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Local Legends

Cleveland bands reunite to celebrate the Agora's 38th anniversary

By Anastasia Pansios

BUDDY MAVER FONDLY REMEMBERS Cleveland's music scene from 1965-1975. He was drummer/vocalist for the horn band the Charades, who later, as Charade, had a single, "And You Do," on Epic in 1970. His band Rainbow Canyon (1972-1975) recorded for Capitol. Both were big draws at the Agora back when local bands held down specific nights, when friends and fans would gather weekly to hear their favorite band and hang out.

Maver is celebrating that time with "Cleveland Legends 1965-1975," an evening he's put together at the Agora for those friends and fans. It's also a celebration of the club's 38th anniversary. The concert, which includes a lobby "meet and greet" with the bands and a souvenir program for each fan, is a spin-off of a private event Maver and his wife Carol have hosted annually for a decade. It started when he invited some of his old musician buddies to drop by his South Russell home for food, reminiscing and jamming.

"It's become a great opportunity for everybody to see each other," says Maver. "It's just friends getting up and playing with each other, laughing and joking and telling stories and eating and drinking."

Agora owner Henry LoConti was one of the frequent guests.

"He wanted to put something together to commemorate the 38th anniversary and asked, what do I think of duplicating it at the Agora," says Maver. "Henry is somebody that we all love, and he's been such a supporter of Cleveland music, I said, 'OK, let me make some calls.'"

The party's entertainment is a revolving jam session stretching through the afternoon and evening. Such a jam session will conclude the Agora show, featuring 18 players from such legendary Cleveland bands as the Twilighters, the Originals, Rastus, Tiny Alice and the Raspberries. The bill also includes five bands who were big draws at the Agora. And, though he's dubbed the show a celebration of the 1965-1975

era, only Joey and the Continentals, who later became the *Upbeat* TV show house band as the GTOs, and Maver's own Rainbow Canyon, really fit.

The other three bands, popular dance band Easy Street, rockers Wild Horses, whose "Funky Poodle" was a local hit in 1980, and prog rockers Fayrewether, known for their jaw-dropping renditions of Genesis tunes, were all huge in '80s. All three have held many reunions in the last decade. Maver says that getting the older bands together was trickier: egos, other gigs and distance interfered. But almost the original lineups of Rainbow Canyon (Raspberries guitar Wally Bryson will be replacing the unavailable Billy Hanna) and Joey and the Continentals will be on stage at the Agora.

"This reuniting is not as easy as it sounds," Maver says. "Even with Rainbow, 30 years later we had to sit and listen to our album to remember what parts we played, and then we actually had to dig out the parts and say, 'was that a G flat over D or was that an A minor over G sharp?'"

Joey Porrello of the Continentals moved to New Jersey in 1986. But he and the other members of his group will be reassembling in a Maple Heights rehearsal hall for several days prior to the show to work out their 30-minute set, which will

AGORA 38TH ANNIVERSARY

8 p.m., Saturday, June 12
Agora Theatre
5000 Euclid Ave.
216.881.2221
Tickets: \$15

feature all members from some point in the band's mid-'60s heyday.

"We had five local hits and we're going to do a medley," he says. "We're going to do some of our favorite songs that we actually started with, like 'Jenny Jenny Jenny,' like 'I Can't Help Myself,' like 'Pretty Woman,' 'Knock on Wood.' Those were all very popular songs."

The band was a big draw at the old Agora, where Porrello says they packed in 1,200 people one Thanksgiving eve. They also rented Gilmore Hall in Mayfield Heights every weekend to play non-drinking shows, and regularly drew 600-800 people to the Green Darby on Lakeshore Boulevard. Since he's no longer in town, Porrello doesn't run into those old fans often, but he's looking forward to seeing some of them at the Agora.

"My son works for a company [in Cleveland], and he says six or seven of the women that work in the office said they know Joey and the Continentals, and they're all going to be there," says Porrello. "So it'll be kind of exciting to see what kind of crowd we get." ■



JOEY & THE CONTINENTALS In their mid-'60s heyday.