

40 years of Three Dog Night not enough for fans

BY JEFFREY LUTZ
The Wichita Eagle

In 1968, music may have been at its creative apex, with bands such as the Beatles, Beach Boys and Rolling Stones in their primes.

Three Dog Night was just getting started, but the group didn't want to miss out on music's greatest era.

Drawing inspiration from legends such as Brian Wilson, Joni Mitchell and Neil Young, Three Dog Night released 12 albums in six years, establishing the popularity the group still has 40 years later.

"It was a very exciting time in music," said Three Dog Night vocalist Danny Hutton. "That was the inspiration — everybody was trying to outdo everybody else, but it was friendly competition. Everybody was helping everybody else, pushing the music."

Three Dog Night, which performs Saturday night at the West



File photo

Three Dog Night members Cory Wells, left, and Danny Hutton in the late 90s. The band last released a studio album in 1976.

Bank Stage in a concert that is free with a River Festival button, offers a story of survival. But the group had plenty of tumultuous times.

In the midst of recording 18 Top 40 hits, including "Joy to the World," "One," "Mama Told Me Not to Come" and "Black and White," the band got caught up in the rock 'n' roll lifestyle.

"There was a lot of partying

going on, and I think we just lost that fire for the music," Hutton said. "It wasn't becoming fun. It just petered out, basically. There wasn't one moment where we just said, 'Let's stop.'"

Hutton, 65, left the band in 1976, a year before it split up altogether. After breaking a drug habit he said was a major reason he became burned out, he began longing for the days on the road.

"Everybody thinks they want to retire and lay back, but you have to have purpose," he said. "There's a Buddhist saying — you have to have something to do, someone to love and something to hope for. I didn't have any of that."

Hutton was alerted by band-mate Cory Wells that another group was calling itself Three Dog Night, so the two got together to stop it.

In the meantime, they discovered they shared a renewed passion for playing music and started on the path to re-forming the band.

"We decided that if we can all stay healthy and it's still fun, let's go back and try it," Hutton said. "We've been doing it since 1980, and it's still fun. I don't want to stop."

The band grew to as many as eight members but currently features six, including original members Hutton, Wells, Jimmy Greenspoon and Michael Alsup.

Though the band hasn't

If you go THREE DOG NIGHT

What: Rock band Three Dog Night in concert

Where: West Bank Stage

When: 8:30 p.m. Saturday

How much: Free with a River Festival button

released a full-length studio album since 1976, its popularity has remained strong because it tours almost constantly and because its songs remain relevant.

"Most of our songs are about emotions, like love, or they're party songs," Hutton said. "We're not really political. I don't think songs about emotions or having fun really get dated."

"We don't want people to come to the show so we can lecture them or bum them out. We want them to come to have fun."

Three Dog Night

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