

STREET SCENE

Brothers Creeggan take a break to play together



CHRISTINA FUOCO

Ring in the New Year with 16,000 people at the Palace of Auburn Hills, the Canadian pop band the Barenaked Ladies announced the sold-out show was the biggest of its career.

That hasn't stopped their need to play clubs. Two members of the band are returning to small venues to promote their side projects.

BNL bassist Jim Creeggan and his brother Andy Creeggan, the band's former keyboardist, are performing Sunday, Jan. 18, at the Magic Bag in Ferndale in support of its aptly titled album "The Brothers Creeggan" and "The Brothers Creeggan II."

Opening for the brothers is Kevin Hearn, BNL's keyboardist, and his band Thinbuckle.

"We're sort of in between touring and (recording) an album with the Ladies. It's nice to go out and put it (the music) out there. We've always sold Brothers Creeggan CDs at Barenaked Ladies shows and we've had a mail-order service through my mom. That's how it survived," Jim Creeggan said with a laugh.

Prior to this tour, The Brothers Creeggan released albums and did a few "odd gigs here and there."

The Toronto-born brothers began playing music together in high school as the Backstreet Band performing songs by bands ranging from Elvis to the Weather Report. They soon moved on to experimental jazz with Tuna Straight.

In 1987, they formed an a cappella quartet called The Synthetics and won the National Rising Star talent contest at the Canadian National Exhibition beating out some fellow Canadian teenager named Alanis Morissette, who was then 13.

Several projects followed including a stint with the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra.

The brothers got together to record classical, jazz, Latin, ragtime and pop music as The Brothers Creeggan "mainly, I think because there's just a brother thing that needed to be explored to the fullest. It's there, and we just wanted to give it its full potential," Jim Creeggan said.

"Most of it is centered around tunes on the two instruments - double bass and piano, and then, on the recordings, we build stuff around that. We explore the duo

possibilities, whereas the Barenaked Ladies have more of a band set up where it's five individuals doing what comes out of that combo."

They recorded their first album, "The Brothers Creeggan" (Reprise) from 1993 to 1994 dipping into Jim Creeggan's experiences traveling in Belize and Guatemala. For example, the "Clown Song" tells the story of Creeggan's meeting with a Belizean "tour guide" and other clown friends to Andy Creeggan's jazzy piano. The musically frenetic "Takin' Out the Garbage" talks about cleaning and things that are taken for granted. It also shares BNL's trademark sense of humor, "Never felt so keen/when I use Mr. Clean."

In February 1995 Andy Creeggan left the Barenaked Ladies but continued his work with The Brothers Creeggan to study composition at McGill University in Montreal.

"He sort of wanted to explore his own sort of personal stuff and music all tied into one," Jim Creeggan explained.

"He's fooling around trying new things. He was the earliest one to join the band. He had never really got to try university and he's sort of doing that right now."

He took time out from his studies to record "The Brothers Creeggan II." Two songs - "Suite for Sarah" and "Squiggly Line" - were recorded as part of a collection of lullabies they were writing. The Latin-like "Cows, Chickens and Peas" continues the theme of Andy Creeggan's fascination with farm animals.

It seems like whenever the brothers have free time, they're

working on music. Andy Creeggan took the surplus of his material and released "Andi-Work." Jim Creeggan played bass on four songs on Sarah McLachlan's latest album "Surfacing," and on one tune on Meryn Cadell's debut album "Angel Food for Thought."

The brothers accompanied Jane Siberry on "My Mother is Not the White Dove" on the "Honor the Earth" tribute CD.

Jim Creeggan explained that at the Magic Bag he and his brother will perform a few BNL songs including "Spider in My Room" from its 1996 album "Born on a Pirate Ship" (Reprise).

As for the Barenaked Ladies, singer/guitarist Ed Robertson and singer Steven Page are working on new songs, some of which the band debuted at The Palace show.

"I love them so that's great," he said laughing.

The Brothers Creeggan and Hearn aren't the only ones working outside BNL. Besides his own album, Hearn has been recording with the Rheostatics. Drummer Tyler Stewart has been playing around Toronto in a band called Arsed with a former publicist for BNL and fellow Toronto musicians.

"It's kind of like the Cars meets Oasis, or Oasis meets 38 Special," Stewart said giggling.

Side projects, he explains, makes BNL "looser."

"I learn how to make the music more fun," Stewart said. "The Ladies are pretty fun. It doesn't look like we're that serious, but we take the music very seriously. That's very uncool to admit, but it's true. I learn a certain sense of lightness when I

play with anyone else. We play with a different energy. The last tour was 21 months long and it was tiring. It's good to step out and do something different."

The Brothers Creeggan and Thinbuckle perform 8 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18, at the Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave. in Ferndale. Tickets are \$10 in advance for the 18 and older show. Call (248) 544-3030 or visit <http://www.magicbag.com> for more information. The Brothers Creeggan's website is <http://www.musicwest.com/Artists/C/Creeggan/>

Detroit Red Wing and WKRC-FM DJ Darren McCarty has been nominated for an ESPY Award for his game-winning goal against Philadelphia in the NHL Finals last season. Fans can vote for McCarty two ways - by calling (900) 976-ESPY or by visiting the unofficial McCarty website at <http://www.darrenmccarty.com> beginning Thursday, Jan. 15. The ESPY Awards, which represent the convergence of the sports and entertainment communities, were created by ESPN in 1993 and are given for Excellence in Sports Performance in more than 30 categories. The show will be aired live at 8 p.m. Monday, Feb. 9, from Radio City Music Hall in New York.

If you have a question or comment for Christina Fuoco write her at The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150, or via e-mail at cfuoco@aol.com, or leave a message at (734) 953-2045, ext. 2130. Christina Fuoco reports on pop music during the K-Rock report Fridays at 5 p.m. with Millen.

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