house to Paragon so I could buy a new guitar strap," Tampa City Councilman Guido Maniscalco said.

When Keith Arsenault, the theatre manager at Hillsborough Community College, heard Paragon was closing, he simply lamented, "Dickie, say it ain't so."

It is so, Rumore said.

Note worthy closing

"It's been a good time," he said. "But it's time to move on."

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