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THURSDAY, July 15, 2004

Features Editor, SUE LORENZ, 429-2400, Ext. 210

# Let's party

Venetian Festival kicks off today with a full weekend of entertainment on tap

By H-P STAFF

Music will be practically nonstop during this year's Venetian Festival. Wherever people wander in downtown St. Joseph during the Venetian Festival, they're likely to hear some type of music to suit their taste.

They will find the best of local musicians on the bluff, internationally known bands on Whirlpool Field, and rock 'n' roll legends in Shadowland Pavilion and along the St. Joseph River. "We did try very hard to get a wide variety for all age groups," said festival director Barb Stelter. "We really feel we have hit this year with country, rock, the Cryan' Shames and the big band dance with the Tim Milo orchestra. Our focus is to have something for all age groups and all musical tastes."

Stelter thinks the entertainment is among the best in the festival's 26-year history.

"We have an excellent line-up this year, with Three Dog Night, Better Than Ezra and Trick Pony, all in one weekend."

The festival kicks off today and continues through Sunday.

Tonight's entertainment includes the Tom Milo big band at Whitcomb Tower, Johnny's Little Rocket Ship at Shadowland Pavilion and the Cryan' Shames on the River Stage.

Headlining the festival entertainment are Three Dog Night, Lou Gramm's Foreigner, Blue Oyster Cult, Better Than Ezra, Trick Pony, Cryan' Shames, the Grifters and the Controls. Their music ranges from rock 'n' roll to country and everything in between.

Blue Oyster Cult will perform at 9:15 p.m. Friday at the Shadowland Pavilion. The group has carved out a unique place in music history as a rock band earning mainstream critical acclaim and commercial success. Its self-titled debut album, released in 1972, set off decades of hit record making, including "Godzilla," "I Love the Night" and "Black and Blue." The

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Contributed photo  
**THE ELECTRIC LADYBUGS** will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday at Shadowland Pavilion during the Venetian Festival. Band members are (from left) Joel Hirsch, Big Dave and St. Joseph native Aaron Strebs.

The Herald-Palladium

SECTION

# Entertainment D



**THREE DOG NIGHT** will rock the Beach Stage beginning at 9 p.m. Friday, the group released its first album in 1968 and had its first Top Ten hit – a version of Harry Nilsson's "One" – a year later.

## Three Dog Night to howl at the beach

By **TODD R. BROWN**  
H-P Copy Editor

Almost 23 years after Three Dog Night released its Top Five single "Never Been to Spain," founding singer Danny Hutton said he still hasn't visited the Iberian Peninsula.

"That's up to our booking agent," Hutton said, laughing. "I would love to go."

One place Hutton and the rest of the band can say they've been to after Friday is St. Joseph. The group is scheduled to play at the Venetian Festival on the Beach stage at 9 that night.

"I don't want to sound egotistical," Hutton said by phone from his home in the Laurel Canyon area of the Hollywood Hills, "but when people see us, we kick ass. We're a big, loud rock 'n' roll group. We sing and play like we always did."

Hutton, who immigrated to Boston from Ireland as a child and then at age 12 moved to "the poor part of Hollywood," as he put it, sang as a solo performer in Los Angeles in the mid '60s before becoming part of Three Dog Night.

Three Dog Night released its first album in 1968 and had a Top Ten hit the following year with a version of Harry Nilsson's "One."

The group, centered on the harmony singing of trio Hutton, Chuck Negron and Cory Wells, disbanded in 1977, having scored 21 Top 40 hits. Among them were the Number One songs

"Black and White," "Mama Told Me (Not to Come)" and "Joy to the World" with its famous opening lyric,

"Jeremiah was a bullfrog." The group reunited in 1980 and has been performing on and off ever since, though Negron is no longer

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**BETTER THAN EZRA** will bring its pop-rock sound to Shadowland Pavilion at 9:15 p.m. Saturday.

## Better Than Ezra aims to keep fans happy

Louisiana-based group to play at Shadowland

By **TODD R. BROWN**  
H-P Copy Editor

The alternative-rock revolution roared into being with Nirvana's multi-platinum-selling "Nevermind" album in 1991 and ended with a whimper when sales began tapering off for three- and four-piece, angst-ridden bands in the late '90s.

In-between was Better Than

Ezra, a New Orleans based, pop-rock group that scored a hit in 1995 with the radio-friendly single "Good" from the band's debut CD, "Deluxe." The next year the group had another hit with "King of New Orleans" from its sophomore album, "Friction, Baby."

