mega retro

Tribute band is all about the Mega 80's

Above: The Mega 80's are Corey Derlin, Mick Kluesa, Ron Nicolaus, Talashai Ito and Jason Gillinger. Right: Mick Kluesa on keyboard. The lineuse performs all the biggest hits from top 80s bands including U2, Ben Jovi, New Order and Def Leppard.

Why is it that we struggle to remember our own telephone numbers, but when it comes to the ability to almost any song from the 1980s, we enjoy instant recall. "Down To The Zoo" "Mr Roboto" and "Ooh Ooh Ooh"?

Though the '80s brought significant social change with the onset of the "decade of excessive glitter," nostalgia, it was all fun and fluff. While new wave, new romantics and hair metal might not be significant enough creatives to embrace a true revival, Detroit-area children of the '80s are flocking — like seagulls — to see tribute band Mega 80's.

Formed in 2002 by Berkley resident Corey Derlin, 35, the Mega 80's grew from the remains of the band The MBOs. Derlin manages the band and other high-end entertainment shows through his production company Tangerine Moon.

"We reformed and decided to take it to the next level as far as what we could do theatrically," Derlin said.

Elements such as computer-controlled lighting, live dancers and customized backdrops that play flashback video clips and reminders of fun things like Pac-Man add entertainment value to the production, all of which work to differentiate this tribute band from a mere cover band, he said.

Each song included in a Mega 80's set list goes through a lengthy production process before it can even be rehearsed and used in a show, Derlin said.

The band members, who are all professional working musicians, come together to smoothen every note and nuance to create an exact replica of each song, whenever possible. They use the same type of equipment the original artist used, including vintage keyboards and drum machines. This process can take as long as 80 hours, followed by months of rehearsal, resulting in music that sounds at least 90 percent like the original.

"It gets crazy, crazy detailed," Derlin said.

"The audience isn't even paying attention to how detailed it is. They just go, 'Wow! This is great. That's the end result.'"

With a mixed pair set to capture the fun of the music, why bother to offer such a meticulous look-alike? Derlin compares it to choosing one supermarket over another for your weekly shopping. You don't necessarily know why you had shopping there, you just do.

"There are multiple factors that make it the experience that it is," Derlin said.

Another the experience is, the fans love it.

"We had a blast," said Wendy VanderMeulen, 29, an advertising account manager from Royal Oak. Wendy and friends caught a Mega 80's show recently at the Magic Bag in Ferndale for a girls' night out. "We got all dressed up for the occasion in '80s gear and went out dancing. It takes you back to your teenage years and gives you a little nostalgia."

Mega 80's guitar player Mick ("Blue Madness") Kluesa, 38, from Canton believes that fun is what the '80s were all about.

"Sightless music quickly this guitar pop music time," he said. "The music was geared toward an escape for the working person and that's why this is so enjoyable."

Apart from the escapism, the music is just fun to play and to listen to, said Kluesa. The play list includes music from several genres of the '80s, offering something for everyone. Songs from The Clash, New Order, Def Leppard and the Beastie Boys join medleys of Prince, Journey and — for hair metal fans — a "Mega Metal Medley," 20 minutes of favorites from Motley Crue, Guns 'N' Roses, and Bon Jovi.

It's not unusual that people are clamoring for the '80s, said Howard Kramer, Sterling Southfield resident and commercial director at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland.

"Every 20 years, people tend to look back nostalgically if you'll excuse the pun, at the music of an era," he said.

Kramer notes that people tend to gravitate the music that had the most to offer creatively or "spur of the feel good factor of the 'year spun.'"

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Back to the '80s

WHEN: The Mega 80's have upcoming performances scheduled at the Magic Bag Aug. 27 and Sept. 10, and at the Beach Grill every Friday through August.
WHERE: Magic Bag, 2990 Woodward Ave. in Ferndale (248-544-3030, www.themagicbag.com); Beach Grill, 28230 Jefferson Ave. in St. Clair Shores (586-771-4800, www.beachgrillwithnightlife.com)
TICKETS: Cover charge is $10.
INFORMATION: www.mega80s.com

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