



# MATT PABLECAS IS READY FOR PRIMETIME

Matt Pablecas brings passion and sublime craftsmanship to all of his spaces—at home, on the job site, and onstage with his guitar

Written by **ROBIN ROSS**  
Photography by **LINDA M. BARRETT**





*Matt Pablebas built this Modern Farmhouse. Photo courtesy of TJ Wilkes Photography.*

**I**F A TELEVISION NETWORK is casting for a new homebuilding series featuring an exuberant star who constructs luxury dream homes by day and fronts a band in his free time—they need look no further than Barrington Hills’ Matthew Pablecas, co-owner of the Hale Street Group. For Pablecas, his life as the co-owner of the construction company and lead singer in the band Exit 147 is the culmination of two lifelong passions.

“I love building because it reminds me so much of music. You know, in a weird way, it’s like a song,” Pablecas explained. “To get a great song, you need incredible musicians who know their trade and love their craft. It’s the same thing in building. Love and talent equals passion, and with that combination it’s really hard to fail. It’s why I’m so engaged in building, as I feel there’s a passionate art to it.”

With longish, wavy brown hair flecked with silver strands, trim beard, and five o’clock shadow, Pablecas’ look is more rock star than businessperson. Friends describe him as charismatic. He built a stage in his home and is known to sing on a job site. But in both his business and music, he is intensely focused on delivering quality.

## LEARNING TO LEVERAGE

Pablecas is the third generation in his family’s real estate acquisition company, Pabcor. “My grandfather came to America from Greece in 1934. He worked as a waiter at The Pump Room in Chicago. Not long after, he saved enough money to purchase a 3-flat and learned to leverage to continue buying more, turning that into 6-flats to 12-flats to midrise apartment buildings,” Pablecas said. “In 1977, my father Gus gave the business a name and took it to a new level during the late ‘70s through the ‘80s with condominium conversions, in the ‘90s with retail shopping centers, offices, hotels, mobile home parks, land, apartment buildings, and to this day is still active and looking for new acquisitions.”

Pablecas has happy childhood memories of tagging along with his grandfather and father to visit their properties. As he got older, his father, Gus, would have him doing construction work for Pabcor, enjoying hands-on tasks like laying tiles and framing walls. The deeper he delved into the business, the more he realized that his passion lay in construction.

