

Legendary musician Joe Hall says he finds fame is a trap

By *WERNER BERGEN*, *EXAMINER ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR*
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A life filled with music has been the motto of musician Joe Hall.

The veteran rocker will be honoured Sunday in The Market Hall Bright Lights series. At the event, Hall will be interviewed by author and musician Paul Quarrington, perform with musicians from his path, listen to musical guests and watch vintage film footage from the late '70s.

Hall has been compared to everyone from Frank Zappa to Tom Waits, but he is an original, whose wit, social commentary, and entertaining stage presence made him one of Canada's legendary folk rockers, states Bill Kimball, in a Market Hall press release.

A fixture of the '70s Queen Street scene in Toronto with his band The Continental Drift, Hall has called Peterborough home for 20 years and continues to play music, record and go on tour.

In the '70s Hall was an inspiration to a generation of young musicians and audiences who found traditional folk too saccharine, disco too empty-headed and arena rock too bombastic.

Hall has become a mentor to a new generation of musicians, who record his songs and whose recordings he helps produce. Among these are the Silver Hearts, the 10-piece 'roots orchestra,' that has recorded numerous albums and toured the country. The core members of the Silver Hearts will be playing on the Bright Lights bill.

"I'm certainly gratified in the local scene," he said.

Hall said he was initially surprised when he was approached by Kimball.

He felt logistically it would be a monster.

Hall listed the stage layout and where the many musicians would stand.

"I don't know how big it's going to be," he said. The band is called Total Chaos Polytet.

In the last five years he has been recording and producing other musicians. He had also taken a 10-year hiatus keyboarding for his wife's (Anna Croatch) business.

When asked if he was looking forward to the afternoon, Hall said "I'm vibrating at an unusually high frequency."

And while Hall will perform, he will be interviewed by Quarrington too.

"Who knows what he'll get into, but I'm prepared," said Hall.

One of the questions will most certainly be why he never hit the big time, said Hall.

To him fame is a trap.

Hall admitted he probably undercut his trip to the big time.

"I was terrified of success. I shot myself in the foot as a survival mechanism."

The father of five, with two grandchildren, said he is on his third and last marriage.

Hall recorded three albums with The Continental Drift that have all become underground classics. The first, "HJ Boenke" was recorded by Bob and Daniel Lanois in Hamilton prior to the establishment of their world famous recording company Grant Avenue Studios, where Joe's second album, "On The Avenue" was recorded with Bob Lanois as engineer. Lanois will appear at this event to share reminiscences of recording these important albums.

"It was a long time ago. We lost track of each other since those days," said Lanois, in a telephone interview.

"We were kids, somehow we found each other. I think we were kindred spirits," said Lanois.

Hall and his band, as well as Lanois, all respected each other. They treated him as if he was a member of the band, Lanois said.

"Everyone was honest musically," he said.

Lanois said recording musicians like Hall is all about using the moment and taking advantage of "what's going on at the moment."

"For a lot of recording sessions I offer my services as a host to take to them to that step," he said.

"In those days we were rebels with a cause," Lanois said.

Bright Lights is a series of live on-stage conversations with great artists who live in, or hail from, the Peterborough area.

Previous artists have included playwright Drew Hayden Taylor, ballerina Evelyn Hart, composer R. Murray Schafer and theatre artist Gwen Brown.

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Event facts

What: In Conversation with Joe Hall, in Market Hall Bright Lights series.

When: Sunday, May 24 at 2 p. m.

Where: The Market Hall, 336 George St. N.

Tickets: \$12, available in advance at Showplace Box Office, call 742- 7469.

More: Visit www.markethall.org or www.joehall.org