

Niagara Rhythm Section still singing the Blues

BY JOHN LAW

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NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE – When The Anchorage restaurant was slated for demolition, the owners decided to sign the Niagara Rhythm Section to play out the string for six months.

Four years later, they're still playing. Like clockwork, the veteran Niagara band led by Steve Goldberger can be found at the rejuvenated Ricardo Street pub every Saturday, starting at 9:30 p.m. Not bad for what was supposed to be a brief fling.

"We're still there," says Goldberger, a local blues mainstay.

"It's been building and building and we've got this great rotation of guests coming from all over.

"It's the secret for our sanity, that's for sure. If we had to play the same thing over and over again every week, it'd be pretty boring."

The tradition continues Saturday when guitarist Ed Kopala and singer Gayle Ackroyd drop by for their annual winter visit.

As always, Goldberger vetoes any rehearsals with the Niagara Rhythm Section's guests. It keeps the show fresh and spontaneous.

"Some of them will bring music charts we can follow, or we just have a quick 30-second briefing before the song starts," he says. "We've all been doing it long enough.

"That's the beauty of improvisation - there's a certain form to each style of music you can sort of predict.

"It's a team effort, so everybody's giving each other cues. Usually there's one



It has been four and a half years of jamming at The Anchorage for the Niagara Rhythm Section. With a different guest or two each week, the band has become a Saturday night tradition.

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guy in the band who kind of has an idea where it's going. We follow him!"

Mixing it up is also the reason Anchorage regulars keep coming back every Saturday, he adds. Just because it's the same band doesn't mean it has to be the same music.

"A lot of guys will come and say, 'We've done 'Mustang Sally' for 30 years ... let's try it as a hip hop, or a swing.' So that keeps it fresh and that's why they like coming because we're up for anything."

The Anchorage feels like a weekend home now for Goldberger and the

band, to the point he would be disoriented if he played anywhere else on a Saturday.

The weekly jams inspired the band's latest CD, "Live at The Anchorage Vol. 1," featuring tunes with Lance Anderson (next Saturday's guest), John Mays, Chuck Jackson and the late Joe Ingrao.

There's so much in the vault, Goldberger says Vol. 2 is imminent.

"Some of the artists have actually hired us to back them up on other jobs, which is kind of neat," he says.

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