## GROWING THE FAMILY BUSINESS

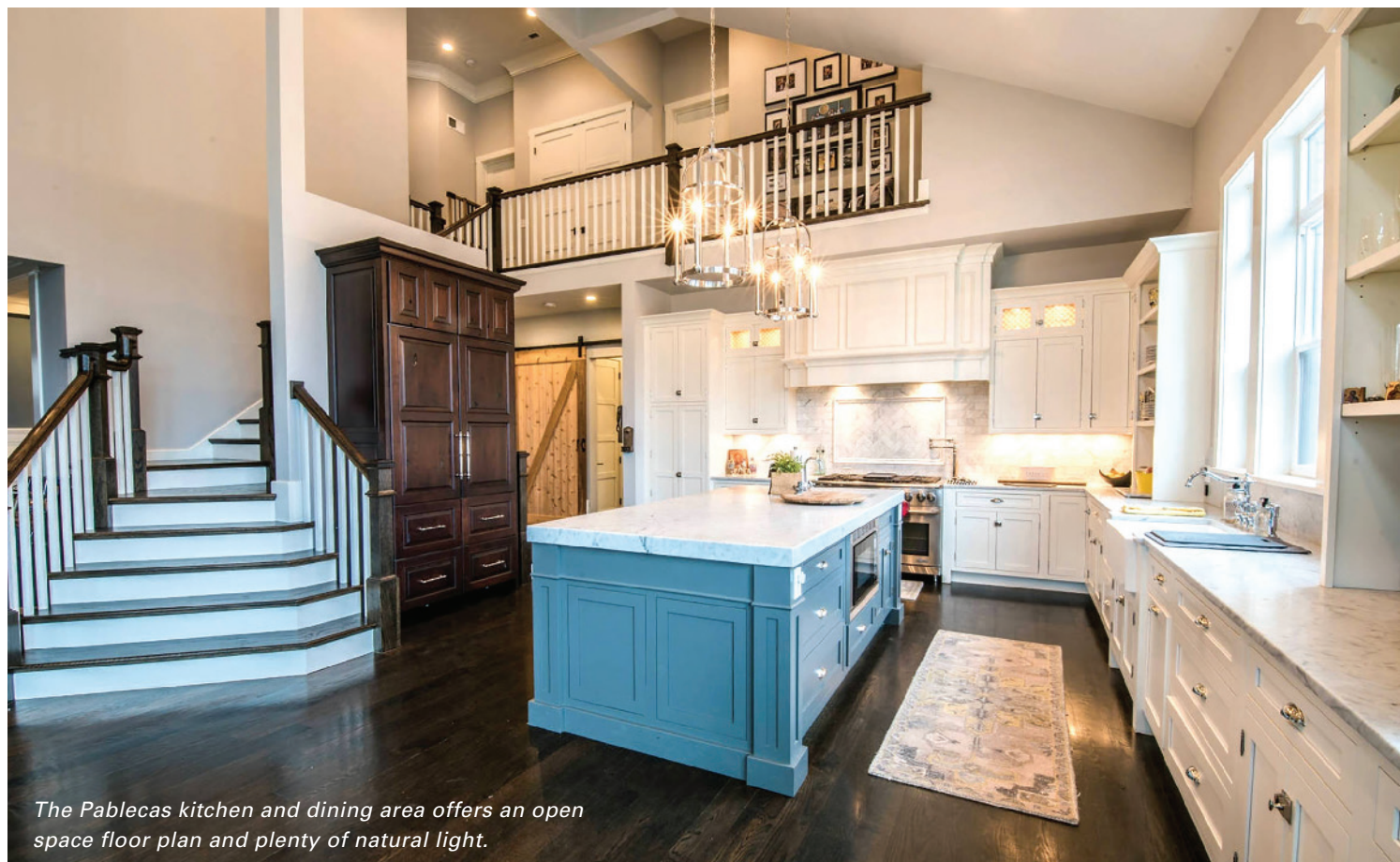
Pablecas’ sister Michelle married Ted G. Arvantis in 2001. The two men hit it off immediately. Just after the wedding, Arvantis called to tell Pablecas that the house across the street was for sale. “We kind of started by accident,” Pablecas said. “Ted knew my passion for building. So we bought this little, tiny house sitting on a huge lot. We subdivided it, put up two homes and they both sold before the roofs were on. The name of that street happened to be Hale Street.”

They started the Hale Street Group, based in Prospect Heights. Pablecas cherishes the partnership. “Ted runs the office and I run the field,” he explained. “He’s a fantastic guy, super intelligent, great with numbers, and has outstanding management skills.”

Arvantis said, “Matt and I each bring a dynamic approach to the table. Partnerships are difficult and offer an array of challenges, but the key difference with this partnership is that we truly care for the well-being and best interest of each other. We have been blessed with great family support and guidance throughout our years and are deeply rooted in our faith and family traditions.”

As the company grew, Pablecas and Arvantis took on new challenges. In addition to residential homes, they built multi-family, commercial, office, medical, and townhome developments. From 2001 to 2006, the duo converted nearly 200 apartments into condominiums. In 2006, they opened a new division called Pabcor Management where they managed over 21 condominium associations throughout Chicagoland and nearly 3,000 residential units. Arvantis explained their shared vision has helped





*The Pablecas kitchen and dining area offers an open space floor plan and plenty of natural light.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HALE STREET GROUP

the partnership thrive. “We have similar core values that have allowed us to continually reinvent the Hale Street Group and to refine our common goals.”

Together, they also run the family real estate acquisition business, Pabcor, with Pablecas’s father, Gus. “The way I like to explain it is the first generation starts it, the second generation builds it, and the third one just tries really hard not to screw it up, you know?” Pablecas said with a laugh. I’m happy to say we continue to grow the family business and I know we’re making Dad proud.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Pablecas takes pride in his team. “I believe 100 percent you’re only as good as your trades—our people. They are some of the best in the industry, and because of that, we shine. They’re all unique and bring something different to the table. That creates real chemistry which takes something from just okay to something really special.” You can have the best carpenter in the world. But take away their tools and they’re nothing. The same feeling applies with our group. It has taken over 20 years to formulate the Hale Street Group and I’m really proud of what we have.”

