

Lazy River Band to perform at Rustix Friday, July 24

In the summer of 1969, bassist Mark Flanagan, drummer Ardie Strutzenberg, and guitarist John Callahan, recruited keyboardist Jon Porter, and guitarist/vocalist Randy Berka, to join a new band playing cover tunes at high school dances, county fairs, nightclubs, and ballrooms. The quintet adopted the name Lazy River from the Des Moines River, which runs through their hometown of Humboldt. Early posters typically featured photos of the band against a backdrop of the river. Friday, July 24, the band will celebrate their 40th anniversary with a special performance at Rustix Restaurant and Roadhouse in Humboldt.

Though they were just teenagers, Lazy River performed at countless venues throughout the upper Midwest from 1969 through 1972, culminating in appearances at the famed Star Ballroom in Dakota City (2005 inductee in the Iowa Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame). In December of 1971, the band recorded a number of demo tracks at a studio in Omaha, NE, and a copy of the original tape was found a few years ago in the archives of keyboardist, Jon Porter.

Eventually, all of the musicians went their separate ways until, one evening in 1999, when Strutzenberg, Callahan, and Flanagan met at a bar in Humboldt to reminisce and decided on the spur of the moment to play a "reunion" gig. They phoned former Goo guitarist, John Brandsgard, asked him to participate, and the next evening was the first of a series of nine magical "Rock 'n' Roll Reunion" gigs. Over the past decade, these have raised thousands of dollars for non-profit community groups and activities. Over the past few years the band has also performed at the Hard Rock Cafe™ in Washington, DC, as well as the Silverton Casino and Stoney's Rockin' Country in Las Vegas, NV. Last year Lazy River was nominated for the Iowa Rock'n'Roll Music Association, but they came up short of the vote tally needed for induction.

Founding member, John Callahan, notes, "We're just a bunch of guys who enjoy getting together to play music. We have lots of good memories, and it's a blast that we can all get together once or twice a year to play." Callahan is the only band member that continues to reside in Humboldt. Bassist Mark Flanagan lives in Adel, lead guitarist John Brandsgard lives in Kansas City, drummer Ardie Strutzenberg in Owens Crossroads, AL, keyboardist Jon Porter in Henderson, NV, and rhythm guitarist Randy Berka in Davis, CA.

On Veterans Day 2007, the band

went to work at Junior's Motel recording studio in Otho to produce its first single entitled "Man of Steel," which is available on iTunes. The song is based on a poem entitled "Soldiers" written by civilian Army mechanic Matthew Lightfoot of Texas, to the buddies he left behind when he returned home in 2005. It is a musical tribute to US servicemen and women around the world and all proceeds from the recording have been donated to the Armed Forces Foundation. According to Callahan and Berka the band has booked additional studio time this summer with the goal of recording several more original tunes.