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**Soundtrack of southern Minnesota**

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MANKATO —

The eight inductees for the Mid-America Music Hall of Fame collectively tally dozens of albums, decades (and decades) of experience and more memories than can fit into one newspaper.

But they'll reprise some of those good shows, great songs and bygone memories during a hall of fame concert at 7:30 p.m. on Friday at the Kato Ballroom.

Inductees include: Whitesidewalls, The Shags, The Joe Schultz Band, Sandra Lee & The Velvets, The Murphy Brothers Band, Dick Kimmel and Jerilyn Kjellberg, Jim McGuire and Paul Durenberger.

"With a lot of people, this music is attached to their memories, their marriage, their job," said Doug Spartz, director of the hall of fame. "All their lives are associated with this music."

After several years of hosting induction ceremonies in the Twin Cities, Spartz moved the event to Mankato this year. In honor of the move, he said the selection committee paid particularly close attention to southern Minnesota musicians that had been somewhat "neglected" in previous years.

To date, the Mid-America Music Hall of Fame has inducted more than 1,200 artists in its 16-year history.

(Note: The Mid-America Music Hall of Fame was originally called the Midwest Musicians Reunion. The second iteration was called the Minnesota Rock and Country Hall of Fame but was changed to its current name about 10 years ago, in part to distinguish it from the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame in New Ulm.)

Spartz said this year's honorees were culled from a list of more than 200 musicians and represent the halcyon days of music in Minnesota.

"We didn't know until several years later how special that time period was," he said.

*Sandra Lee & The Velvets*

For almost 12 years, Sandra Lee & The Velvets were one of the premier dance bands in southern Minnesota.

In the mid-1960s, The Country Velvets were an outgrowth of the Mock family band. Dad played the accordion while sons Charles and Duane played drums and lead guitar. But in 1972, the group added sibling Howard Mock as well as Leon and Sandy Zarn of Sleepy Eye, and the group that spawned three albums and earned a reputation for playing a variety of musical styles was born.

"You really had to kind of play it all back then," Howard Mock said. "We were there to please the crowd and we did whatever it took."

That play-anything mentality kept the band traveling well, playing ballrooms, corporate parties, celebrations and dances with regularity for more than a decade. The group featured 1950s and '60s rock and country, as well as polkas and waltzes — which were must-have additions

to the repertoire, band members said, for those gigs in German-heavy towns like New Ulm and Sleepy Eye.

Sandra Zarn said the group is "honored" and "appreciative" of the induction and said getting the band back together for rehearsal sessions has offered a welcome dose of nostalgia.

"It's been so much fun to see each other again," she said.

*Paul Durenberger*

Forty albums. Nearly 1,400 original songs. More than six decades of playing and creating music.

Meet Paul Durenberger, the self-described "obsessive-compulsive" Mankato musician.

"Making music is what I do," he said.

Durenberger started his career early, coming home from kindergarten one day and playing "Oh! Susanna" on the family piano. When mom asked where he learned the tune, Durenberger responded by saying he had heard it in school that day.

Before he was 10 years old, Durenberger was playing Bach and Beethoven.

"But when The Beatles came out, that stopped everything," he said.

The lifelong Mankato resident — one of his albums, "Fulton Street," is named after the street on which he was born — was matter-of-fact about his induction. Though his musical prowess is unquestioned by those who know his work, Durenberger fits that stereotype of a talented local musician who toils largely in obscurity for little more than the joy of making music.

"If you go as far as Gaylord, most people don't know who I am," said Durenberger, who credited his faith and his wife of 44 years for his success. "But making music is like a heroin addiction. You just can't quit."

*Dick Kimmel and Jerilyn Kjellberg*

Dick Kimmel is no stranger to hall of fame inductions.

The New Ulm resident and legendary bluegrass musician was inducted into America's Old-Time Country and Bluegrass Hall of Fame in 2008 and the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame in 2010. Kimmel and Jerilyn Kjellberg have played together for several years, both as a duo and as part of Dick Kimmel & Co. Their work together includes their 2007 album, "Somebody Loves You Darlin'."

By himself, Kimmel had a pair of No. 1 hits while living in West Virginia — "West Virginia My Home" remained on the bluegrass radio charts for more than three months and was played before West Virginia University Mountaineer sporting events; Kimmel's original "Ride On By" also hit No. 1 in West Virginia. He's recorded more than two dozen albums and has continued to serve as something of an ambassador for the genre, even after moving to New Ulm in 1981 to pursue a job with the Dept. of Natural Resources as a wildlife biologist.