The band, which plays the Venetian Festival's Shadowland

Pavilion Stage at 9:15 p.m. Saturday, hasn't been very high on the charts or much on the airwaves since. Instead its members have been keeping busy playing live for hardcore fans.

Better Than Ezra plans to have a compilation of hit singles and unreleased songs out by Christmas and hopes to release a DVD of a concert taped in August at New Orleans' House of Blues club sometime in the fall to coincide with a national tour.

In 2001 the band released its most recent CD, "Closer," on now-defunct Beyond Music. The DVD will include a documentary by a Chicago film student of that album's supporting tour.

"I think we made our best record with that last record," said bassist Tom Drummond by phone from his home in the Garden District neighborhood of New Orleans. "Unfortunately, the record company went

belly up.

"I think the one we're working on now will be even better. We don't really like making the same record twice."

Drummond, who recently turned 35 ("I'm going to have to start counting backwards," he joked), said the band – which includes founding member and singer and guitarist Kevin Griffin and drummer Travis McNabb – is evolving by incorporating new sounds into its palette and collaborating with local musicians.

"Sometimes we'll sit in with friends at the Mermaid Lounge or Carrollton Station," Drummond said.

"We've had Mark Mullins – he's a great trombone player. He's played on almost all our records. He's in a band called Mulebone."

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**TRICK PONY** will bring its hot country sound to Shadowland Pavilion at 3:30 p.m. Sunday.

## VENETIAN

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of the charts. The singles "On A Night Like This" and "Just What I Do" were just as successful.

The group was named the Favorite New Country Artist by American Music Awards in 2001 and the Top New Vocal Group by the Academy of Country music.

Admission to the concerts at the Beach Stage and Shadowland Pavilion require a gate pass for \$10 for one day or \$20 for the weekend. Children 10 and younger will be admitted free. Admission to other festival venues is free. For more information, call 983-7917.

<p><b>Shadowland Pavilion</b> <b>THURSDAY</b> 8 p.m. Johnny's Little Rocket Ship</p> <p><b>FRIDAY</b> 7:30 p.m. Seventieth Sunday 9:15 p.m. Blue Oyster Cult 10:50 p.m. Blue Oyster Cult</p> <p><b>SATURDAY</b> 7 p.m. Piston Hurricane 8 p.m. Electric Ladybugs 9:15 p.m. Better Than Ezra</p> <p><b>SUNDAY</b> 1 p.m. TBA 1:45 p.m. Brad Tyler 3:30 p.m. Trick Pony</p> <p><b>River Stage</b> <b>THURSDAY</b> 7:30 p.m. Cryan' Shames</p> <p><b>FRIDAY</b> 6 p.m. Piston Hurricane 8 p.m. A.J. Draper &amp; Co. 8 p.m. EZ Prey 9 p.m. The Grifters</p> <p><b>SATURDAY</b> 5:30 p.m. Groovatron 6:45 p.m. Mudcat Society 8 p.m. Cherri and The Violators 9:15 p.m. The Controls</p> <p><b>SUNDAY</b> 1 p.m. Reconciliation 1:45 p.m. LM Christian Center Worship Band 2:30 p.m. Chris Spitters Band</p> <p><b>Beach Stage</b> <b>FRIDAY</b> 7:30 p.m. Blind Sided 9 p.m. Three Dog Night</p> <p><b>SATURDAY</b> 6:30 p.m. TBA 8 p.m. The Board Band 9:15 p.m. Lou Gramm's Foreigner</p> <p><b>Municipal Band Shell</b> <b>SUNDAY</b> 3:30 p.m. Municipal Band Concert 7:30 p.m. Municipal Band Concert</p> <p><b>State Street</b> <b>SATURDAY</b> Noon to 6 p.m. State Street Rhythms</p>	<p>Noon. Little Frank and the Premiers 2 p.m. Jumpin Gene's Blues Band 4 p.m. Jim Cooper Quartet</p> <p><b>On the Bluff</b> <b>THURSDAY</b> <b>Pleasant Street</b> 5 to 7 p.m. Kaolin Maize 7 to 9 p.m. Wood N Nickle</p> <p><b>Ship Street</b> 5 to 9 p.m. Ande's Cosmos</p> <p><b>FRIDAY</b> <b>Broad Street</b> 5 to 9 p.m. Ande's Cosmos</p> <p><b>Near Broad Street</b> 6 to 7 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. Barclay's Gymnastics</p> <p><b>Pleasant Street</b> 5 to 6 p.m. A.J. Draper and Co. 6 to 7 p.m. Noah Privett 7 to 8 p.m. Laurie Howard 8 to 9 p.m. Dramatic Shift</p> <p><b>SATURDAY</b> <b>Broad Street (in conjunction with Curious Kids' Museum)</b> 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Deep Fried Pickle Project 1 to 2 p.m. Bev Smith 2 to 3 p.m. Katie Richie 3 to 4 p.m. Bev Smith 4 to 5 p.m. Katie Richie</p> <p><b>Pleasant Street</b> 11 to 11:30 a.m. Kitty Ellis</p>	<p>11:30 a.m. to noon. Virginia Stewart Noon to 12:30 p.m. Adam Maly 12:30 to 1 p.m. Taylor Clark 1 to 2 p.m. Jackie Schultz 2 to 3 p.m. Judy Scott 3 to 4 p.m. Ty Maxon 4 to 5 p.m. Venita Sekema 5 to 6 p.m. Rob Kenagy and Jeff Schiman 6 to 7 p.m. Hurt Me, Tommy 7 to 8 p.m. Digimshift 8 to 9 p.m. Trestle Freeform Ensemble</p> <p><b>Ship Street</b> 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Ande's Cosmos</p> <p><b>Whitcomb</b> 1 to 2 p.m. Dance Arts 2 to 3 p.m. Connie Cassidy 3 to 3:30 p.m. Citadel 6:30 to 7 p.m. Just Having Fun 7 to 9 p.m. The Chain Gang</p> <p><b>Near Pleasant Street</b> Noon to 2 p.m. Sunset Coast Gymnastics 5 to 7 p.m. The Incognito Cloggers</p> <p><b>SUNDAY</b> <b>Broad Street</b> 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Ande's Cosmos</p> <p><b>Pleasant Street</b> Noon to 1 p.m. Che Warner and Nancy Hauch 1 to 2 p.m. Tim Tredor 2 to 3 p.m. Riley O'Connor</p>
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## IN BRIEF

