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The Moody Blues stand test of time

Rock legends will share classic sound with local fans at the Embassy Theatre.

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel
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Listen to an interview with Graeme Edge of The Moody Blues

The Moody Blues, who'll perform in concert Sunday evening at the Embassy Theatre, hold a unique place in rock 'n' roll history. They are one of the few "British Invasion"-era bands to have their hit-making years begin in the early 1960s and stretch throughout the '70s and '80s.

From the bluesy ballad "Go Now," a hit from 1964-65, to the J.R.R. Tolkien-like atmosphere of the orchestra-filled epic "Nights in White Satin" from 1967 to the breezy synthesizer pop of "Gemini Dream" and "The Voice" from 1981, the Moody Blues' music has stood the test of time.

Graeme Edge, founding member and drummer, says fans who go to the show can expect a nice sampling of the classic Moody Blues sound.

"We'll be doing all the ... we call them the Big Five," Edge said in a telephone interview. "The songs we've got to do – otherwise we won't get out alive – (are) "Nights in White Satin," "Tuesday Afternoon," "I'm Just a Singer (in a Rock and Roll Band)," "I Know You're Out There Somewhere" and "Isn't Life Strange." We try and represent at least one song from each album."

The band began its career in 1964, initially sounding very much a part of the blues-based, British Invasion pop/rock of the early '60s. The band's sound changed course with its second album, "Days of Future Passed" – a moody concept album highlighted by "Nights in White Satin," which signaled the beginning of the progressive rock sound popular in the 1970s.

What was the impetus for this unexpected change in their sound?

"The fact that Decca (Records) gave us an orchestra," Edge said with laugh. "That, along with the fact that we got our hands on an instrument called a Mellotron. That was the first time you could make sounds that sounded like brass and strings and the orchestral parts from one sort of keyboard instrument, so it was available for us to take out on the road."

That fusion of elaborate orchestration with pop/rock became the trademark sound that defined the Moody Blues and resulted in a string of best-selling albums that included "In Search of the Lost Chord" (featuring the hit "Ride My See Saw"), "A Question of Balance" (featuring "The Question") and "Seventh Sojourn" (featuring "Isn't Life Strange" and "I'm Just a Singer (in a Rock and Roll Band)").

Asked which of these classic albums was his favorite, Edge said that changes.

"Obviously, of course, 'Days of Future Passed' will always be up there," Edge said, "but there was one particular album called 'Seventh Sojourn.' I was going through a divorce at the time and the album was associated with some bad stuff, and so I didn't really think about it or play it very much.

"And then Justin (Justin Hayward, Moody Blues singer and songwriter) did one of his 5.210 (5.1 surround sound mix) or whatever things that he does. And he sent it to me to have a listen to make sure that I agreed with what he did ... I hadn't listened to it for like seven or eight years. And I was sufficiently far away so that the music didn't remind me of certain emotional conditions. And I'm listening to it, and I thought, 'You know, this is not a bad album at all.' I really enjoyed listening. It's as close as I'm ever going to get to hearing a Moody Blues album for the first time."

Edge said the thing that amazes him most is the group's longevity and the fact they still enjoy performing as much as they ever did.

"It's great to get up there ... just getting up playing live to the people, I love it," Edge said. "Playing live is the thing I enjoy most on the planet, even better than golf.

"We know what we're doing. We know that most, if not all, of the audience has paid to come and see us. So they're on our side, you know what I mean, unless we really screw up. And I really enjoy giving them more than they expected.

"We try and make sure they're pleasantly surprised about how energetic and live and well-performed the show is – at least that's what I think."



More Information

They still rock

What: The Moody Blues in concert

When: 7:30 p.m. Sunday

Where: Embassy Theatre, 121 W. Jefferson Blvd.

Cost: \$43, \$53, \$63 and \$78; available at the Embassy box office, Ticketmaster outlets, www.ticketmaster.com, and 1-800-745-3000.

For more information, call 424-5665 or go to www.fwembassytheatre.org on the Web

