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WEEKEND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE FOR THE PERMIAN BASIN
ODESSA AMERICAN • FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2000

They're back

What farewell? The Presidents of the United States of America are back with a new album.

SEE PAGE 2C

The Big 'L'

'American Pie' alums Mena Suvari and Jason Biggs team up again in 'Loser.'

SEE PAGE 4C

All-star rockers play on

The players:

Randy Meisner — The Eagles

Denny Laine — Moody Blues, Wings

Spencer Davis — Spencer Davis Group

Ron Wikso — Foreigner

Coming to rock Odessa

Where: Ector County Coliseum

When: Doors open Friday night at 7 p.m.

Veteran musicians join forces to form a classic-rock supergroup

Nick St. Nicholas — Steppenwolf

By Stephanie Dunaway
Odessa American

It's a rock 'n' roll all-star special.

One night. Seven stars. Too many hits to count.

Original lead singers and performers from the Eagles, Steppenwolf, Moody Blues, Wings, Foreigner, Toto and the Spencer Davis Group will be in concert at the Ector County Coliseum today. The band has performed together for the past four years as the World Classic Rockers, boasting nine Grammy awards, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame memberships and Lifetime Achievement Award winners.

The legendary artists span three decades of rock 'n' roll and the event at the Coliseum is a unique opportunity to see the original members of classic rock supergroups.

NICK ST. NICHOLAS

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As a member of WCR, Nicholas

Fergie Frederiksen — Toto

votes for Neil Young's motto, "It's better to burn out than it is to rust."

RANDY MEISNER

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The band went on to be one of the most successful in American music history and Meisner was an integral part of the group with his high harmonies and songwriting contribution of "Take It To The Limit."

However, Meisner left the band after the "Hotel California" album to front his own band and make solo albums.

"Basically just being on the road so much and all the pressure of the Eagles eventually got to me," Meisner said in a phone interview from his home in Los Angeles. "We had made plenty of money and I thought the band had peaked."

See ROCK on Page 5C

Michael Monarch — Steppenwolf

'ROCK' from the cover

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Meisner went on to form the Meisner, Rich and Swan band and made three solo albums.

"Then, it was almost like I was retired and Nick (St. Nicholas) called me," he said.

He plays with WCR "once in a while" but says he is content with the success he's had. He has more album sales to his credit than any bass player in history except Paul McCartney.

"I'm real settled with what I've done," Meisner said. "The albums are really fun to make but I don't really like to be out on the road now."

However, Meisner is having fun with the WCR.

"Every song is a hit. It's just a live jukebox from the '70s. It's real exciting and the audiences seem to love it," Meisner said.

DENNY LAINE

Founding member of The Moody Blues, Denny Laine was a success in England and America in the '60s and '70s. The band's hit song "Go Now" led them to tour with the Beatles and Laine connected with Paul McCartney. The duo went on to form the band Wings in 1966.

Wings recorded 10 albums and had such hits as "Band on the Run" and "Live and Let Die."

Now, Laine is glad to be touring with the WCR.

"We're lucky because we've had a second revival. It's nice to see the younger people appreciate our music," Laine said in a telephone interview from his home in Los Angeles.

Laine said the WCR tour is a relief because he isn't responsible for the whole show.

"Everybody kind of does their bit and then we get together at the end. It's nice to be able to watch everyone else on stage," Laine said. "It's pretty easy to be laid back when you've been doing it for so long. You're either good or you're not."

Even though the show is relaxed, Laine said there is some intensity attached to it.

"It still requires the same sort of level of energy and we're actually doing it on a pretty good level," he said.

It helps that the WCR tour is more sophisticated than the tours the band members were on at the outset of their careers. The hotels and traveling are first-rate.

"This isn't like starting again. We're doing it on a pretty good level and the audiences always appreciate it."

