

THE EXPONENT ONLINE

Alumnus returns to Purdue, brings band and bodhran

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Publication Date: 01/25/07

Kitchens and bathrooms are on opposite spectrums of the eating cycle. However, Bob Harke, a bodhran player, sees a vital similarity between the two.

"Kitchens are like bathrooms in that you get some very good acoustics," said Harke, lead vocals and musician of Kennedy's Kitchen. True to its name, the band, which has been playing traditional Irish music together for eight years, still gets together every Thursday to eat and practice their playing in founder John Kennedy's kitchen.

Kennedy's Kitchen will be performing from 8 - 11 p.m. on Thursday at Nine Irish Brothers, a local pub.

Matt Rose, general manager of Nine Irish Brothers, expects the concert to tie in closely to the pub's theme.

"It goes back to authenticity," he said. "They really go well with our concept."

For Harke, the show holds special meaning because even though he is a 1965 graduate of Purdue University, he has never returned to the city to play with his band before.

"My heart is still at Purdue," he said, despite earning a master's degree from Notre Dame. He also added, "We're just trying to branch out and be more well-known" and sees the Indianapolis and West Lafayette area as a big step in that direction.

One of many reasons the band appeals to such a wide audience is due to the work of 18 year-old whistle player Nolan Ladewski. He has proven to be a bridge between the old and the new.

"We get pretty rocking with Nolan being 18," said Harke. "He's really picked up more of the modern jigs and reels along with the traditional as well."

As a home-schooled senior in high school, Ladewski acquired much of his instrumental abilities from Kennedy, who is his uncle. The fact that both are of Irish descent directed the musical direction of the band.

And even though Irish music isn't exactly a widely adored genre in today's contemporary world, Kennedy's Kitchen has been well-received at most of its shows.

"People basically flock to us afterwards and tell us how they enjoyed it," said Harke.

Sherry Harke, wife of Bob and manager of the band, sees great potential for the group.

"They're past due for a tour in Ireland," she said.

The Exponent

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