



ELECTRIC SIDESHOW

By Joe Collins

*If my words did glow with the gold of sunshine,
And my tunes were played on the harp unstrung,
Would you hear my voice come through the music,
Would you hold it near as it were your own?*

“Ripple”, *The Grateful Dead*

Two things are almost guaranteed when you go to see *Electric Sideshow* play: someone in the crowd will most certainly shout out a request for *Free Bird* and the band just as certainly will not play it. Not that the band does not appreciate the song or the artist (Lynrd Skynrd, but you knew that, right?). It’s just that *Free Bird*, and a lot of other standard bar-band FM-radio-replicating fare is simply not their style. What exactly is their style is a little challenging to nail down; but I can tell you from first-hand experience that it is definitely unique,

refreshing, and a whole lot of fun.

“We do a ton of covers,” Brian Webb, the band’s drummer explains

quietly. “We originally started as a *Grateful Dead* tribute band. But once Casey and I got into the band we got into



Bob Rankin

Brian Webb

Casey Bishop

doing a lot of other bands like Tom Petty, Bob Dylan, just old classic rock and stuff like that.”

The Casey he refers to is Casey Bishop, *Electric Sideshow's* equally soft spoken and modest young bass player, who nods his head in agreement as Brian defines the band's style.

“We play stuff we like,” Casey adds. “We don't really get a lot of the good gigs that other people will get because they play top 40 music and what's on the radio. We've never been like that. We always play what we want to play and we're not going to compromise for anybody. We've got friends in other bands and they only play material that they know will get them gigs. It's not stuff that they like but they do it well and that's ok for them, we will just never do that.”

Aside from the band's founder, James Drake, Brian and Casey have been with the band the longest. Brian was born and raised in Lenexa and lives there now with his wife and two young children and his entire extended family.

“Every last one of them!” he boasts with a smile.

Brian can still vividly recall the day he fell in love with the drums. “The first time I saw or played a drum set was the day before my 15th birthday. A friend of mine had a kit and I played it because no one else wanted to play it. I bought my own kit six months later and I have played ever since. My grandparents had a garage that was halfway empty so I just set them up and played rather than go out and be social.”

Brian met Casey when they both attended Lafayette High School, though their musical collaboration didn't really take off until a few years later. Casey was born in Newport News and lived there until he was ten when his family moved to Mooretown Road in Lightfoot.

“I am actually now living in the house that I first moved to,” Casey says, adding that he and his wife have a 16 month old baby daughter. “My dad remarried since my mom passed away and he left the house for me and my wife so I moved back into it.”

Casey has had an eclectic background when it comes to playing music. “I started in the

sixth grade at Toano Middle School playing trombone. Then in my 7th grade year I went to tuba cause nobody wanted to play it,” he recalls, grinning as he explains his secret motivation. “It was easy to be number one if you're the only person playing so I switched to tuba and I did real well with that. I made all district band from 7th grade to 12th grade and I was 13th in Virginia in my 11th and 12th grade years on the tuba.”

Casey began his love affair with his current instrument, the bass guitar, in the 8th grade.

“Again, it was because nobody wanted to play bass guitar in this jazz band and that was an open position so I picked it up,” he explains.

Like many bands, *Electric Sideshow* has evolved over time with numerous personnel changes and a band name change. It was originally an acoustic group that Brian met through a mutual friend. When the group realized their bass player wasn't working out, the stage was set for Casey to join the band.

Other musicians came and went and even now they may appear as a three piece, four piece,

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or five piece band depending on the availability of their bandmates. James Drake, the lead vocalist and rhythm guitar player, was not present the night I watched them play but his influence is definitely felt in the band.

As Casey puts it, "I see James as kind of the leader from a musical standpoint because he is kind of like an encyclopedia as far as music goes. We can go to him with any question about music and he'll have the answer. I look to him as far as stability in the band."

Also absent was their occasional keyboard player, Eric Shaw, who plays in multiple bands and was in Atlanta playing a gig.

A recent and highly respected addition to the band is Bob Rankin, the lead guitarist and another lead vocalist. Bob is the father of a 10 and 6 year old and lives in Norfolk but faithfully treks to Williamsburg when duty calls.

