



Hometown
PAGE 4B



Gardening
PAGE 5B



TV Listings
PAGES 6B-9B

SECTION B | Friday, April 1, 2011

FAB AND 'ABBEY'

Concert Association Gets Back To The Beatles When Abbey Road Band Performs In Yankton April 10

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If you saw the members of the Abbey Road Band walking down the street, you might never know what type of music they love to share with their audiences.

However, if you were to close your eyes and listen to just one song, you would be taken back to a sound so iconic, that many bands fear to try to cover it: Abbey Road honors the Beatles by covering their songs.

According to the band, they are, "No smoke and mirrors, no wigs or costumes, we are the real thing. ... A professional, fun-loving group with a great respect for the Beatles' songs and sound."

As a kick-off for the 65th anniversary membership drive of the Yankton Concert Association, the Abbey Road Band, based out of Rapid City, will be performing at the Summit Activities Center Theatre at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 10.

"You come to our show, we are going to take you back in time," said Monte Madison,

who handles the band's Paul McCartney vocals, bass, keyboards and lead guitar. "We hear that so often, people greet us at the end of the show with tears in their eyes saying, 'You took me back in time to a time of my youth I had forgotten all about. Thanks for the memories.' It is a great time and the ultimate compliment."

The other three members of the band are Tony Johnson (Ringo Starr), drums and vocals; Fred Gondzar (John Lennon), vocals, rhythm guitar, bass, keyboards and harmonica; and, Don Lerdal (George Harrison), vocals, lead guitar and bass.

Madison said that forming a Beatles tribute band was a dream he had nurtured his entire life, but anytime he approached other musicians about forming a band, he was told it just couldn't be done. He didn't believe that, and finally in 2002, the band came together.

Since that time, Abbey Road has become one of the premier Beatles cover bands in the country.

"I kept hearing, 'We have all tried playing



COURTESY PHOTO

Meet the Abbey Road Band — from left: Don Lerdal, Monte Madison, Fred Gondzar and Tony Johnson. The Beatles tribute band performs in Yankton on Sunday, April 10, as part of the Yankton Concert Association's season series.

this music before, and it is just too difficult to create it accurately." Madison said. "I didn't believe that and finally found some lads, (who) work very hard and work to put a show together that sounds like the Beatles."

Because the music is so familiar, the group knows it can't merely be good: It must be as close to perfect as it can.

"The critics are really on our case if we don't have the music exactly right," Madison said. "But you know, we have never had someone come up and tell us we didn't pull it off. Every hardcore Beatle fan comes up and tells us that they are going to be listen-

ing, and they have always come up to us afterwards and said, 'Congratulations, you have passed the audition.'"

Johnson says the band enjoys that challenge.

"I encourage our audiences to listen to Beatles music on the way (to the concert) so they can find faults with us," he said. "That is my thing. I am looking forward to somebody saying, 'Oh, you guys didn't do something right,' because it has never happened. Usually all I get is, 'Oh, you don't even look like the Beatles.' That is not the point. Listen to the music. How did you like the music?"

While the Abbey Road Band members know they have to be perfect, they also acknowledge it is the moments when they are not that let the crowd know they are a real band.

"(Madison) is a psycho, you never know what he is going to do at any given time on stage, and it is funny," Johnson said. "Sometimes he comes off with something that makes me lose track of what I am doing and I lose track of where I am. It really loosens things up. I think it is important for

■ BEATLES, Page 10B please

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