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For 1969, Woodstock still rocks

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By J.T. MORAND Staff Writer

In the summer of 1969, when he was 18 and his band was Captain Soul, playing Rolling Stones and Cream songs in the parking lot of Shoppers World in DeKalb one weekend was a big deal.

But after the show, when a kid wearing a T-shirt with a bird on a guitar neck logo approached the band, Balsano knew there was something bigger going on.

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Lead vocalists Hayden Felipez and Paul Garvas take a bow after a 1969 show. The band performs songs popular in the later 1960s and early '70s.

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1969 lead singer Hayden Felipez channels Janis Joplin.

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Lead male vocalist Paul Garvas interacts with the crowd while playing guitar during a 1969 show.

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That logo was for Woodstock, a three-day music festival with the likes of Janis Joplin, The Who, Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane and many other musical acts performing for thousands of hippies on a dairy farm in upstate New York. It was the ultimate concert, featuring the most popular rock and folk acts of those years.

"It was all the guys we idolized at the time," said a now grown-up Balsano, today a finance director living in Naperville. "We thought it was unreal."

But it was real enough for Balsano 36 years later to form a band dedicated to the music of that era. He named the band 1969, and the members look like they could have walked off that New York farm.

1969 will help celebrate the 40th anniversary of Woodstock this weekend around the Chicago area, including a gig in Northbrook on Friday.

Love that sound

The band isn't just a vehicle for the musicians in it to make money. They're all big fans of the music that came out of the late 1960s and early '70s.

"The 1969 persona is so genuine for all of us," said Hayden Felipez, an executive assistant from Antioch by day, but lead female vocalist by night and weekend. "We're such old hippies."

She was 8 years old in the year 1969, hanging out with older brothers and sisters who were into the bands. The music of the time constantly filled the house and has been in constant rotation ever



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since she said



1969, the band, entertains a crowd in Bolingbrook with songs by Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane, Joe Cocker, Cream, the Doors and many others from the late '60s and early '70s. Their version of Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Were Made for Walking" has a heavy dose of Led Zeppelin.

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'WOODSTOCK 40TH ANNIVERSARY BASH'

1969, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. Aug. 14 at Pavilion After Dark, 577 Waukegan Road, Northbrook. (847) 715-9445, www.pavilionchicago.com.

So Felipez, who has used her voice for jingles and other bands, jumped at the chance to rehearse for 1969 three years ago when she read an ad that said they were looking for a singer who could handle singing Joplin.

"It feels fresh all over again," she said. "It feels very viable and timely."

Jaimie Kopy, bassist from Gurnee, was 10 years old in 1969 and was surrounded by the music and the hippie movement. His parents held love bead making parties and the music filled his house, too.

"All I could think about was, 'God, do I want to do this!'" he said about playing rock music.

But like so many kids then, he learned of Woodstock after it happened. Had he known about it, it would have been a different story.

"My folks would always take me to concerts," he said. "So I would have been interested."

Spirited efforts

But the members are happy to keep the spirit of the music alive today and treat every gig like it was Woodstock.

Their sets include songs by Hendrix, Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Joe Cocker, Cream, the Doors, Buffalo Springfield, Sly and the Family Stone, Creedence Clearwater Revival and many others.

The song they're most proud to play these days is a Led Zeppelin-esque version of Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Were Made for Walking."

"It sounds like 'When the Levee Breaks,'" Felipez said.

The members agree the music takes them back to a time when rock music was the best it ever was, and they hope the message in the songs resonates with listeners during a time when America is fighting two wars, and peace, love and happiness seem to be in short supply.

But for keyboardist Balsano, he's transported to a specific moment that puts a smile on his face.

"When we do 'Born to be Wild,' it takes me back to that band (Captain Soul) from that night," he said. "It was the biggest crowd we ever performed for."

Video



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