This spring, Hale Street Group will partner with Greg Crowther of Great Haven Builders to break ground on a 15-unit apartment building at 407 East Main Street, adjacent to Barrington’s Metra station. Pablecas said, “The development is carefully designed to maximize everyday living, to complement today’s fashions with warm, clean, classic modern finishes and a touch of farm charm, provide heated underground parking, private balconies, a common area patio with grills, and it literally shares the same pavement as the Barrington Metra Train parking lot. You can check it out at [407eastmain.com](http://407eastmain.com).”



*The barn can store builders equipment or be staged for a family event.*

## HE’S ALL IN

His clients uniformly praised Pablecas as a creative problem solver who treats each project as if it is his own home, and who always—always—answers his phone.

“Matt is incredibly charismatic,” said Dr. Jamie Riley. “His personality is contagious. You cannot be around him and not be laughing.” Riley and her husband, who have been friends with Pablecas since they were 15, hired Hale Street Group to build their new Arlington Heights home. “He is so passionate about everything and anything he does. He is a doer.”

Northbrook client Meg Tennant said “Matt is extremely energetic. He is creative and brings a lot of care to his work. My family and I have always been





*Ted G. Avartis and Matt Pablecas say that their families revolve around cooking.*

his priority. He has focused on how this project is going to work for my family. He's become a friend."

Both Riley and Tennant noted that Pablecas goes to great lengths to please his clients. For example, Riley said, "The house was just framed in and we were trying to picture where our island would go. Matt called over all the carpenters and brought over an enormous piece of plywood and set it on the floor. He had us all stand around it and then lift it up. He said, 'Here. We are sitting around your island.' We could see exactly how it fit, how many people it seated, how far it was from the wall. He does it in the moment and is always thinking and doing on his feet."

Northbrook client Meg Tennant agrees. "He is able to see the whole project and figure out solutions," she said. When she and her husband struggled to visualize a new staircase, "Matt took out a marker and started drawing it on the wall so we could see exactly how they would look."

Riley fondly noted that Pablecas brings everything, including his sense of fun and musical



*Ted G. Avartis, brother-in-law and business partner to Matt Pablecas, often leads the cooking when the families get together.*

talent, to a project. "He sings about everything and sometimes he makes up a song about things that are happening with the house. Whether it is a house, his family, or his music, he is all in."

Pablecas said that Hale Street Group built its reputation by delivering quality, being proactive, paying attention to detail, being organized, doing what we say we'll do, following through, and staying true to its values. We never allow our passion to come before our principles and we work hard to always do the right thing.

He thrives on partnering with clients to achieve their vision. "When you meet homeowners—not to sound corny—I try and find their melody and rhythm," Pablecas said. "I study their family dynamic. I tap into this because there's a lot of emotions present when you're building a family's dream home. It takes a leader, a good builder, to bring it all together, which relates that to the lead singer role that I play in my band. In the end. I want my customers or audience always happy and wanting more."





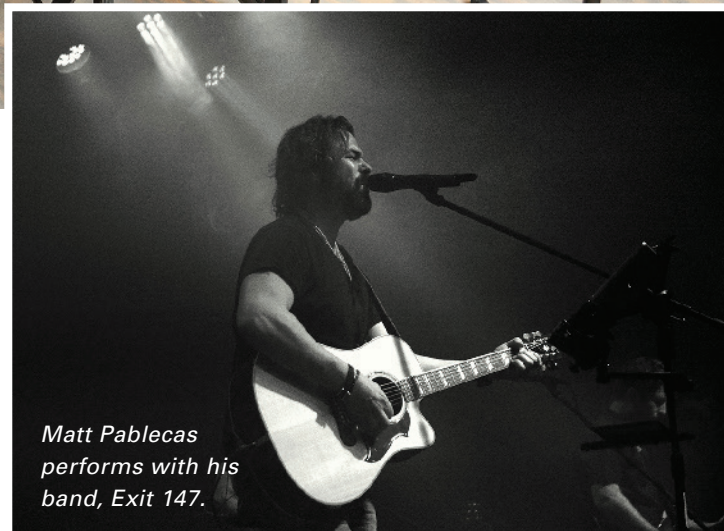
*A custom music stage and studio offers a place for practice and family fun.*

