

Bob Kerr



Hard Reign puts the music on a mission

01:00 AM EDT on Wednesday, August 20, 2008

Back when I first wrote about Hard Reign in 1981, I loved the fact that lead singer Frank Laureanno could, if the situation demanded, sing “Feelings” in Portuguese. It showed a certain creative flexibility. Frank was a rock ’n’ roll guy, but sometimes there was a payday to be had with a musical downshift and a wardrobe change.

Hard Reign was, and is, a Fall River band. Laureanno and his brother, Mike, Scott Oliver and Scott Botelho rehearsed in the basement of the Laureannos’ house on Friendship Street. Jeanne and Frank Laureanno Sr. were very understanding.

In fact, it was at that house earlier this year that Frank Sr. told Frank Jr. that he’d like to see the band get back together. It has been more than 25 years since they last played, more than 25 years since day jobs became unavoidable and band members went their separate ways.

Hard Reign had had its dreams and its near misses and those really bad nights when the band played for the door and didn’t cover gas money. Back in 1981, it had an original song, “Back To You,” on a compilation album called Southern New England’s Best Rock and it was headed for a gig at The Channel in Boston.

But Hard Reign never broke out.

“It was at the crossroads,” says Jim Cooney, the band’s manager and a songwriter. “Life got in the way.”

The band took a quarter century off and then some. When it appears at White’s of Westport in Westport, Mass., on Saturday, it will have less hair and will feature an electrical engineer (Mike Laureanno) on keyboards, a pipefitter (Oliver) on drums, and a math teacher (Botelho) on bass. Frank Laureanno, guitar and vocals, works at Holsum Bakery in Fall River.

Cooney is president and CEO of a media buying and marketing company.

On Saturday, they’ll be Hard Reign for maybe 12 more songs and for a very good cause. They’ve been rehearsing. Mike Laureanno, who said he hadn’t seen Oliver or Botelho since 1982, admits he wasn’t quite sure if the music would still be there after all those years.

“When my brother called me and said Dad wants us to get back together I said, ‘You gotta be kidding me. We haven’t played in 27 years. The calluses are gone.’ ”

Appropriately, the members of Hard Reign got back together over a huge Portuguese feed at the Laureannos’ house. They did some catching up. Some of them had left Hard Reign but not the music. Mike Laureanno is a folk performer and also a member of the Jack Hardy Band. Oliver plays with the classic rock band The Water Buffalos.

And they talked, over all that good chow Jeanne Laureanno had prepared, about getting back to being what they had been in the early ’80s. For one night only.

Just a few weeks later, they were presented with a very good reason for a reunion. Brandon Cusick, Mike and Frank’s 5-year-old great nephew, was diagnosed with leukemia.

“We had a mission,” says Mike.

So this one will be for Brandon. And it will be one of those nights when all kinds of people might stop by at White’s to play some music and look back over a decade or two or three.

Tickets are \$20 and will be available at the door. They can be ordered by calling (401) 823-0265 or (401) 751-1647.

The music should start around 7:15. Hard Reign will be joined by Satellite, another local band reuniting for the benefit.

Satellite was Frank Laureanno’s first band, the one with whom he sang “Feelings.”

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