

Old Winos to release new album with friends

**Mike Balsom
Special to The Local**

Fans of the Old Winos house band on Friday nights at the Old Winery will have something to take home with them next weekend.

Band leader and bassist Steve Goldberger, drummer Dave Norris and guitarist Mike Glatt will hold a CD release party Friday, Feb. 7 for *The Old Winos & Friends*, a new collection of 11 songs based on their popular Friday night residency that began in 2012.

Goldberger explains that the Friday “rambles” began as a country complement to the Niagara Rhythm Section’s Saturday residency, now in its 16th year in town, after stops at the Anchorage and Corks.

As with Saturday nights, the Old Winos, as Friday’s band is known, welcome a different guest each weekend. It makes for an eclectic mix of originals and cover tunes that changes completely from week to week. The calendar in Goldberger’s studio is already filled with guest slots booked until mid-May. Some of Canada’s best musicians contact him frequently, looking for a chance to play with the band. The popularity of the gig, however, has meant that Goldberger sometimes can’t find a weekend that works mutually.

The new album of roots music has been more than a year in the making, explains Goldberger at his home studio, known as the Shed. The basic tracks were recorded by Goldberger, Norris and Glatt. As guests would arrive for their appearances with the Old Winos, Goldberger would invite them to the studio to lay down their parts.

Sitting at the console of his 32-track recording board, Goldberger begins by playing some songs from another album he is working on, a collection of New Orleans-style original Christmas songs with the Johnny Max Band. The sound is original, and powerful.

He then cues up a few of the songs that made the cut on *The Old Winos & Friends*. The album includes one original and 10 covers of songs by the likes of Steve Earle, John Hiatt, Bob Dylan,

Rodney Crowell and Buck Owens.

It begins with the original *Weekends with the Local Fringe*, hearkening back to his early days gathering local Niagara musicians together to jam and party. It perfectly captures the rag-tag anything-goes spirit of the group’s residency at the Old Winery.

Someday, from Earle’s 1986 debut album, features background vocals from Laurel Minnes and Dory Karr. It’s a somewhat slowed-down version of the song about breaking free from the mundane, with Goldberger singing lead and adding some touches on the organ.

Frequent Friday guest Marty Allen lends his Johnny Cash-styled vocals to the truck-driving song *Six Days on the Road*, made famous in 1963 by Dave Dudley. It’s a romping travelogue, featuring pedal steel player C.J. Altmann (Tim Hicks’ band), five-time Canadian Country Music Association fiddle player of the year Shane Guse, and Juno-nominated guitar player Wendell Ferguson. Allen also sounds exactly like Cash on *I Walk the Line (Revisited)*, a Rodney Crowell update on the outlaw country classic.

Having done a few Jimmy Buffett tribute nights at the Old Winery, it was a no-brainer for Goldberger to take on one of his songs. He was surprised to discover, however, that the one he chose, the tropical-flavoured ballad *Lovely Cruise*, was actually written by little-known songwriter Jonathan Baham.

He cues up a very interesting take on the melancholy Bee Gees classic, *To Love Somebody*. Goldberger trades lead vocals on this track with C.J. Altman, local singer Laurel Minnes, and country-folk artist Katherine Wheatley. An 11-voice choir, consisting of frequent Friday guests (Serena Pryne, Blair Packham, Gayle Ackroyd et. al.), accompanies them throughout the song.

When asked about the choice of a Bee Gees song for a roots-based album, Goldberger says “a great song is a great song,” and asserts that this one qualifies. He adds that before taking on a cover,



Steve Goldberger sits at the console of his 32-track recording board. (Mike Balsom)

he purposely doesn’t listen to the original beforehand in an effort to more easily place his own stamp on it. And believe it or not, the band doesn’t rehearse, either before heading into the studio, or onto the stage. That spontaneity comes through on every one of the 11 songs on this collection.

Other highlights on the album include the instrumental Buck Owens tune, *Happy Go Lucky Guitar*, a faithful version of Dylan’s *Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues*, Katherine Wheatley’s original number, *Hallelujah*, and *Looking for a Heartache Like You*, written by Buddy and Julie Miller, with Jim Lauderdale.

Other well-known local musicians also appear on the album, including saxophonist Jim Gay, percussionist Penner McKay and pianist Doug Mundy.

When the listening session ends, Goldberger sits and talks about some of his favourite songwriters. It’s clear that to him, it’s the focus on songs and the songwriters behind them that brings him the most joy.

Looking at the collection of vinyl records lining one wall of his studio space, he enthuses about the most re-

cent Rosanne Cash album, and flips through an impressive collection of albums by Texas troubador Jerry Jeff Walker. He adds that one of his favourite songwriters is Nanci Griffith, another Texas-raised singer-songwriter. His eyes light up when he thinks about the prospect of someday recording a full album of Griffith’s songs.

Goldberger spends hours almost every night in the studio, mixing tracks on the

console, laying down guitar, bass and keyboard licks for recordings, and practising on his recent acquisition, a beautiful stand-up bass. The new instrument makes its way to the Old Winery some nights, but probably not for the CD release party next Friday. After all, with the guests that may show up, there won’t be much room on the stage for the large bass.

The ninth annual Jimmy Buffett Tribute goes this Friday

night, with dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the show starting at 9 p.m.

Guests confirmed for the Feb. 7 album launch party include singer-guitarist Marty Allen, steel guitar player C.J. Altman and guitarist Andrew Aldridge, among others. The show begins at 9 p.m. The new CD, along with Goldberger’s back catalogue, including Niagara Rhythm Section releases, can be purchased through stevegoldberger.com.

Comedy fest raises money



The Icebreakers Comedy Festival headlining show, starring Shaun Majumder at White Oaks Resort and Spa, raised \$1,200 for Pathstone Mental Health, while local comic Joe Pillitteri (above) filled the Jackson-Triggs Estate Winery auditorium and raised money for his favourite charity, the Terry Fox Foundation. (Photo supplied)

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