SPENCER DAVIS

A part of the British rock sensation of the '60s, Spencer Davis created the famed Spencer Davis Group and produced the hit songs "Gimme Some Lovin'," "Somebody Help Me," "I'm A Man" and "Keep On Runnin' "

He's now taken those hit songs and joined the WCR.

"I prefer to call it a three-dimensional juke box. You ring them up and put them on the stage and they play all the hits," Davis said in a phone interview from his home in Los Angeles.

Though the band is made up of people who were founding members of successful bands in the '60s and '70s, Davis said WCR members see each other as bandmates and not separate musicians.

"It's frightening when you consider that you're playing with somebody like Randy Meisner. But, even if people don't connect with names immediately, they connect with the songs right off the bat," Davis said.

Other than WCR, Davis still tours internationally with his original group.

"It can be stressful. I won't deny that. The travel can be real difficult but I've been playing in a band and singing all my life. It's just what I do. It's all I've ever done," he said. "It has its perks and its pains, but that's what rock 'n' roll is all about."

Since he has been performing for so long, Davis understands that audiences may not expect much from him because of his age. On the contrary, he laughingly said, "I can actually get onstage without any help from anyone whatsoever."

When it comes to the whole band, Davis said they don't need help either.

"It's not pre-recorded tapes or samples. The show usually goes well, and the audience senses that. We feed off their energy."

MICHAEL MONARCH

Of all WCR musicians, original Steppenwolf member Michael Monarch is the most surprising. Known for his psychedelic guitar playing on "Magic Carpet Ride" and "Born to Be Wild," the musician is now recording pop and R&B music.

"It's quite different from the music I'm known for, but Steppenwolf was over 30 years ago and I was 16 years old," Monarch said in a phone interview from his home in Los Angeles.

The change in musical direction was brought about by Monarch's hobby of swing dancing.

"I compete and have a few swing-dancing titles in California. I was second in the state in 1998," Monarch said. "That influenced my music making."

His latest album is an all-instrumental guitar compilation that is available on the Internet. Monarch is now working to find other ways to market the CD.

He also spends time working with other musicians, just as he did after he left Steppenwolf. Between Steppenwolf and WCR, his career has included making an album with Janis Joplin, regular work as a session slide guitarist in England and the band Detective.

"That's a musician's life. You do whatever comes up," Monarch said.

Other jobs that have come up have been television and film soundtracks. Monarch's work has been included in "WKRP in Cincinnati," "Geraldo," "Miami Vice," "A Current Affair," "Saturday Night Live," "The Wonder Years," "Easy Rider" and "Coming Home."

His current gig with WCR has been an odd job for Monarch.

"I think this is an unusual band. These are the biggest classic songs and (audiences) are getting a piece of that. They're getting a piece of history," Monarch said.

He enjoys the appeal that the band has to a wide variety of people.

"We get those who are die-hard old-age and we get people who are 18 to 21 who know our songs."

For Monarch, the appeal of WCR is just as surprising as the appeal of Steppenwolf 30 years ago.

"Who would've known," Monarch asked. "You start out in a dirty old garage. Then someone signs you ...By chance, the company releases some odd songs from the album ...They didn't know "Born to Be Wild" was going to be a hit. I'm really glad and feel very lucky to be involved with music."

FERGIE FREDERIKSEN

Younger audiences may remember Fergie Frederiksen who comes from a different era than most of the WCR rockers. In 1983 his band Toto won seven Grammy awards for their album "Toto IV."

As the band's lead singer, Frederiksen was involved in a sold-out world-wide stadium tour where he performed the hit songs "Rosanna," "Hold the Line" and "Africa." Each of the songs reached the Top 5 on the Billboard charts.

As a singer and songwriter, Frederiksen has earned a double platinum album and a gold album.

RON WIKSO

The most recent star of WCR, Ron Wikso is best known for his work with the band Foreigner. He performed with the band on its Mr. Moonlight world tour and Can't Stop Rockin' North American tour.

Wikso also contributed to Cher's rise to the charts by performing with her during her Heart of Stone world tour and Love Hurts North American tour.