

Fresh from Montgomery Gentry show, Bullhonky Deluxe starting to make some noise

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Courtesy PhotoBullhonky Deluxe

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FOR THE SAGINAW NEWS

Success often means having all the right people in place.

But Bullhonky Deluxe founding members guitarist/vocalist Brian Gallagher and bassist/vocalist Dennis Perkins know that sometimes it takes some adjusting to get everything right.

When the band won the 94.5 The Moose Country Superstar Finals in August, beating out six other area bands for a chance to open for Joe Diffie at the 3rd Annual Bobby Randall Birthday Bash in Midland this Sunday, Gallagher and Perkins agreed that everything finally came together.

It took a lot of work and some personnel changes to get there.

They started in 2007 as a three-piece: guitar, bass and drums, playing mostly covers of outlaw country and roots music, along with a few originals. They played their first gig as Bullhonky Deluxe in 2008.

“We were out playing most weekends,” Gallagher said, “and we had a pretty good following. But something was missing.”

Perkins added, “We were pushing to be something more than a bar band, but it just wasn’t coming together as a three-piece.”

In 2009, Bullhonky Deluxe became a four-piece, adding another vocalist/guitar player. That year, Perkins said, “We finally thought we had it down, but then we lost key members.”

So in March 2010, it was back to the drawing board. Luckily, they already knew vocalist Jamie Lane and lead guitarist/vocalist Jim Morgan, who were in a rock band called Morgan Lane. Lane and Morgan were ready for something new, since they had “been doing the rock thing for years, and I was pretty much done,” Lane said.

Morgan added, “We were at a point where we wanted to move on, and we merged our band with Bullhonky Deluxe.”

And that was the start of something big. Or so everyone thought.

“We were playing a lot of charity events and benefits, because we like to help out,” Perkins said, “and we were getting to be well known for that kind of thing. People would call us up and we’d go out and play no matter where they were.”

But the long road up isn’t without setbacks, and they lost another member.

Jim Morgan knew drummer Fido Kennington was looking for a band and thought he would be a good fit. After a few rehearsals, Bullhonky Deluxe realized they had the drummer.

“When Fido joined,” Gallagher said, “we really just clicked. He gets it like we do. So he was playing on our one-year anniversary show in March 2011.”

Since that time, Bullhonky Deluxe has written a few more songs, logged thousands more miles around Michigan and played more — and bigger — shows, including the Genesee County Fair and the Twang Thang in Midland, opening for Montgomery Gentry.

Preview

- What: 3rd Annual Bobby Randall Birthday Bash with special guest Joe Diffie
- Where: Midland County Fairgrounds
- When: Sunday (music starts at noon)
- Cost: \$10 advance; \$15 at the door
- Sponsored by: 94.5 The Moose



File Photo | The Saginaw

Bullhonky Deluxe band members had the chance to perform before thousands of concertgoers before the Montgomery Gentry concert this summer in Midland.

“That Montgomery Gentry show was a really big test for us,” Morgan said, “to see if we could push it to 6,000 people. And we did. It really elevated us from just being a bar band.”

Lane added, “We give it everything at every show. There was one weekend where we played five shows and I was really feeling it. But we wanted to give the fans our all because that really resonates with people. We don’t take one person for granted.”

And their fans agree. The “Bullhonky Nation” is there at every show, some coming down from Beaverton and Gladwin, or up from the Detroit area, sporting band T-shirts, singing and dancing at every show. And not just the covers: The Bullhonky Nation wants to hear the originals.

“Up north, we were playing Crump Days,” Kennington said, “Jamie asked what the crowd wanted to hear and the resounding response was ‘Horn’s Up’ and I thought ‘Hell yeah!’”

“Horn’s Up” and “Hurricane” are two recent Bullhonky Deluxe originals that the fans have really taken to and fit right into the band’s setlist alongside covers of classic Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard, newer outlaw country and some rocking versions of ZZ Top’s “La Grange” and The Rolling Stones’ “Dead Flowers.”

At the Lapeer Days show, where they opened for James Otto, Kennington said there was a kid who “got so excited when we played ‘Hurricane,’ I thought his head was going to explode.”

Bullhonky Deluxe is a band that plays music that appeals to all ages, according to Gallagher. “We can play for 10-year-olds to 90-year-olds, and they’re all into it.”

That they have members with more of a rock background in Lane, Morgan and Kennington means that, as Morgan said, “We’re opening people’s eyes to country because we give it enough rock that people really like it.”

In addition to still playing shows nearly every weekend, the band is developing bullhonkydeluxe.com, writing new songs that they will take into the recording studio and preparing for the future.

“We’re looking for that song that’s going to get us some airplay,” Gallagher said. “To have five guys who are all willing to work as hard as we do and still get along is a really rare thing. And it’s great that we’re all on the same page, working toward the same goal.”