

Travelling Milburys brings sounds of Orbison, Petty and Harrison to Town Park

George Harrison, Tom Petty, Roy Orbison, Jeff Lynne and Bob Dylan didn't waste any time individually earning musical immortality. But, when they came together as the Traveling Wilburys, they created their own unique blend of magic.

This Wednesday, July 27, you can see and hear the magic unfold before you as The Travelling Milburys takes the stage as part of the Town's popular Concerts in the Park Summer Series.

"We really try and stay true to the original," says bandleader John Cassano. "Anything that goes with it, we try and do. It's the look, the authentic instrumentation, and the stories that go along with the lyrics. All five were such huge artists, so we bring out the Tom Petty fans, Roy Orbison fans, Bob Dylan fans, and on and on. Back then the songs they produced were significantly different than what they are now. They had a structure to them, significant lyrics that weren't obscene, had melodies, harmonies, so when the Wilburys came together, five amazing voices combined together and you just don't get that anymore."

The Travelling Milburys came together almost by chance.

Cassano has been in bands most of his life and, prior to exploring the Wilburys, was in a tribute band paying tribute to contemporary Top 40 artists.

"There's nothing wrong with Pink, Katy Perry and Lady Gaga, but it wasn't my thing," he explains. "I was playing drums at the time and then something happened: Tom Petty passed away and I got to thinking, I've had this idea on the shelf for a little while to start a band that is a tribute to the Traveling Wilburys and the first thing I did was get on the phone."

When all the artists were assembled, it didn't take long for them to realize they were on to something special.

"I gave the band members six or seven songs to learn and we all came together one fateful night at a practice studio outside of Markham and, wow, as soon as we walked into the room and started playing the songs, people were looking at each other and that's when we realized it was pretty electric."

This electricity carried through to the start of the global pandemic, where the band was still performing gigs until the day before the first lockdown in March of 2020.

Not being able to perform was a life-altering experience, says Cassano, and so too is being able to play in front of a live audience once again.

"It has been two years of the occasional gig here and there, mostly in drive-ins where people could remain separated. For us, especially those of us who work as full-time musicians, performing again has been a godsend. We all love music, so this has been a breath of fresh air and greatly welcomed.

"We want our audiences to leave with just a feeling of satisfaction. It is all about enjoyment for the audience, so we have trivia and participation, but we try to be true to the songs and at the end of the day, whether they are lying on the grass or lying back in their lawn chair, we want to take them back to that time when they first heard those songs on the radio and that's what we try to hit with each and every song we do.

"This is an all-star band paying tribute to an all-star band. They are the best tribute artists doing the best individual artists who were in the Travelling Wilburys. It's an evening that won't be matched anytime soon."

For more on next week's free concert, and for a full roster of the Concerts in the Park series, visit aurora.ca/concertsinthepark.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter