

Meet Local Band ~ Crackerjack Palace

Learn of the interesting beginnings of this local band...

George Harrison of Beatles fame, passed away on November 29, 2001 of cancer. Towards the end of 2004, a band from Newfoundland issued a challenge through an online United Church publication *Emerging Spirit*. The challenge was put out to amateur musicians across Canada to host a benefit concert to benefit the AIDS crisis in Africa, of which George Harrison was a huge supporter of. It was also an anniversary of his death.

Paul Bartlett MD, a Tavistock native thought it would be a fun experience – with a cause, so he reached out to several local musicians including Tavistock resident, Paul Stock. From there the list grew to eight members including Tavistock residents Barry Klein, and Jim Atwell, Baden resident Dan Munroe, Tom Elliott from New Hamburg, and Stratford resident, Mark Diotallevi. The concert was held at the Grace Mennonite Church in Tavistock and it was a huge success. That was beginning of Crackerjack Palace which was named after a song by George Harrison.

Fast forward twenty years and many concerts later there are only three original members left – Tom Elliott, Mark Diotallevi, and Barry Klein. There have been multiple changes over those years including the addition of bass player and Baden resident Dean Jutzi, five years ago. Last fall, their drummer Grant Heywood, moved to New Brunswick which prompted a need for recruitment of new members.

One of the obvious needs was a drummer. St. Agatha native, Diego Vitello didn't start playing drums until age 24 (1988). That year he bought a drum set and started practicing his new hobby. He played in a local band from 1991 to 1994 and then joined the group *Hillbrook Connection* playing regularly. Covid reared its head in 2020 which curtailed his playing, but in September 2023 his friend Mark Pfaff called and told him of the band looking for a drummer who could also sing.

Stephanie Martin from St. Mary's has been involved in music for years. She currently performs with two other bands, *Steph and the Road Hounds* and *Good Company*. She also runs her own business, deepwatersmusic.com, where she offers music lessons in St. Mary's. She joined the band last fall and is an accomplished singer and guitarist, which adds to Crackerjack Palaces' repertoire of songs.

The Bass player and vocalist, Dean Jutzi, grew up in Tavistock and at age 14 bought his first guitar at Carl Seltzer's store in Tavistock. Dean played with Tom Elliot, John Omand, Gary Hahn, and Peter Guenther in a high school band at Waterloo Oxford.



He also played with the local band *JL Revival* at the King Edward Hotel in New Hamburg for many years – pretty much their house band. He had also played with Barry Klein in a variety of venues and bands. Dean relocated to Baden decades ago to raise his family.

Tom Elliott from New Hamburg is the lead singer, acoustic guitarist of the band, and a Beatles enthusiast. Tom started out as a drummer but learned to play the guitar a bit so

he could play and sing a few songs. He and Johnny Omand played Thursday nights at The Imperial Hotel in New Hamburg for their high school friends, when they were all still in their teens. "We probably made \$20 and spent it all on beer" stated Tom.

Barry Klein from Tavistock started playing around age 12 originally taking an interest in bluegrass and country, later in rock and roll and blues, with all of these influences shining through. He began playing professionally around 16 or 17 and has played with many acts over the years including Linda Lee, Chuckie Zehr, and Cheryl Lescom.

Mark Diotallevi, who is a retired family doctor from Mitchell, residing in Stratford, plays the keyboard and sings backup vocals. He was born in Sault Ste Marie and moved to this area after completing medical school in London. He also provides the practice space and scheduling.

The group's focus is music from the '60s and '70s and beyond. Music such as David Bowie, Steely Dan, Moody Blues, Rolling Stones, and the Beatles can be heard with a focus on playing songs that are not usually covered. They practise every Thursday night and have a limited number of gigs booked until they perfect their music. Being the members are from St. Agatha, Baden, New Hamburg, Tavistock, Stratford, and St. Mary's makes them a regional band. Check out Crackerjack Palace on June 11th at 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m. See details below! For more information, visit their website at www.crackerjackpalace.com.



Music in the Park

The New Hamburg Board of Trade Presents:

CRACKERJACK PALACE
TUESDAY, JUNE 11
7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

KIRKPATRICK PARK
New Hamburg, ON

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