**Dunes sets audition for 'Fool for Love'**

MICHIGAN CITY, Ind.—The Dunes Theatre will hold auditions for Sam Shepard's "Fool for Love," directed by George Maslankowski, at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday in the Long Beach Community Center.

The cast consists of four characters: May, age 25-35, half sister of Eddie and daughter of Old Man; Eddie, age 25-40, half-brother of May and son of Old Man; Old Man, age 50, father of Eddie and May; and Martin, age 30-40, boyfriend of May.

The play is a long one-act presentation that takes place in a dilapidated motel room somewhere along the dusty back roads of Texas.

Performances will be Sept. 10-12 and Sept. 17-19 at the Dunes Summer Theatre.

For more information and directions, call Maslankowski at (219) 362-2091.

**Tolhuizen to sing at Brown Bag concert**

BUCHANAN — The band Blues Inc. will perform at 7:30 p.m. today on the Buchanan Common stage.

Blues Inc. is an area band that plays Chicago style, West Coast swing, Texas style, funk, rock, traditional and contemporary blues.

Pie, ice cream and coffee will be available at the Senior Service

Center during intermission and after the program. Admission is free. Some seating is available, but those attending can bring folding chairs or blankets.

For more information, call Don Holmes at 695-1133.

**Reggae/Latin festival Sunday in St. Joseph**

ST. JOSEPH — A Benton Harbor/St. Joseph reggae and Latin festival will be held from 1 to 10 p.m. Sunday at the Amtrak Railroad Station, 410 Vine St.

Performing will be the Process, Contrabando and Indika, Caribbean vendors will sell their wares.

Members of Indika, featuring Doggie Ranks and Rasta Kelly, developed their talents in

## BAND

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a member. ("Chuck was having some serious drug things," Hutton said. "From what I hear, he's very healthy now.")

Along with Hutton and Wells, the other members of the band are original keyboardist Jimmy Greenspoon and guitarist Michael Allsup, and bassist Paul Kingery (who lives in Detroit) and drummer Pat Bautz.

In May the band released the CD "Three Dog Night – The Complete Hit Singles," a digitally remastered collection that Hutton called the "definitive" compilation of the group's most popular work.

"I think part of our longevity is, the songs we did are fairly good-quality songs with good lyrics – fun lyrics – good chords, good musicality in them," Hutton said. "That's the band, that's us."

"I get a kick out of people who say, 'You sound just like your records.' A lot of bands never sounded like their records."

