

Summer Concert Series heats up

by Nicole Belanger |

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Kicking off its 36th season, this year's Summer Concert Series is bringing rockin' music, swingin' oldies, patriotic tunes and jazzy originals to Baker Park's band shell during a series of free live concerts typically attracting thousands.

"Over the years, it's grown significantly and we're bringing in more and more regional entertainment," said Jen Martin of Celebrate Frederick, the city organization sponsoring the summer-long concerts.

Returning to the bandshell for the second year, the Rock & Roll Relics are looking forward to kicking off the series on Sunday.

"It was a great concert and a beautiful day and everyone seemed to have a good time," said founding member Chip Chiappone of last year's concert.

Based in Gaithersburg, two members of the Rock & Roll Relics live in Frederick. In fact, many of the 11 bands playing in this year's series hail from Frederick or surrounding areas.

"We do think it's good to support them," Martin said of the local bands.

Bands play at 7 p.m. Sunday nights, with the season ending on Aug. 30. Admission is free, although sponsors request concertgoers bring canned goods to benefit the Frederick Food Bank. Last year, almost 4,000 canned goods were donated by the end of summer, Martin said.

In addition to the Rock & Roll Relics, bands playing this year include many returning favorites and some new faces.

Blue Sky 5, a classic swing band, will take the stage on July 12.

"Swing is very popular at the concerts. People love to get up and dance to it," Martin said.

Another popular artist, Shane Gamble, is bringing his soulful original music to Baker Park on June 28. A solo artist who hails from Frederick, Gamble performs all over the East Coast and has opened for groups like the Goo Goo Dolls and Toad the Wet Sprocket.

"It'll be nice to come home and play for the home crowd," Gamble said. The throaty singer will perform many songs from his third full-length CD, to be released in October, as well as hits from another recent album, "Behind the Blue." Accompanied by a five-piece band, Gamble's music is acoustic with vocal harmonies that add to the backdrop of drums, bass and a pedal steel guitar.

His new music is a mix of upbeat and mellow songs that include something for everyone, Gamble said.

The entire concert series is designed for families and listeners young and old, Martin said. "Some come every Sunday, but some concerts attract different ages," she added.



Photo courtesy of the Rock & Roll Relics
Celebrate Frederick's Summer Concert series will kick off this Sunday with the Gaithersburg-based oldies band, The Rock & Roll Relics.



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concerts attract different ages, she added.

The Rock & Roll Relics specialize in music from the 1950s and 60s with a little bit of 70s thrown in, Chiappone said.

"Our mission is to keep people hearing this music because the radio doesn't play them much anymore," he said.

Playing songs from the Beach Boys, the Beatles, Chuck Berry and Motown, band members also throw beach balls into the crowd and hand out hula hoops during "The Twist."

"We like to get the audience involved in the show and keep the area in front of the stage filled with people dancing," he said.

The Frederick Symphony Orchestra returns to the concert series on June 21.

"They had a huge draw last year," Martin said.

The season also includes the U.S. Naval Academy Band, blues musician Matt Wigler, New Orleans jazz trio Zydeco, bluegrass band Ernie Bradley and blues soloist Mary Ann Redmond, as well as a country band. Finishing the season is the JCJ Band – a "really fun Latin salsa band," Martin said.

Performers are chosen by a committee of volunteers who listen to CDs, attend various concerts and take recommendations with a goal of providing a mix of musical styles and talents.

At the end of each Sunday night concert, musicians from around the country will play the Baker Park Bell Tower Carillon for a unique, soulful sound that is rarely heard since the bells have become extinct in communities across the country.

"It takes a lot of skill and there are only a couple of these carillons in the country," Martin said.

Summer concert Series

When: 7 p.m. Sundays, beginning June 14

Where: Baker Park Bandshell, 2nd and Bentz Streets, Frederick

Tickets: Free

For a complete listing of performers: www.celebratefrederick.com

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