

ENTERTAINMENT

Blazin' through tradition

By Phil Johnson
New Town Crier

Blazin' Saddles is one of those groups that almost defies description.

The popular Beaches-area country-blues/rock band can belt out pure country Hee-Haw sounds right out of Nashville, or do a nice rendering of a Don Henley favourite, Forgiveness.

Whatever the style of song, it's one of Blazin' Saddles' fortes — being able to transcend sounds.

That's a tribute to band members Dave Pearce, Steve Goldberger and Bob Sagar, all of the Beach, and drummer David Norris, who hails from the wilds of Mississauga.

Adding an extra dimension lately has been violinist Igor Romaniuk, also a Beacher and former Toronto Symphony member who lives up to his reputation as an eclectic musician by doing opera and theatre, country and blues — the latter from a gig with Velvet Hammer.

Pearce and Goldberger were 18-year-old teen buddies when they

formed well-known country-rock band Black Creek. The two won Genie Awards for best Canadian movie soundtrack during that time, after working on the film *Lions For Breakfast*.

They stayed on with Black Creek for several more years before splitting up. Goldberger went on to play with Gayle Ackroyd, Willie P. Bennett and Mark Haines.

Pearce later joined the Ronnie Prophet television show, playing banjo, guitar and backing up stars such as Chet Atkins, Mel Tillis and Crystal Gayle.

That was something he'd always dreamed of.

As a 10-year-old, he was watching singing star Glen Campbell on TV and saw a "really cool" banjo player. It was John Hartford, who wrote the theme for the show, *Gentle on My Mind*, which became one of Campbell's biggest hits.

"Hartford would open Campbell's show playing the song while standing in the audience," says Pearce. "When I heard him performing, I knew that was some-

thing I eventually wanted to do."

Known around town as Banjo Dave, Pearce has also spent time in recording studios where he's worked on albums and jingles. As well, he's spent time in Nashville performing on the Grand Ol' Opry show.

Four years ago, Pearce joined Blazin' Saddles and his buddy Goldberger who had formed the group with Norris two years earlier. Norris, a rock-solid backbeat performer, has also worked with Gayle Ackroyd and with The Satellites, The Pukka Orchestra, and The Andi Duncan Band.

Sagar came on board Blazin' Saddles not long after Pearce. His "stripped-down" guitar style has been well-known around Toronto for the past 20 years. He's performed with Limousine, Mondo Combo, Foolish Behaviour, and Leggat, with whom he recorded two major records.

If you missed Blazin' Saddles' Glenevis gig on May 9, you can catch them again on June 7 at Scratch Daniels, or June 14 at Feather's Pub in the Beaches. ■