



Returning to rock

After 30 years, Fox reunites to plug in and play on stage again

By Tim Brouk
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It was 30 years ago when a band of Purdue University graduates decided to call it quits.

Fox had made a regional name for itself with its mix of jam-friendly originals and classic-rock covers from 1972 to 1976. The four-piece of drummer George Brenn, guitarist Mark Sloan, guitarist David Owen and bassist Gerry Bishop was the go-to Lafayette band to open for visiting superstars including Styx, REO Speedwagon and Canned Heat. Fox also played five nights a week at a popless bar called Lorraine's Lounge, which used to stand at Fourth and South streets.

The four young men started families and careers after Fox. Bishop is an attorney in Merrillville. Owen is a computer-aided drafting teacher, and Brenn owns a landscaping business. Pretty soon, the years were flying by as the guys, who used to live together as well as play rock 'n' roll almost every day, lost touch.

When one of Owen's daughters got married, their chance



Photos provided

George Brenn (left to right), Gerry Bishop, David Owen and Mark Sloan make up the rock band Fox, seen here in 1973. Fox made a name for itself in the '70s playing originals and covers, and opening for bands like Styx and REO Speedwagon. Now, 30 years later (as seen below), Fox has reunited to play some gigs, relax and just have fun.

to catch up arrived. The wedding reception featured a reunion. While not as monumental as Kiss or the Pixies, it was still huge for the men who now range in age from 54 to 56.

"Since then, we've gotten together for a couple parties, and we've missed playing live together," said Sloan, now an area manager for AT&T special services. Fox will make the reunion official with some gigs in Monticello at 8:30 p.m. today and Thursday at Indiana Beach's Roof Garden.

Sloan admitted playing music in front of the crowd is

the most addicting force he has encountered.

"The ego factor to being able to get the crowd to respond and enjoy the music, the interaction the group has and the effect music has on the crowd ... You feel like you're one with the crowd," Sloan said. "You miss the party atmosphere. I don't think we're reclaiming our youth. I don't think we're trying to relive a certain time in our lives. We just love to play

If you go

What: Fox
When: 8:30 p.m. today and Thursday
Where: Roof Garden-Indiana Beach, Monticello
On the Net: www.indianabeach.com

music. We enjoy just practicing and jamming. It's fun to play."

While many of the 5,000 fans who saw Fox rock Slayter Hill in 1973 scattered across the country once they got those diplomas, Sloan and his Fox-mates are content that they will most likely never play to crowds that large again.

"It's a real rush just getting in front of people," Sloan said. "The larger the crowd, the better we play. You just get into it more yourself. It's a huge ego boost and a ton of fun."

The Sloan house is mostly supportive of the Fox reunion. Sloan's wife, Janette, has fully backed her husband's return to being in a rock band. Step-daughter Linsey, 18, is unsure of seeing her 54-year-old stepfather wail away on an electric guitar.

The few shows Fox has played already have gone well. However, the physical toll on Sloan's body is more pronounced than when he was a 21-year-old.

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The equipment seems to have doubled since Fox's original run, and those amps seem to get heavier after every show.

"It's really funny how you get energized when playing," Sloan said. "You have an awful big strain physically, but when you're playing, you're energized

and you don't realize how worn out you are until after the show."

Brenn believes Fox's chemistry started early on, and it made playing together easier and more fun. Brenn said the amount of shows Fox played helped support the band members through Purdue. In 1972, Fox played more than 100 gigs.

Over 30 years later, Brenn

said Fox has not lost a step. He calls the bandmates' relationship a "musical brotherhood."

"It's pretty astonishing," Brenn said. "After just a few songs, the chemistry was still there."

For the full-circle file, Fox recently played the Jefferson High School 30-year reunion for the class of 1975. Brenn said Fox

played the class' senior prom in 1975.

Sloan said Fox is not going to be as serious as the first go-around, when it had a booking agent and played all around Indiana and beyond. It's just a way to relax and have fun for him.

"There's worse habits and hobbies," Sloan said. "Other people our age are playing golf."

