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FEATURED TOP STORY EDITOR'S PICK

Local musicians make up Bowie tribute band and will perform at West Shore Theatre

Christine Musser For The Sentinel

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The Band Who Sold the World is made up of Central Pennsylvania natives and will perform David Bowie's music at the West Shore Theatre. Christine Musser, For The Sentinel

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To put a band together and celebrate the music and lyrics of an extraordinary, award-winning performer isn't an easy task, even for the most seasoned musicians. But that is exactly what Shea Quinn and Scott Frange did in 2015 when they set out to honor David Bowie and his artistry.

Forming the Band Who Sold the World, the intention was to have a different style of tribute band that focused on Bowie's unique musical style and lyrics. From 1969 to the early 1980s, his music crossed many different genres.

"I'm not wanting or trying to look like him or be him," Quinn said. "I just want a really good sound like his material; his music is timeless. We got to do it justice."

"Bowie fans will be at the show," Frange said. "They may not play guitar, but they will know if a note is missing."

As the band prepares to take the stage at the West Shore Theatre at 7 p.m. Saturday, July 1, Quinn and Frange looked back at the band's formation, pulling all of the members from Central Pennsylvania and incorporating three other seasoned musicians and two still in their teens.

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The band

The band members include Quinn, Frange, Mike Heininger, Steve Lentz, Jennie James, Logan Bedard and James Klippel.

Mike Heininger, guitar player, is from the York area and attended Berklee College of Music in Boston. After graduating, he remained in Boston and performed with a local band. He eventually returned to York where he met Quinn during an open mic performance. The two of them performed together that night playing "Ziggy Stardust." Impressed with Heininger's guitar performance, Quinn called Frange the next morning and said he had found a guitar player.

By day, Heininger owns a garage door business. As a musician, he wanted to have a larger presence in the Tri-County area.

Lentz plays saxophone and is also from the York area. Lentz attended college in Tennessee with plans to be a band director. After college he went on the road and played at Opryland in Nashville, and he has played professionally since 1972.

After having to retire from work in maintenance in 2017 due to a seizure, Lentz continued to perform locally as a solo artist. The Maxwell Project, a 10-piece funk band, of which Lentz is a part, celebrated this past March when they were inducted to the Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame.

James is a vocalist with the band. She grew up in Lemoyne and graduated from Cedar Cliff High School. She's been involved in musical theater since she was a child. She met Quinn while performing in "Rocky Horror Picture Show," and she has performed with local bands in Florida and California. She currently teaches at the Palo Alto Children's Theatre in California. Since she currently does not live locally, she flies to Pennsylvania to perform with each of the band's shows.

Klippel plays keyboard and is one of the youngest musicians in the band.

"The first chords I learned to play on the guitar were 'Space Oddity,'" Klippel said. He lived in Camp Hill until he was 11 years old, which is when he moved to Marysville. He started playing music at 13 and purchased his first piano from a garage sale. Klippel graduated from the Capitol Area School for the Arts, where he had a mentor who helped him to learn to play music by ear.

Klippel is a "multi-instrumentalist." His side project is Winter Parks. "I try to blend R&B and different genres and stuff," he said. "It's like singer/songwriter type of stuff if you want to categorize it. I really don't have a genre for it."

He designed the project himself and focuses on blending different genres. "I'm inspired by Paul McCartney. He did an album of pretty much everything except his wife played a note on the synthesizer," he said.

Bedard is the drummer and is from Mechanicsburg. He started early at age 6 after his parents bought him a drum kit for Christmas. After learning some songs and playing them on the drums, his father took him to an open mic event at Gullifty's where he met Quinn and Frange. That night he performed Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music," and by 8 years old, he was performing with Quinn, filling in for drummers who couldn't make it to a gig.

"It has ignited something within me," Bedard said of his work with Quinn.

Besides playing Bowie, Bedard plays with Teen Town, an award-winning jazz band named after the prominent jazz fusion of the 1970s. The band has won the DownBeat Award and Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame “Best Jazz Band” Award.

Bedard’s long-term plan is to become a diesel mechanic rather than depend on a music career to pay the bills. “I don’t want to play music to pay my bills. That takes the fun out of it,” he said.

Frange plays bass guitar, though his day job is owning Players Exchange in Lemoyne, which is a well-known used/vintage guitar shop. He’s been part of the Central Pennsylvania music scene since the 1970s and has performed with several bands, including New Found Freedom, the Middleton Brothers, Bob Barry and Subject 2 (with Jim DePalma), to name a few.

He helped launch the career of Elizabeth Hale of Halestorm, writing and playing the cello parts in her single, “Rose in December.”

He is also on the advisory board of the Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of fame with Quinn.

Quinn is the lead singer of the tribute band, and he’s performed with the Pikers, the Sharks, Jet Silver and the Luv Gods. The Sharks won MTV’s “Basement Tape Competition” in 1986 and were inducted into the Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame in 2020.

Bowie

The band had already pulled together 20 songs from Bowie’s large catalogue and started rehearsals when they heard of his death in January 2016. Since the purpose of the group was to celebrate Bowie and his music, they weren’t sure if they should move forward. After discussing what they should do, they decided to go ahead and performed several weeks after the news.

“I’ve always been a huge fan,” Quinn said. “I started out playing Kiss and Rush then this guy came and his intelligence, he was a little different, but he [had] intelligent, incredible song writing. He had to be pretty brave to pull that stuff off. He could have been ridiculed, but he was brave enough to do it. He’s incredible.”

Bowie’s album, “Hunky Dory,” is what turned Quinn onto Bowie. The album included “Changes” and Quinn’s all-time favorite, “Life on Mars.” His daughter learned to play the song on the piano and played it for him one Christmas as a gift.

“I bawled like a baby. It was so incredible. It is really a difficult song to play,” he said.

Bowie's music catalog is massive, and it wasn't any easy task to choose what songs to use. They decided to go with their favorites and do the ones that the audience would expect to hear. The set begins from 1969 and runs into the early 1980s, covering pop rock, mid-'70s rock-and-roll to dance music genres.

As the band members sat around the large dining room table in Frange's house and talked about Bowie's music, the age differences were not recognizable. They had a connection with varied musical backgrounds, with all of them coming together for one purpose – to honor one of the most innovative musicians the world has ever seen.

And they know it has to be done right.

“Everyone in the band gets it. They know,” Frange said.

There's some nostalgia as the seasoned men talk about how in the 1970s musicians always had work. It wasn't unusual to play a couple nights in the Harrisburg area and then go to Philadelphia or New Jersey and play another couple nights.

Those days are gone, though, and newcomers Bedard and Klippel didn't know what it was like to perform that way.

“They're young and they're hungry and they want to play, and they want to play it right,” Quinn said. “Some of the guys are just getting a little too old for this stuff you know.”

“It's really exciting for us,” Heininger added when talking about the age difference.

The Band Who Sold the World, nominated twice for the Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame, is a collaboration of strong talent from the youngest to the oldest who must translate Bowie's genius artistic design that blends a mass of musical styles.

The Band Who Sold the World will perform at 7 p.m. Saturday, July 1 at the West Shore Theatre, 317 Bridge St., New Cumberland. Tickets are available on the West Shore Theatre's website at **westshoretheatre.org**.