"We picked up Bob and that was a great find

for us," Brian tells us enthusiastically. "Just because he has a great love of music. He's a great



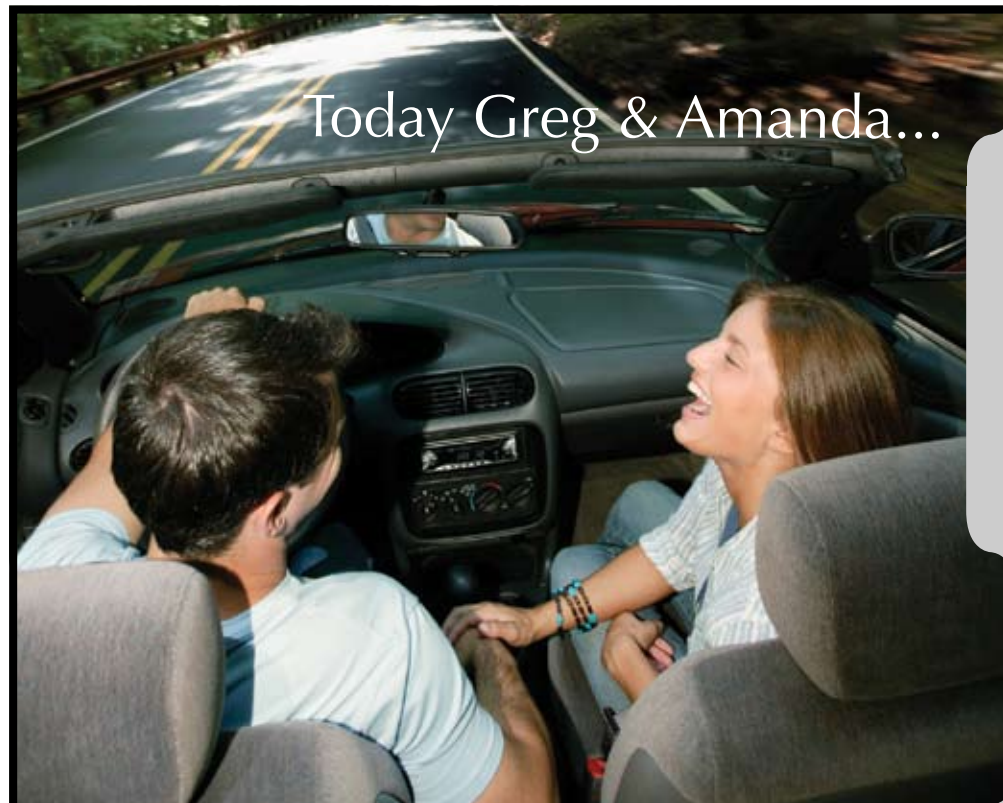
Brian and Casey, local members of Electric Sideshow, get the music started at J.M. Randalls.

player and he has fun and that's hard but very good to find."

Casey echoes those sentiments. "Bob is an

older cat and he's been around the music business for a long time and he has ended up playing with a lot of people. The first time he came to practice we pretty much knew we had found the guy we wanted. He was the first guy we interviewed. We knew it was going to be a long and painful process playing with people who were

horrible. But then Bob could sing and play and he already knew the material basically and it worked out great for us. We were forced to find



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somebody quick and we found Bob and it was a great find for us."

For his part, Bob, an extremely personable and charming artist who opens his part of the interview with a self-deprecating joke about middle-aged, underachieving artists, brings a lot of varied experience to the band. He plays the guitar, mandolin, peddle steel, banjo, bass guitar, drums and: "Anything that a working musician does in this business which is basically just prostitution with strings," he says jokingly.

Bob's career in music has been diverse and plentiful. "I started playing professionally in 1981 when I moved to Nashville from Columbus, OH," Bob begins. "I worked with a lot of nobodies and a few somebodies throughout the course of things. I was in Nashville for ten years when I got involved with a company called Pacific Light and Sound and moved to northern California. I traveled doing light and sound for the *Grateful Dead* and when I wasn't hauling boxes around I still did music myself."

Bob moved to the Tidewater area 14 years ago and immediately became immersed in the music scene here. He now plays in multiple bands that play a variety of genres of music and it keeps him moving.

"Almost every weekend if I am not sick I have been playing somewhere" he admits, "I've even done a lot of work with several groups that play USO things and I get to go and play club Riyadh and got to Iceland and play Reykjavik or wherever. And that's a fun thing to go play for people who are really grateful to get that human contact."

Personnel changes aside, Brian and Casey say that after six years of playing together they have settled into knowing how to play together well and they have definitely grown. "We're much better musicians; we know more music," Brian declares. Casey adds "We're overall better talented now."

It is evident when the three play together they are truly devoted to their craft. Because of that, with every performance there is a potential advanced lesson in how to jam. During one much deserved break in the performance I enjoyed, Brian and Casey confessed that Bob had led them on more than one song that night that they had never played before. It was surprising to learn because it was not apparent to me and I doubt anyone in the audience picked up on it either.

