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Poco takes stage in Van Wert

Concert is Saturday with Firefall, Pure Prairie League.

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel
 Thursday, September 17, 2009 - 12:01 am

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— From "Crazy Love," written by Rusty Young and performed by Poco

Poco holds a special place in American popular music as one of the pioneers of the California "country-rock" sound. That style of music, a blending of country and rock music, spawned the mega-successful group The Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Pure Prairie League. It also generated some of Poco's biggest hits — "Crazy Love" (A No. 1 adult contemporary hit in 1979), "Heart of the Night" and "Call It Love."

If you want to try a sampling of that smooth, laid-back sound, you can catch the Poco/Firefall/Pure Prairie League concert at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center of Northwest Ohio in Van Wert.

Poco began in 1968 when former Buffalo Springfield members Richie Furay and Jim Messina (later of Loggins and Messina fame) formed the group in California. The original group also included steel guitarist and songwriter Rusty Young, drummer George Grantham and bassist Randy Meisner, who later left and joined The Eagles.

Oddly enough, Timothy B. Schmidt replaced Meisner in Poco and then, when Meisner left The Eagles, Schmidt left Poco to replace him - and remains a member of The Eagles to this day.

Founding Poco member Rusty Young still tours with the band and says people who go to the show in Van Wert can expect at least an hour of classic Poco songs.

"Generally in a show like that, it's a 60-minute set, so it's not the 90-minute set we usually play," Young said. "In the set, I guarantee you we'll do most of the songs that people who come to a concert expect to hear — 'Rose of Cimarron,' 'Crazy Love,' 'Heart of the Night,' 'Bad Weather,' 'A Good Feelin' to Know' — the classic Poco songs."

Young wrote Poco's biggest hit, "Crazy Love." Asked if he preferred songwriting to performing, he couldn't decide.

"They're ... so different; they both have their own rewards," Young said. "Songwriting is a lot of fun when it works. When it's good, it's just great, it's something that I really enjoy. And performing live is terrific because we get to meet the Poco nuts out there, meet our friends. It's always a great environment to play music in. Especially these summer outdoors things, they're a lot of fun that we do, so I enjoy both of them."

Young said he tries to keep up with technology, such as providing downloads of their songs on their Web site, and offers his services as a player via the Web as well.

"We have on our Web site — it's called Sessioncats," Young said. "And if someone's interested in having me play on their CD, they can go to our Web site at Sessioncats (www.sessioncats.com) and, from there, you can navigate through getting me to play on your CD. And we do it all though MP3's and through the Internet ... I've done projects for America and a lot of European stuff and Richie Furay, our old comrade."

Even though past group members, such as Messina and Schmidt, have had very successful careers beyond Poco, they still have a comradeship and occasionally perform with the band.

"Yes, a couple of times this year," Young said. "It's really rare that Tim does, but, this spring, Tim did a show with us — Tim and Richie and Jimmy all did a show together — a festival in California called the Stagecoach. And then we just got through doing three shows in New York with Loggins and Messina, and Richie and Jimmy both played with Poco on those shows as well. There's a number of shows during the year that we play together."

After 40 years of writing and performing, Young finds people's reaction to his music the most satisfying part of his job.

"When people come up to us after a concert and tell us about how our music has ... affected their lives ... , that's the most rewarding thing," Young said. "To know that you've had a positive impact on people's lives and that what you've done has meant something."



More Information

Catch the show

What: The groups Poco, Firefall and Pure Prairie League in concert.

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Niswonger Performing Arts Center of Northwest Ohio, 10700 Ohio 118 South, Van Wert, Ohio

Cost: \$20-\$45

Information: Call 1-419-238-6722 or go to www.npacvw.org/ on the Web.

More Poco

To listen to James Grant's full interview with Rusty Young of Poco or to see the group perform "Crazy Love," go to www.news-sentinel.com. Click on Entertainment and then the link for this story.

