



GREAT MUSIC AND GREAT TIMES WITH WAYNE HUFF

By Lorraine Payette

If you like classic rock and enjoy an artist who can not only play and sing, but also has an infectious sense of humour blended with the ability to make everyone feel good, then you are looking for Wayne Huff.

"I have been playing professionally for about 45 years," he said. "Mostly locally, but occasionally I'll branch out to Ottawa (Hurley's in Stittsville) or the other side of Toronto (Port Dover).

I've never been out of the country professionally, and have very seldom performed more than four hours from my home town."

Although a mild mannered courier driver by day, given even the slightest opportunity he'll grab his guitar and magically transform into his alter ego – known lovingly to his fans as "Animal" after the character from the Muppets.

"I specialize in classic rock (always been a rocker at heart), but occasionally branch into what you might call 'outlaw' country (Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Kristofferson, etc.)," he said. "I also have an 'adult' comedy set, but obviously it's not welcome in every venue."

Although he respects country music fans, he plays very little of what modern fans think of as country music. He feels it just isn't him, and he tries to stay true to what he feels is best.

Asked once who he would like most to jam with, he had to think about it.

"Man, that's a tough call, there are so many of them out there. If I'm forced to choose one, I guess I'd have to go with Neil Young, since his music and voice are most suited to my playing and singing style."

The comic side of his music is probably what people think of most when they think of Wayne, and they come out wherever he plays – whether at one of the many pubs and restaurants in Gananoque, the School House Jam in Rockport, or any of a wide selection of private parties, barbecues, or other functions. However, he also has a more serious side.

"Most often I play solo, but I've also taken part in many open jams, the latest one being the celebration of life for a great friend, an awesome musician and a wonderful, kind soul," he said.

"We had been friends for many years. He'd had previous struggles with cancer, and recovered, but his latest battle was, unfortunately, one that he wasn't going to win. Since he was laid up, and his loving wife was caring for him full time, neither one of them was working, so I decided to hold a fundraiser for them.

"The response I received from friends and fellow musicians was nothing short of amazing. I ended up with a dozen singles and duos, and 6 bands, playing over a total of 8 ½ hours, and we raised \$4,000 to help them out. It never ceases to amaze me how the musical community comes together to honor and assist one of their own."

He performs regularly, yet has never produced a CD. He did record a version of John Denver's "Garden Song" to help promote the Lansdowne community garden, but his magic is best experienced live.

No matter the size of the audience, Wayne is always happy to share his music. Just head to the closest local venue when he's there, and get ready for the time of your life. **LH**