The night I saw them perform they were a group that knew their stuff and loved playing together. As for their style, I think I could write 20 pages trying to describe it - or maybe just tell you how they opened their set. They started with "Beautifully Broken" by Government Mule, segued into "When Doves Cry" by Prince, and finished up with Bob Dylan's "Tangled Up in Blue". And that was a *medley* - not just the first three songs of their set. It was amazing. The music flowed like that all night: unpredictable and unassuming, just a great little rock and roll trio playing their hearts out. Even as I struggle to describe their music I realize I can never do this local gem of a band justice with the written word. I recommend you see *Electric Sideshow* perform yourself. Just do everyone a favor. Don't request "Free Bird"! NDN

Electric Sideshow will be performing again at J.M. Randall's at 4854 Longhill Road on these upcoming dates: February 19th and March 24th.
To listen to some of their music, visit: www.myspace.com/electricsideshow

Lance Pedigo

Local Drummer Performs in Venues around the World

By Sara E. Lewis



Local artist, Lance Pedigo is on his way to Sydney, Australia, for the 60th anniversary performance of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Lance will be Drum Major, leading the Middlesex County Volunteers Fifes and Drums, a group of adult performers from the Boston area that formed a Fifes and Drums regiment based on the Colonial Williamsburg Fifes and Drums model.

“I’ve been very happy with life as it has developed for me musically,” says Lance. He has good reason to be content. He is able to use his creative talents in his life’s work.

“I consider myself lucky to make a living doing what I love,” says Lance.

Lance is one of four musicians who train, drill, and supervise area youth as they pass through the ranks of Colonial Williamsburg’s

Fifes and Drums. Although he’s been supervising them for nearly two decades, Lance first joined the corps as a recruit in 1972 at the age of nine and went on to graduate as Sergeant Major in 1981.

He credits his mother for making the first music connection for him. When he was seven, she arranged for him to take drum lessons with George Carol, head of the Colonial Williams-



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By Mike Hu

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burg Fifes and Drums at that time. When Carol left, Lance continued lessons with leader Rodney Edmondson. Finally, Lance took private lessons from Fifes and Drums manager, John Moon.

"From there it went like that," said Lance, holding his palms close and moving them apart in a wide "V". At Bruton High School, he played in the band and competed to win honors. He broadened his musical form by learning to play drum set with local jazz performer, Chubby Hill. Lance also played ompa music at Busch Gardens and enjoyed a number of other performances in different cities: as a member of the All American Marching Band he performed at Walt Disney World, the 1984 Olympics, Ronald Reagan's Inauguration, and the Statue of Liberty re-dedication.

When the All American Band traveled to New York to perform, he decided to stay a while. Lance packed his belongings inside a drum and when he stepped onto the tour bus, he knew he would not return home right away. "I wanted to be where musicians live and work," he says.

Next, he moved to New Orleans and played with a Dixieland band. He later performed on a cruise ship before finding his way back to Williamsburg. In 1991, Lance came full circle. He took a job with the Colonial Williamsburg Fifes and Drums while also offering private drum lessons to young men eager to learn the instrument.

With such an array of experience and musician-friends, it's not too surprising that he's still growing. Lance keeps a busy schedule playing with several local groups.

Along with other Fife and Drum alumni, he formed the Celtic-inspired group, *Poisoned Dwarf*. Members of klezmer band, *Bagels and Fraylox*, asked him to join them and he has also learned their traditional style. At Williamsburg's First Night, *Poisoned Dwarf* and *Bagels and Fraylox* have played in the same concert space on alternating hours. The two groups got together on the final set. "We call it Poisoned Bagels," says Lance. "The common thread is that they play jigs and reels and the hora and other dance music or music that is meant to be interacted with."

One thing leads to another, and now Lance is playing with Stephen Cristoff, a Colonial Williamsburg mandolin player and singer. Stephen and Lance were talking one day and decided, "Let's do something together." Lance says that's the way most music relationships have progressed. "I'm friendly, I'm nice, and I usually don't say 'no'."

One of Lance's favorite memories was when he was performing during Queen Elizabeth's visit for the 400th Anniversary of Jamestown. Lance performed just a few feet away from her. "You're not supposed to look into the Queen's eyes," he says. "But I was supposed to look straight ahead and I was staring right at her face."

"Life's good; I'm honored to do these things," he says. Lance encourages the young people he works with to take advantage of as many life and music experiences as they can. His zest for life is certainly a reflection of his mother's supportive attitude and consistent encouragement. Vicky Pedigo, Rawls Byrd School librarian, has enjoyed Lance's career almost as much as he has.

"She's been to 95 percent of my performances," said Lance. And that's a lot. NDN