Hutton said the group never has relied much on studio production to fine-tune the vocals or polish the sound. They would go into the studio and simply "turn on the mike" to record their songs, he said.

On the other hand, Hutton said, "I love fiddling around in the studio, but not to hide ... that you can't perform."

"One of the guys I admire most, that I love, he's my bud, is

Brian Wilson. I am so blessed to have been around him when he was doing 'Pet Sounds.' I was there on the 'God Only Knows' sessions. It was quite a moment."

In terms of contemporary music, Hutton, 62, said his opinion varies.

"I think there's interesting, good music, and then there's crappy music," he said. "Some of the real good, the real popular music, some of it is really good, but it gets put down because it's popular. There's some really bad music that, because people give good interviews, people think it's good. And then there's just bad, trendy music."

"I like Eminem, but there's a lot of rap music I don't like at all. I think it's just dumb, sing-songy music. But I would never say no to music just because it's some category."

Hutton said he has three sons, ages 18, 22 and 28, all of whom are in bands, and he said he is strictly a one-woman man.

"I was the party animal in the '70s," Hutton said. "I had the house in Hollywood everyone came to. A knock on the door, there's John Lennon and Ringo."

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"One of the guys I admire most, that I love, he's my bud, is

replace the band, but then cancelled because of a scheduling conflict.)

"Are you a punk-rock fan?" Hutton asked. "I used to manage a group called Fear. When they were doing that movie, 'Decline of Western Civilization,' I couldn't get 'em a deal, a record deal, this is in 1980. Not way."

"They did that song, 'I Don't Care About You, (--- You),' We had a real hard time. I love that spirit, some of the intelligent groups doing that."

But, Hutton said, "Just for effect, yelling four-letter words stupidly, it cheapens the value of the word." He laughed and added, "I think a good swear word is valuable."

Three Dog Night last charted in 1975 with "Til the End of the World." Besides touring, in the absence of contemporary hits, how does the band make money?

Consider "Mama Told Me Not to Come," which has appeared in the soundtracks for the films "Boogie Nights" and "G.I. Jane," among others.

"Randy Newman wrote that song. It's been in 20 movies, it's been in the Hunter Thompson movie ("Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas")," Hutton said. "Lots of times we'll be in a movie in the background on the radio for 20 seconds, so we permeate the air like that."

How does that kind of song licensing pay?

"It's enough to pay my bar bill, that's what it pays," Hutton said with a chuckle. "We do a lot of stuff every year. I'm very happy about that."

## EZRA

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Rather than playing around town, though, Drummond said he prefers going out to hear what other local bands are up to.

"Vaughan's, I was there last week, late at night. Getting our drink on," said Drummond, speaking of a club in New Orleans' Bywater neighborhood known for its top-notch live jazz and free red beans and rice on Thursday nights.

"We were going to see (trumpeter and singer) Kermit Ruffins, but we got there too late.

"It's kind of nice just to go and listen. When we have a record out, we'll play about 200 shows." That, he said, can be very tiring.

## ARTS NOTES

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"Joel and I were in an acoustic band (Alieron) for two years together," Strebs said.

"He was playing the African drums and wanted to get back into drums. It (the acoustic band) was too quiet for me, and we

decided to get plugged in. Big Dave used to come to all our shows and liked the music a lot. He was playing guitar and said, 'I can play bass if I can be in your band.'"

Growing up near the beach, Strebs became acquainted with several people on the Venetian Festival staff.

"I called Mike Minestra, who is organizing all the bands," Strebs said. "His daughter went

to school with my sister. I called him a couple of months ago and said we'd like to play. He said sure and booked us."

When he's not playing in the band, Strebs works part time as a free-lance video editor.

San Dee Wallace is a staff writer for The Herald-Palladium. Arts Notes is published each Thursday. You can e-mail her at swallace@heraldpalladium.com

p.m. Sunday. The performances will feature Mary Rademacher, Francesca Amari and Rick Reuther.

A single ticket is \$15, and the dinner-theater combination is \$40.

For more information and reservations, call 639-1486 or 637-7829.

**Air Zoo opens new children's area**

PORTAGE — A new children's area of the Kalamazoo Air Zoo has opened at 6151 Portage Road. A 2,100-square-foot mural, "Fantasy of Flight," serves as the focal point of the new play area.

Admission is \$19.50 for adults, \$17.50 for those 60 years old and older, and \$15.50 for children ages 6 to 15. Children 5 and under are free. Group rates are available for advance purchase. Call (866) 524-7966 or visit www.airzoo.org.

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