

## Henman is a rock and blues original



Contributed photo  
David Henman, middle, is flanked by band members Eddie M. Cromwell, left, and Handel Eccleston, right. The David Henman Band plays Barrie's Sticky Fingers on Saturday night.

February 28, 2008

**After more than 45 years in the music business, David Henman has finally done it. He's recorded his first CD.**

Well, not exactly.

A founding member of April Wine, Henman recorded three albums with the band during the early 1970s, and also released an album with a mid-1970s outfit called All The Young Dudes, but *Life on A Stick*, which is in the final mixing stage, marks the first time Henman has put out a CD under his own name, and with his own band.

That band is performing at Barrie's Sticky Fingers Bar and Grill on Saturday, March 1.

"It's being mixed at Orchard Studios in Brampton ... and then we have to get it mastered. I am in discussion with some local companies just looking for a limited distribution, maybe in Toronto, Montreal and Halifax, because those are the areas that would know my name," Henman said.

Born and raised in Halifax, Henman, brother Ritchie and cousin Jim joined Myles Goodwyn to form April Wine in 1969. Ritchie and Dave left the band a couple of years later, while David lasted until 1973. His song, *Drop Your Guns*, was one of April Wine's earliest top-40 hits.

He then performed in All The Young Dudes, sharing bills with the likes of The Bee Gees.

In 1986 he moved to Toronto and became the editor for *Canadian Musician* magazine, as well as continuing to play a number of shows each year.

After many years of playing in various cover bands, Henman decided a year ago to take the plunge into becoming an all-originals act.

For the longest time, this move was frowned upon on the club circuit, as venue owners wanted to take the easy approach, hiring bands that played familiar music.

Times have changed, and for the better, Henman says.

"I discovered a couple of things. The cover songs, people were lukewarm about. But they were reacting really, really enthusiastically for the original songs. And I was getting a sense that we have entered into some sort of a new era where it looks like people have finally reached a saturation point with going out and paying good money to hear a bunch of old men playing old men's songs," Henman told *The Advance* from his private studio in Newmarket.

"And it's the same with club owners. I've met with almost zero resistance to going out and getting paid to play original music. I mean, that's unheard of. It's totally unheard of ... instead of them hanging up on me as soon as I say that we play only original music, they're like, 'OK, that's fine.' And I just sit there with my jaw on the floor, because I can't believe it. That's never happened in my 45 years of playing."

He said club owners and their audiences are looking for quality over familiarity, which means that bands that are both good and original are starting to get more gigs.

His original music is an eclectic mix of rock, roots, blues and even a little reggae. It is through the freedom of being a solo artist that has allowed Henman to branch off and explore different themes, genres and styles.

"I got so fed up. Every band I've ever been in, you bring some new material you're really excited about and inevitably someone goes, 'well, that won't fit our style. That won't fit our sound.' And I'm aghast because if you're the artist, you can do anything you want. What do you mean it doesn't fit your style? Your style is what you make it," Henman said.

"So I wanted to put together a band where there weren't any rules like that, and the only way I could think of doing that was to put it out under my name, put me in charge, and that way I could make the rules and the main rule being there are no rules. It gave me that kind of dictatorial power to throw out the rulebook."

He also wanted this new band to contain like-minded musicians, and Henman feels he has them in bassist Handel Eccleston and drummer Eddie M. Cromwell, both veteran musicians with diverse musical pedigrees.

"I will only work with guys who have an open mind and who are literally adventurous, curious players who want to do everything and who want to always leave the door wide open for whatever we feel like doing," Henman said, all three still have their day jobs (his is in the magazine/periodical publishing field) while they see where the music of the David Henman Band takes them.

With the advent of relatively inexpensive home recording technology, as well as Internet-based networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, Henman believes the music industry is far more open and democratic than it has been in the past. People now have various methods for getting their message and music out to a receptive public.

"The individual artist has a lot more clout. You can practically do everything yourself," he said. "It's pretty much a DIY (do it yourself) kind of industry, which is great for the artists. You can create your own audience ... these are like the good old days. It's sort of a golden age, a Renaissance. It's wide open. You can invent your own marketing techniques."

*Life On A Stick* will also be sent around to folks throughout the music business, including radio. It will be the response of folks at the shows, people who may hear the songs on radio and the industry itself that will determine Henman's next actions.

"With us, it's all a matter of putting the horse before the cart. Right now, we're really just a recording act that plays locally, and they're really the beginning, middle and end, and we'll follow the horse," he said.

"We'll get our music out there and if and when I makes an impact, then we'll follow that up. But we'll follow the music. We'll go on the strength of the music and the strength of the reception to the music ... we're going to let the music do the talking."

That music will be talking at Sticky Fingers Saturday night. For more information, visit the bar at 199 Essa Rd., or call 721-8793.

For more information on Henman and his music, visit his website, provided with this article.

- *Jim Barber is the Arts, Sports and Lifestyles Editor for the Barrie Advance. Contact him at [jbarber@simcoe.com](mailto:jbarber@simcoe.com).*