McGuffey lane resurrects glory days with new disc

By HERB GRANT
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McGuffey lane resurrects glory days with new disc - Fresh off the release of its first album in eight years, McGuffey Lane is enjoying a creative resurgence.

The band will perform songs from the CD at 9:30 p.m. Friday during the 25th annual Old Hilliardfest.

Original members John Schwab, Terry Efaw and Steve Reis reunited and traveled to Nashville, Tenn., to record with executive producer Robin Waddell.

"He's found out how to work the financial system by using a BB gun instead of an Uzi," said singer-guitarist Schwab, who wrote most of the new tunes.

A distribution deal could help reach shelves at Best Buy, Borders, f.y.e. and Walmart stores.

For now, the disc is available at performances and at www.mcguffeylane.com.

The basic tracks were cut in Nashville instead of the Schwab studio in Columbus.

"Just getting out of Dodge was good," he said.

Back home, overdubs were performed before the group returned to Nashville for vocals and mixing.

The result: a crisp, high-energy collection of ballads and rock songs - and not what guitarist Efaw described as the "formulized Nashville sound that was really big years ago."

"We wanted more of a live feel," Schwab said.

With solid writing, playing and managing, "I kind of feel like this is our second album," he said - 30 years after the first and most successful set, titled McGuffey Lane.

"It's a show of force," Efaw said, "that we're still around and not just existing off what we've done before."

While recording the album, they evoked the heyday in 1976 - when McGuffey Lane became the house band at Zachariah's Red Eye Saloon near the Ohio State University campus.

"We were on the cutting edge of the country-rock scene and right across the street from the biggest school in the country," Efaw said. "These kids had never seen a band with a steel guitar before - or a harmonica."

Even without radio airplay, the band consistently sold out shows at Zachariah's - a smoky, dimly lighted building with two balconies.

The lines to enter snaked down N. High Street and around the block.
"It was routine that we would practice every day, leave, eat dinner, come back two hours before the show and talk to the crowd," said bass player Reis, whose childhood home on McGuffey Lane in Athens supplied the name.

"They brought their coolers and waited outside for hours before the doors opened so they would get a shot (at getting in)."

National acts in town heard the buzz - and band members were soon rubbing elbows with their heroes, including Earl Scruggs and Jerry Jeff Walker.

McGuffey Lane eventually toured with the Allman Brothers, the Charlie Daniels Band and the Judds.

It had hits on the pop and country charts, too, but never achieved a national following.

"We came as close to really hitting it big . . . as you can come," Efaw said. "The guys who managed us in the beginning were inexperienced. We were all kind of growing together."

Schwab is "thrilled to death" with 10, an album made for the Lick Records label he co-owns.

And it should help the Mifflin High School graduate continue his streak of "40 years without a day job."

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A schedule
The 25th annual Old Hilliardfest will feature a Friday post-game party for teenagers, a 5-mile run, a juried art show, a car show and - at noon Saturday - the dedication of First Responders Park. The entertainment lineup:

FRIDAY

MAIN STAGE
7 p.m.: Greater Columbus Community Orchestra; 8: Circle of Fifths; 9:30: McGuffey Lane

SATURDAY

MAIN STAGE
10 a.m.: Drums of Steel; 11: Derek DiCenzo Quartet; 1 p.m.: Annie LaRue; 2: Meister; 4: Stinkin Lizard

COMMUNITY STAGE
10 a.m.: Sweet Adelines; 11: Kid's Company vocal students; 1 p.m.: Bad Rooster; 2: Hubris; 3: Hilliard Community Music School; 4: Diffusion; 5: Time of Trial

PERFORMING ARTS STAGE
10 a.m.: Four Harmony's Sake; 10:30: Invitation to Dance; 11:30: Habeeta's Dance of the Arts; 1 p.m.: Kid's Company: Triple Threat Summer Troupe; 1:30: Oriental Martial Arts College; 2:30: Martial Arts Alliance; 3:30: DCW Elite; 4: Katerina & Khristina
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