

# Rock concert at Churchill's benefits food bank

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Courtesy PhotoMembers of the band

DRAT are, back row from left, Dave Leonard, Tom McMurray, Tim Flynn and Sean MacDonald, and front row from left, Steve Reddy and Todd Grigar.

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FOR THE FLINT JOURNAL

The third annual Rock and Roll Benefit for the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan returns to Churchill's in downtown Flint this week. This time, there's a supergroup of sorts in the mix.

Flint's DRAT was originally formed as a Monkees cover band by bassist Sean MacDonald, guitarist Dave Leonard and guitarist Steve Reddy. But they never really got around to doing any Monkees covers and instead have been performing their own brand of revved-up covers in the rock and punk vein for the last four years.

The current lineup, which features guitarist Tom McMurray, singer Todd Grigar and drummer Tim Flynn, represents a bit of Flint rock royalty as all of the members involved have been in legendary Flint bands like Repulsion, The Bumps, Darvon, Genocide, The Freakies, Dejecta, Rats of Unusual Size, By Ween, Guilty Bystanders and Super Shock Control.

Well, except for Leonard.

Leonard is a latecomer to the Flint music scene. Or rather, a latecomer to performing as a musician on the Flint music scene.

After going to shows for years and as he said, “hanging around musicians,” Leonard decided to learn to play guitar and start or join a band. DRAT is that band. And, Leonard says, “It’s been a blast.”

DRAT’s setlist is made up of songs, as MacDonald joked, “that Dave can learn. That’s the main criteria for a DRAT cover.”

It’s, of course, all in good fun, just like most of what DRAT does.

With a setlist that includes songs from The Rutles, Faxed Head and Spinal Tap, DRAT is definitely a band with a sense of humor. But a sense of humor that rocks.

“We play stuff that’s fun,” MacDonald said. “And we’re willing to play just about anything.”

Reddy added, “We play songs by bands that everybody knows, but we don’t play the songs that everyone expects from those bands. We play the songs that we’d like to hear if we were at a gig watching some other band.”

Grigar continued, “We’re not a bar band that’s in it to make money, we’re out to have fun. And if you don’t get the joke, then it’s on you.”

As of right now, they’re most likely the only band in the Flint area ever to go from playing Black Sabbath to The Osmonds, which, Grigar said, “Shows just how seriously we take ourselves.”

There have been a few lineup changes in the four years DRAT has been together. The most recent two members are Flynn and McMurray, both long-time veterans of Flint’s music community.

Flynn had been in The Freakies with Grigar, McMurray and MacDonald.

“I missed playing in The Freakies,” Flynn said, “because we always had a lot of fun with our setlists and shows, so to get the chance to play with these guys again was really cool.”

Guitarist McMurray rounds out the three-guitar attack in DRAT, but don’t expect Lynyrd Skynyrd or Molly Hatchet, unless, of course, someone in the band suggests one of their songs (and it’s easy enough for Leonard to play).

#### Preview

- What: Third annual Rock and Roll Benefit, a fundraiser for the he Food Bank of Eastern Michigan

- Where: Churchill’s, 340 S. Saginaw St., downtown Flint

- When: Friday, Dec. 30; doors open at 8 p.m., music starts at 9 p.m.

- Who: Smiling Sacrifice, DRAT, Moon Boots, Prune

- Admission: \$5 for and 18-and-older show

- What else: 50/50 raffle, prizes

“We like to mix up our setlists and keep it fresh,” MacDonald said. “For this show, everybody brought two songs. Some stick. Some don’t.”

Reddy said he likes the addition of McMurray, “Thankfully, Tom came along and plays the leads I don’t want to play. And with three guitar players, the odds are better that one of us is going to be playing the right note.”

“This is DRAT’s first show since April,” MacDonald said “so it’s practically a reunion. We thought about changing our name since it had been so long, but we’re stuck being DRAT.”

And it’s a formula and a name that’s worked. DRAT plans to work on some originals in the future to add to the setlist.

This year’s Rock and Roll Benefit includes ’80s cover band Moon Boots, complete with two keyboard players, a reunion of Prude, and headliner Smiling Sacrifice.