

Paul Revere: Still Getting His Kicks

In March 1971, Paul Revere strapped a box of freshly pressed 45 singles on the back of his long-forked Harley Davidson and embarked on a four month journey across the United States, thundering his way to 300 radio stations as he promoted what would become his band's biggest hit, the four-million seller, "Indian Reservation." "I had a chopper with a long front wheel. It was black with an eagle on the gas tank and a tall sissy bar. It was nasty looking!" reflects Revere. "I did the southern route first, and then to the mid-west and from there headed north. I traveled back and forth across the country three times, ate a lot of bugs, lost about thirty pounds and really had an incredible time. It was like *Easy Rider!*" Entering his fifth decade in the music business, Revere continues the long dead sixties philosophy of taking your music to the masses and it's that same energy and spirit that fills the auditorium at every Paul Revere and The Raiders performance. All these years later, he's obviously still getting his *kicks* doing it.

A traveling minstrel since the early 60s, Revere would arrive unannounced at radio stations and charm his way into getting his record played on the radio. "I would knock on the door of a radio station and say, 'Hey, here I am, I'll do an interview. Here's my record, play it! So, it was one of those things where I was always promoting my own stuff."

His first band, The Downbeats, Idaho's only rock 'n' roll band, evolved into Paul Revere and the Raiders and they promptly began sailing their way through the 60s, riding a wave of success that saw them string together twenty consecutive hit singles and leave a trail of Gold Records and classic albums in their wake. Simple, concise songs featuring razor-sharp hooks and sing-along harmonies coupled with a hell-bent stage show helped them capture the exuberance of the era while leaving an indelible sonic thumbprint in the minds of an entire generation. Their music managed to cross their R&B roots with Garage inspired grit and was served within the framework of classic rock and roll while their lyrics covered themes that ranged from girls and authority to rebellion and war.

Audience interaction and one-of-a-kind stage shows have been key elements to the success of Paul Revere and the Raiders since the early sixties when torched pianos and acrobatic stage leaps were signature moves of their live performances. Today, the flaming pianos have been replaced with side-splitting humor directed by Revere while singer Carlos Driggs keeps up the tradition with a series of gravity-defying jumps and a vocal range that is as flexible as his limbs. Barely thirty seconds into their first song, guitarist Doug Heath and bassist Ron Foos bolt into the audience at the behest of ringleader Revere for an up close and personal meet-and-greet with the audience. Poking fun at his band members and himself, the show is peppered with stinging one-liners from Revere and hilarious repartee with his fellow musicians. "I treat being on stage like a backyard barbeque," says Revere. "I try to talk to the audience like I would if they were in my backyard or in my front room. We do it loose and off the wall yet we give them all the music."

Their set-list includes gems from their storied past like "Just Like Me" (#11 in '65), "Kicks" (# 4 in '66), "Hungry" (#6 in '66), "Ups and Downs" (#22 '67) and "Him or Me, What's it Gonna Be" (#5 67) along with covers of other classics that transport many in the audience back to the halcyon days of their youth and the soundtrack of their adolescence. "They enjoy hearing the music they grew up with and they enjoy hearing me relate to them and what we all grew up in and the fact that we're older now and so what!"

Equal parts music and humor, the prime objective of a Paul Revere and the Raiders concert is having a good time. "You can tell by watching our show that we have fun. This band has been with me an awful long time but we never get tired of doing our show because its never quite the same." Indeed, his band's most recent addition is vocalist Driggs, who has been with him for *only* 22 years, while drummer Omar Martinez, who does a fine vocal rendition of "Gimme Some Lovin'," has been a member for over thirty years. Both Foos and Heath have been with Revere for over twenty-five years while keyboardist Daniel Krause has been a Raider since 1980. The

longevity of their tenure alone is a testament to the obvious joy the quintet gets from playing to a crowd full of smiling faces for more than 100 live dates every year.

During the course of a performance it's not unusual for Revere to ask, "Are there any grandparents in the audience tonight?" Invariably, the answer is 'yes' and on most nights it's not unusual to see two or three generations enjoying the show. "We play Disney World and they bring their grandkids to see us," he relates. "We play festivals and state fairs and we'll see their sons and daughters. A lot of kids were raised on this old music. They were hearing it in the car and on the stereo at home. Even though they may have been into punk rock, they were familiar with the music of their parents which was basically the roots of rock and roll."

More than thirty years since his two-wheeled, one-man marketing campaign on a roaring motorcycle, he continues to bring his music to his fans. "I figured out where our fans went, and then I went to where they went. They were in places like Lake Tahoe, Reno, Vegas, places that we found we could draw a crowd. So, we survived. We didn't survive as being the hot group in the recording industry, but hey, been there, done that. We were lucky to have as long a recording career as we had. So I just figured it was time to enjoy life and take people that come to see us on a time-warp trip. If they want to hear the music they grew up with, then watching our show is like turning on an oldies station. It was just a simple matter of figuring out where your audience went and following them. And that's what I did. As long as they're not throwing dirt on me I know I'm OK!"
