

# Jack is back, sans the hair

Local cover band Blackwater Jack reunites



Crash  
**David Cameron**  
MUSIC

Blackwater Jack used to be a standard around town and this weekend the group's reuniting and treatin' loyal long-time fans with a first-rate gig.

First thing: Who's got any hair left?

"Nobody," says Jeff Egert, bass player for the working-class band. "I could (have hair) if I wanted some."

Egert says he recently showed his 19-year-old niece one of his band's old promo pictures. Her response?

"It's Auntie Jeff!"

"Vern, I think, is the only guy that looks the same," keyboardist Stan Pietrusik says of guitarist Vern Michaels, who moved to Saskatchewan after the BWJ years.

"Jason shaved his," he adds of singer Jason Pearson's dome.

No biggie, Pearson always rocked the Axl Rose bandana, anyway.

This isn't The Police doing the multi-million-dollar, lawyer-arbitrated pension-fund tour.

Just a bunch of old bar-band boys catching up and rockin' out again. Hair or not.

"We're not fooling ourselves," says Egert. "We were all very aware of what we were then. We were having a lot of fun. We did have a pretty good run in Edmonton for a number of years. This isn't Led Zeppelin getting back together."

The cover band never got respect as 'artistes' by the



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Recently reunited working-class band Blackwater Jack will be giving it everything tomorrow night at Century Casino.

music 'intellegentsia'. Yet every blues band does it. And what's an orchestra but a cover band?

Meanwhile, the easily dismissed bar band humped it out for the hosers night after night after night for many years.

"I think the cover band thing got out of hand, certainly in this province, only because there was money to be made," says Egert. "Some got caught in a niche - and we were no different."

From the late '80s to the mid-'90s, Blackwater Jack served up a basic menu of meat-and-potatoes Skynyrd/G'n'R.

"But I'll tell you, from a professional standpoint, back in those days, the level of musicianship was high. You can't play six nights a week and not build your chops. The playing was there, if the creativity wasn't."

They talked about getting back on stage for years. But it was somebody outside the band that lit the fuse. Zeno Ioannides, a high school buddy of Egert's - and a BWJ fan - is a longtime booker of venues around town.

"Zeno said 'You guys should do something.' It all seemed to fall in place," Pietrusik says of tomorrow's gig at Century Casino.

"When we started, it was the time of hairspray and eyeliner," says Egert. "We said, 'Enough of the high-maintenance look! So we just got out there and rocked out in T-shirts and jeans, playing some rootsy rock 'n' roll."

"We were told at first, 'Nobody wants to hear it' ... But all of that music has stood the test of time. We may look a little dated, but that kind of music isn't."

"We're trying, I guess, in a way to recapture a moment in time," Egert continues. "We think all those people (that went to) the Renford, Ike & Iggy's, the Metro, and all those places, they'll all crawl out of the woodwork. It should be a blast for everybody, and us too."

"We're not offering anything new. It's mostly like putting on an old pair of shoes - a little stinky at first, but, in the end, they're pretty comfortable."