

Sly like a Fox Fest

Spotlight | Fox

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In 1975, my high school homeroom teacher booked a concert in the school's auditorium by a rock group called Fox that got started in 1970 when all members were students at Purdue Lafayette. Fox already had toured with and shared stages with such superstars of the day as REO Speedwagon, The Charlie Daniels Band, Canned Heat, Van Morrison and Styx. So there was quite a buzz in classrooms about the show.

Imagine the student body's surprise when that very same home room teacher -- David Owen -- turned out to be the band's rhythm guitar player. Little did we know that walking our hallways each morning was a rock star in the mild-mannered guise of a shop teacher.

Flash forward 30 years. Owen, who lives in Gary, is still a teacher and still very much a rocker. In 2004, he sent out invitations for his daughter's wedding to his former band mates with a three-song CD of Fox playing live in 1975, with the request that each re-learn his part on those songs and to plan on playing them live at the wedding reception. "I hadn't picked up my bass in over 20 years," said Gerry Bishop of Lakes of The Four Seasons, who is an attorney by trade. "I was like 'You've got to be kidding?' but we did it and had a blast." Shortly after they played five songs at a local block party, then came a long jam set during a party at Lake Schaffer. "We had fun so we decided to put the band back together just for kicks," noted Bishop, who grew up in Glen Park and once played in the late-1960s band, Them V, that shared stage gear with the Jackson Five and opened shows for Chicago hit-makers The Buckingham. Rounding out the original Fox lineup is drummer George Brenn of Chesterton owner of Four Season's Landscaping, and lead guitarist-keyboardist Mark Sloan of Monticello, an SBC/Ameritech supervisor. While hair may be a little grayer and thinner and waistlines a little wider, the rock 'n' roll spirit has remained unchanged.

So much so, that four old friends pooled their money and took a long weekend long trip down to Memphis in February, where they recorded eight songs at the legendary Sun Studios, where Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins made their first records. David Owen again was the instigator. "The Sun Studio experience was the thrill," Bishop said. "It was like visiting the Mecca of the music world." Fox is mixing the five originals and three covers they recorded at Sun and are not sure when or if they will release the songs for the public. "It was just something we did for fun and for the thrill of it," noted Bishop.

Their concert this evening will be broken down into three sets of music that will cover hits by such classic rockers as Humble Pie, Procal Harum, Free, The Byrds, The Moody Blues, The Kinks, The Beatles and dozens of others.

"We play all the songs we used to play back in the day and a few of our own," concluded Bishop. At least three 1970s-era Fox originals will be included -- "Juke Box," "Look At What You Got" and "Heavy Duty Woman" -- and one newly written song, "Some Things Never Change." As someone who saw Fox perform a few months ago and also back in their '70s heyday, I can attest that these four guys can still rock hard and long. In the case of Fox, fellow Midwest rocker Bob Seger nailed it when he sang "Come back baby, cause rock 'n' roll never forgets!"