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The Guess Who is a musical treat for all ages

Band promises an audience-friendly performance at Foellinger Outdoor Theatre

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel
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If you're a fan of pop radio over the last 40 years, those lyrics should sound familiar.

They come from the song "American Woman," which was a double-sided, No. 1 hit (along with the song "No Sugar Tonight") in May 1970 for The Guess Who — the

legendary Canadian rock group who will perform in concert Saturday at Foellinger Outdoor Theatre.

The Guess Who began their career in the mid-1960s in Canada but didn't hit it big in America until 1969, when their song "These Eyes" hit the Top 10 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

That was followed by several more hits, which included classic rock staples such as "Laughing," "Undun," "No Time," "Hand Me Down World," "Share the Land" and their final top-10 hit from 1974, "Clap for the Wolfman."

The Guess Who's music also enjoyed a mini-resurgence in 1999 when "American Woman" became a hit again after Lenny Kravitz covered it for the movie soundtrack for "Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me," exposing a new generation to the sound of The Guess Who.

Garry Peterson, Guess Who founding member and drummer, gave a taste of what these several generations of fans might expect to hear at the show Saturday:

"Mostly polkas," Peterson said with a laugh. "They'll expect to hear all the hits, which they will, and we do a couple of songs that are kind of deeper cuts off of the albums.

"We have a new song, not really a new song, but it was a song recorded by a very famous rock artist in the '50s ... it's a song by Little Richard, actually, called "Lucille," which is one of my all-time favorite rock 'n' roll songs."

"It's a great and fun show," he added. "Unlike the original band, this band is very audience-friendly, so that's even better."

Peterson said he's grateful he had the opportunity to play on such a wide range of musical styles displayed on The Guess Who's recordings. Because the group's writers were influenced by many genres, their music reflected those influences, which broadened their music considerably.

"I was amazed and humbled to have had the opportunity to play on all those records," Peterson said. "I listen to some of those records and say, 'Is that me playing?' There's some great music there that's not been heard."

"If you take 'These Eyes,' 'Undun,' 'No Time' and 'American Woman' — how many genres can that be?," he said. 'No Time' is almost like a West Coast country rock more like The Eagles. And that's because we were influenced and loved all the genres of music that came before us — country, jazz. You borrow from that as a writer."

Peterson is also glad technology has made it possible for fans young and old to have access to all of The Guess Who's material.

Other than several hit compilations, Peterson said the majority of the group's recordings have been unavailable for years. Looking back, he is astounded by the volume of music The Guess Who recorded and hopes people will rediscover it.

"Actually, a week ago, I discovered on iTunes that RCA or, I guess they're now BMG/Sony, has put them all out," he said. "They're all downloadable — every single album. Even the ones that weren't as popular.

"I have downloaded all of our own albums," he added. "I've paid for them and downloaded them, and on the aircraft when we're flying, I have taken to listening to them and studying them. It brings back a lot of memories.

"I'm hoping young people — or anybody, really — goes back and listens to some of the very, very inventive and interesting music we created that was nothing like



More Information

Keep guessing

What: The Guess Who in concert

When: 8 p.m. Saturday

Where: Foellinger Outdoor Theatre, 3411 Sherman Blvd.

Cost: \$25. For tickets or information, call 427-6000 or go to www.fortwayneparks.org on the Web.

Hear more:

Listen to audio excerpts of our interview with Garry Peterson, drummer and founding member of The Guess Who. Click the link with this story or click the link for Entertainment and then the link in the "Online Specials" box.

the singles and the popular hits that we put out.”

Even though he's proud of the music The Guess Who has recorded over the years and he's glad his career has lasted, Peterson said what's been the most satisfying part of his career is being able to perform in front of a live audience.

“For me, I guess, the longevity always gives you a platform,” Peterson said.

“But I think entertaining people is what it's all about. Live performance is perhaps for me one of the greatest things because you get the instant feedback from the audience of the kind of emotions that you are evoking in them, and that's what music does.”