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Puckett brings rock hits, faves to Friday 3RF show

He's proud of the music he's made in 40-year career.

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel
 Monday, July 12, 2010 - 12:06 pm

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What goes through your mind when you hear these song titles "Young Girl," "Lady Willpower," "Woman, Woman"? How about "Over You" or "This Girl is a Woman Now"?

If you can hum the chorus to any of these songs, you're probably a fan of Gary Puckett and the Union Gap, who created all those hits in the 1960s.

Gary Puckett will take the stage Friday night at Foellinger Outdoor Theatre, and he promises fans can expect to hear not only all of his and the Union Gap's biggest hits, but also a sampling of some of his favorite music by other artists.

"We base much of the show around the Union Gap itself," Puckett said. "All of the hits are included, at least the majority of them. We also like to stretch out once in awhile and do something that's from my past. Something that I would have loved a lot, like Dion and the Bellmoms or Roy Orbison or Elvis, that kind of thing."

From 1967 to 1970, Gary Puckett and the Union Gap were one of the hottest acts in the music business. Their first record "Woman, Woman" hit the top 10 in 1967 and, even though it wasn't their most successful song, it remains a favorite for Puckett and one he takes pride in.

"I thought it was a great record to begin with," Puckett said. "To me, it has withstood the test of time, the other hits as well, but that one in particular to me is a fine song, a wonderful record, and I'm very proud of that entry into the marketplace at that point and time."

That point and time, the late 1960s, was a very fast-paced and hectic period for Puckett. He, along with the Union Gap, had four consecutive top-10 hits within a single year — November 1967 to September 1968.

Even though it was sometimes overwhelming, he still has fond memories of recording at the Columbia Records studios in New York while making those songs. He marvels at the legendary artists and producers he had the opportunity to meet.

"I can see the people themselves," Puckett said. "I can see the elements of the recording studio. It was an exciting time, an overwhelming time at times. It was a fun time to be in the studio.

"You often times had anybody from Paul Revere and the Raiders in there, Sly and the Family Stone, Janis Joplin; anybody working that was a Columbia recording artist — Barbra Streisand, producers, Richard Perry, people like that.

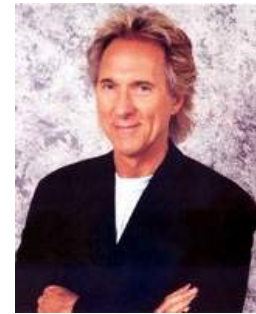
"It often times was a privilege to be able to walk into the control booth and sit there with somebody like Richard, who might have at that moment been working on an album with Barbra Streisand, so those were very fond memories."

While reminiscing about the past, Puckett also had fond memories of some of the people he worked with in the studio. "Every moment is different," Puckett said about hearing his music now on the radio. "I usually think, 'Isn't this great.' I'm hearing something that I did, seems like so many years ago, and yet those records still sound great ... It makes me sometimes think of the great team of people that I worked with, our producer in particular, who was a talented singing, songwriting, producing guy — Jerry Fuller."

"Jerry's philosophy in the beginning was let's find something that's a hit for this singer and this band and then let's make an album around that. Often times he would include songs that were on their way up the charts or he felt would soon be on their way up the charts so, when we had a fan base out there, they would say, 'Gee, I'd like to hear Gary Puckett and the Union Gap doing 'Honey,' for instance, or 'Kiss Me Goodbye' or something like that."

With a career that's lasted more than 40 years, Puckett is not only satisfied with the length of his career and the quality of his music but also of the friends he's made along the way. He considers himself to be a fortunate guy in all aspects of his life.

"It's satisfying to look at the body of work and say 'Gosh, there's some good stuff there,'" he said. "It's also satisfying to realize that you made fans and friends along the way, and they remain fans and friends. ... Life has treated me well."



More Information

Good-time rock

What: Gary Puckett in concert.

When: 8 p.m. Friday

Where: Foellinger Outdoor Theatre, 3400 block of Sherman Boulevard

Cost: \$15. For more information, call 427-6000 or go to www.fortwayneparks.org.

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To hear audio excerpts of James Grant's interview with Gary Puckett, go www.news-sentinel.com. Click the link in the "Online Specials" box or the link with this story.