## THE MODERN FARMHOUSE

Hale Street Group is celebrated for its luxury modern farmhouse homes. Pablecas said he first saw the style in California in 2012 and knew immediately that he had to bring it to the Chicago area. A sophisticated take on country living, modern farmhouse style incorporates features like large windows, steep roof pitches, board and batten siding, rustic materials, large kitchens, seamless indoor/outdoor living, and a bright white interior. “It’s style that works well for a family,” Pablecas said. “It’s warm, welcoming, modern, and clean.”

Matt, his wife, and four children live on Old Hart Road in Barrington Hills in what many would consider a modern farmhouse dream home. Pablecas said the house is not what makes it his dream. “I think the people who live in your home are what make it a dream home,” he explained. “If I had to start all over tomorrow, all I’d need are my children and my wife. I can always build a house. What means the most to me is my family.”

He and his wife, attorney Leah Mandas, met through the church community when they were teenagers. When they married in 2014, “I moved a city girl to the farm,” he joked. He grew up in Arlington Heights and South Barrington, but Pablecas loves the rural nature of Barrington Hills. “I’m a country boy. You know, I didn’t grow up on a farm, and I don’t have a horse, but I live on the lyrics of country music, I drive a pick-up, and I love my cowboy boots.” The dynamic couple also renovated a former drapery shop at



*Matt Pablecas performs with his band, Exit 147.*

PHOTO: MATT PABLECAS

238 George Street to create a law office for Leah and her staff at Mandas Law and a satellite office for Hale Street Group.

Pablecas has weekly Zoom meetings with his father and treasures his close family relationships. “I don’t know if you know many Greek families,” he said, laughing. “Our family is so tight. We work together, we have dinner together, we travel together, and we get along. There’s a common bond and a great amount of respect for one another, and it works for us.”

Besides his business and family, music is his other great passion. Pablecas said that now, “music is my golf” but it’s been key to his development and identity. As the lead singer in the popular ‘80s band Exit 147, he plays up to 70 shows a year at festivals and venues from Barrington Hills Country Club



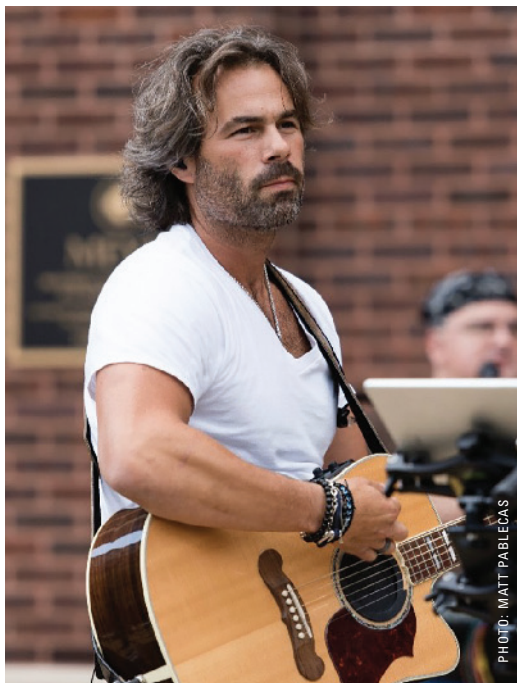
to the Barrington Brat Tent, to Dirty Nellie's in Palatine, weddings, and clubs. He is also half of an acoustic duo, Hart and Pine. "When I was a kid, music gave me purpose and confidence and taught me how to be creative. And it wasn't until I was older that I realized the similarities between my passion for music and my love and satisfaction for building."

Pablecas said he is drawn to music's power to move people. "It's the emotion of it for me. You come up with the four perfect lyrics and you mix that in with the four right chords. I think that can make anybody cry."