"Bluegrass is as popular today as it has ever been," he said.

Kimmel said he and Kjellberg have never played at the Kato Ballroom. They'll probably play some material from the album they crafted last summer, he said, as well as "Ride on By."

"We're liable to do almost anything," he said.

*Jim McGuire*

Once upon a time, Jim McGuire used to give guitar lessons at a little music shop near the location of present-day Blue Bricks in downtown Mankato. A few of his fellow inductees, he said, used to take lessons from him.

"I remember a lot of these kids when they were first starting," he said.

Now 68 and largely retired from teaching, McGuire has been something of a guitar Godfather in southern Minnesota.

In the mid-1950s, McGuire talked his mom into spending $39.95 to but his first six-string guitar out of a Sears catalogue. As an eighth-grader, he was a member of one of Mankato's earliest rock Œn' roll bands, the Rockin' Whitecaps, with fellow Mankatoan Dave Johns. And for decades, he taught classical guitar at Minnesota State, Gustavus Adolphus, University of Minnesota and St. Olaf.

He's played in a number of jazz and swing groups and still plays a regular show at Morgan Creek Vineyard.

"I've been playing in groups forever," he said.

*The Murphy Brothers Band*

In 35 years of making music, the Murphy Brothers Band has had only 10 members — and five remain in the current lineup.

An impressive record for any band, to be sure.

"That says it all," said Steve Murphy, of the band's longevity and relatively consistent lineup. "We just share a no-nonsense love for the music."

Taking their origins from two regional bands, the Epicureans and Highway (which once opened for REO Speedwagon), Steve and Mike Murphy formed the Murphy Brothers Band in 1977, adding drummer Dick Dusek and bass player John Goossen in 1980.

In 2002, the band added two of its current members, Greg George and Jason Anderson, and released a CD in 2007 called "SYNERGY." In 2009, the retiring Dusek was replaced with Dale Bjorklund and the group's first keyboard player, Mark Asche, arrived.

The band continues to play its brand of guitar rock at festivals and special events and is working on a CD, about 75 percent of which is already completed.

"There's no end in sight for us," Murphy said. "Thank God."

*The Shags*

The Shags played their first gig in the spring of 1965 at Ye Olde Pizza in New Ulm. The band made $10.

"More than enough to fill a car's gas tank twice," said founding member Bruce Melzer.

Melzer started The Shags while still attending New Ulm High School, joining forces with guitarist Tom Ginkel, drummer John Ginkel and rhythm guitarist Jack Volinkaty — who later wrote "Satin Sheets," a No. 1 country hit in the 1970s.

They often practiced in the Lafayette school gym, once lost a bass cabinet tied to the top of their car while driving down Highway 15 and once filled up their radiator with Grain Belt on the way home from a show.

The Shags even cut a record at Concert Studio in the Twin Cities. Their admittedly low-budget production included misspellings on both song titles — "Louis Louis" (instead of Louie Louie") and "Summertime News" (instead of "Summertime Blues") — and has become something of a rare find among collectors.

*Whitesidewalls*

The recently reunited Whitesidewalls date back to 1971 when Pat Brown, also known as "Hound Dog," formed the group.

The band held their first rehearsals in Brown's kitchen in Forest Lake and quickly found gigs in small bars, ballrooms and at high school dances. By the summer of 1972, the band had a booking agent and started playing larger venues and better gigs. By 1978, they flew to their first big concert and dance in the Super Dome in New Orleans. In the late summer of 1979, they started a series of full summer shows at Valleyfair in Shakopee, which lasted about 10 years.

The Whitesidewalls started playing regularly at the Kato Ballroom in the 1980s. And in 1985, the Minnesota Ballroom Operator's Association named the Whitesidewalls Ballroom Act of the Year.

After a 20-year hiatus in which the Whitesidewalls continued to perform without many of the original members, they reformed in 2007. While the band cycled through more than 40 members and musicians since its inception in 1971, two of its original members continue to perform: Brown, who plays guitar and is also the band's musical director, and Dave "Swanee" Swanson who plays sax and guitar.

*Joe Schultz Band*

If you walk into Legends Pub and Grill in Ceylon, you'll see walls plastered with images of American icons. Members of the Minnesota Twins. Marilyn Monroe. Joe Schultz.

Though the last name in that list might be foreign to some, it's well-known in Ceylon where Joe and brother Jack have reached "legend" status for their decades of musical performance. The Joe Schultz Band has been described as "one of southern Minnesota's favorite bands."