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'70s hitmaker Three Dog Night will be in town for a sold-out concert

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel
 Thursday, August 20, 2009 - 10:55 am

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 Danny Hutton of Three
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Do you remember who recorded the song "Joy to the World"? You know, the one that begins "Jeremiah was a bullfrog, was a good friend of mine." Stumped? How about "One," "An Old-Fashioned Love Song," "Black & White," "Liar" or "Mama Told Me (Not to Come)" – just to name six of the 21 consecutive top-40 hits that this band recorded.

If you still don't remember who created all of those radio staples, the answer arrives Friday evening when Three Dog Night performs at a sold-out concert at Foellinger Outdoor Theatre in Franke Park.

Three Dog Night's career began in the late 1960s when founding members Danny Hutton, Cory Wells and Chuck Negron joined forces to create one of the most successful bands (and vocal blends) of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The group's hits featured songs written by a host of then little-known songwriters, such as Randy Newman, Harry Nilsson, Laura Nyro and Leo Sayer, each of whom went on to have successful careers as performers themselves.

One of Three Dog Night's first recording projects together was under the name Redwood and consisted of two songs written and produced by Beach Boys legend Brian Wilson.

"I still work with Brian," Hutton said in a telephone interview. "I was a solo act in like 1965, and I had a couple of regional hits and one was a hit in L.A. called 'Roses and Rainbows.' So I get a phone call from the record company (Rhino Records) — they have me on the Nuggets box set ('Where the Action is! Los Angeles Nuggets 1965-1968') that's coming out on Sept. 22, so they asked me to come down to the record store (Amoeba Music), the one where McCartney played. So I'm going to sing there backed up by the Wondermints, Brian's band."

Three Dog Night's successful recording and concert career blazed until around 1976, when the pace of constant recording and touring took its toll on the group members and they parted ways. Chuck Negron suffered through a drug addiction that strained his relationship with the band that lasts to this day — he doesn't currently tour or record with Three Dog Night.

The three founding members did regroup briefly in the early 1980s, but last recorded together in 1983. Hutton and Wells have toured frequently since then as Three Dog Night and are currently recording a new album.

"We've got seven songs done," Hutton said. "Our original producer and our engineer — the original guys that we did all our hits with — (are producing). Actually, we're doing half of it at my house. I've got a studio here. I live in Laurel Canyon in Hollywood, up in the hills. I bought actually Alice Cooper's old house."

"We have something on the new album, it's kind of a teaser, I guess," he said. "I can't tell you too much, except in 40 years we never did what we did on this album on this one song. I'm excited. Doing it live is dangerous, too, so look for it, it's very interesting."

Hutton feels the concert experience has undergone some changes, too: The music's the same, but the pace is different.

"We do mainly one-nighters like we did in the old days, so that much is the same," he said. "I guess mainly it was just very, very hectic then. We would go out on these long tours for months and come back and immediately have to do picture sessions and meetings ... so every day was taken up. Now I go out on a Thursday and come home maybe on a Sunday, so it's not as tiring."

While it was hard for Hutton to single out a favorite Three Dog Night recording, he recently has been listening to some older albums reissued on compact disc, and he rediscovered how good Three Dog Night sounded as a group.

"I mean, I liked them. I really thought they were really, really good — a good sound," he said.



More Information

'70s classics

What: Three Dog Night in concert

When: 8 p.m. Friday. The concert is sold out.

Where: Foellinger Outdoor Theatre, off Sherman Boulevard in Franke Park

Learn more

To learn more about Three Dog Night, go to:

◆ www.threedognight.com: the band's Web site

◆ www.negron.com: Chuck Negron's Web site