"When I'm on the stage for two hours, everything else just goes away. I get to share the stage and this common bond with five of my best friends. I'll still get my Dad up on stage who nails a perfect Neil Diamond and can still draw a crowd. I focus on lyrics and harmonies. I get goose bumps just talking about it, but that's what does it for me. Every single gig brings a different experience and music just brings us together."

## ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

As in business, Pablecas' love of music springs from his early influences. "I came from a musical family. Both my Dad and Uncle Gary played in bands." As a boy, he would beg to be allowed to go to their gigs. "Instead of staying home with a babysitter, I'd be like, 'Can I go? Can I go?' And I would go and fall asleep on two chairs pushed together." He followed in his uncle's



*Matt Pablecas' favorite song to play is "Maggie May."*

footsteps as a drummer and learned to play guitar in college.

Pablecas loves fronting a band. He started almost by chance while drumming for a previous band when the band's singer almost quit, mid-show. "We just knew it was over and it would be our last show together. Not a month went by when my good friend gave me the push I needed to try center stage with a guitar and I never packed my drum kit again."

One of his biggest joys has been joining bands to perform onstage in Nashville clubs. The first time, he explained he tipped a member and asked to sing a song. He performed well enough that they kept him onstage for four. Since then, it's been a whole lot easier to be invited on stage. "I was back three months later, and the guy onstage says, 'Hey, it's the kid from Chicago.' And he brought me back up to do a few songs." Although he is quick to clarify he has not played Nashville

professionally, he has performed at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, Legends Corner, and The Stage. "To stand on the very same stage as some of my favorite artists is a dream. It's the thrill of a lifetime for me to play in those places. They are packed. People are full of life, joyful, and free. There's a rush with that and I get to feel like a rock star for five minutes."

As much as he enjoys Nashville, he's even more enthusiastic about making music with his family. "I built a music studio and stage in my basement, where I practice with Exit 147, and Hart and Pine. I also record myself there when I'm inspired to write," he said. "Most important, it's where I teach my kids the love of music. I try and have my kids in the basement singing with me, or karaoke at least once a week. It's our family night."

Although Quintessential Barrington may be ready to sign up Pablecas for a television series, he chuckles when asked about how home renovation shows influence his projects. "It definitely showcases the modern farmhouse style and people fall in love with that. But, people think everything is easy from watching those shows. When you take down the drywall, there isn't going to be a beautiful fireplace hidden behind there. Although that has happened twice...LOL!"

*Hale Street Group is on Facebook and Instagram or their website: [halestreetgroup.com/](http://halestreetgroup.com/) or [Instagram.com/halestreetgroup](https://www.instagram.com/halestreetgroup). The rendering for the 407 East Main Street apartments is available at [407eastmain.com/](http://407eastmain.com/). To learn more about Matt Pablecas' music, visit [matthewpablecasmusic.com](http://matthewpablecasmusic.com).*



*Robin Ross is a Barrington-based freelance writer.*

## BUILDING TRENDS

While modern farmhouse style remains extremely popular, Pablecas noted that clients increasingly incorporate these trends into their projects:

- **Mid-century Modern.** The streamlined style of the 1950s is making a comeback, according to Pablecas, who explained it complements other architectural styles, including modern farmhouse.
- **Indoor/Outdoor Living.** Hale Street Group is building a home that wraps around a 1,500 square foot interior courtyard with a covered patio. "They will open the doors, and have that space basically inside their home," Pablecas said. "It's like a resort with seamless inside/outside living."
- **Outdoor Entertaining Space.** The pandemic has sparked interest in creating unique spaces with amenities like fire pits, where homeowners can gather safely with loved ones.
- **Retractable Roofs.** Restaurants are adding these to increase comfort and availability of outdoor dining.
- **Rich Finishes.** Pablecas sees clients incorporating more colors like deep blues, French white oak, black metal glass doors, leather kitchen hoods with metal ribboning, and antique gold hardware. We are seeing less gray tones and more earth tones, warm colors. There's an old-world vintage modern vibe that we feel is coming to the country living arena. Straight clean lines are in now, but I have a feeling we are going to start seeing clean curves and arches making a comeback, too.