

Ooks of Hazard to Play the Fourth

By SUE PASCOE
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If you feel like a good smile and some great music, then make your way to the Palisades High School stadium to hear the Ooks of Hazard play on July 4. The nine-member band (seven ukeleles, drums and an accordion) will follow the Palisades High band, and open for the All Star Cover Band.

Amazing Music's Patrick Hildebrand, who plays tenor and baritone ukelele in the band and provides vocals, says that many people have an image of Tiny Tim, singing in falsetto, strumming the tiny instrument. That image sharply contrasts the Ooks.

"It is an underrated and misunderstood instrument," said Hildebrand, who formed the band with Charlie Diaz after an open mike at the Talking Stick in Venice in 2010.

"Charlie started bringing in a uke and challenged me," said Hildebrand, who brought his own uke to the club.

Ed Marshall, who played for Devo, stopped by with a mandolin, and Charlie told him, "That's not a uke, but don't worry you're in, you just have to get a uke." The next time Marshall came in, he was carrying a tenor uke.

Marshall, Diaz, Hildebrand and Nick Dean (who plays tenor and sings) became the core of the band. Rick Torres (a former English Beat performer) plays the base uke; Sam Morrow, described as a brilliant mu-



Left to right: Ed Marshall, Matt Tecu, Charlie Diaz, Rick Torres (in the back shadow), Patrick "PJ" Hildebrand, Sam Austin Morrow, Nick Dean and Diana Hobstetter (aka Mrs. Hobbs).

"A few chords strummed on a ukulele, enough to please a few others beside yourself, does more good in this world than the combined efforts of all the financiers and politicians that ever lived." — Frank Littig

sician and the "young" guy, sings and plays a baritone uke; Matt Tecu is on drums, and Mrs. Hobbs (Diana Hobstetter) is the vocalist and plays accordion.

"[At open mikes] People would ask us to play different songs," Hildebrand said. "After one of these performances someone walked up and said 'You should call yourself The Ukes Of Hazzard.'" Learning that the name was already taken and the group changed

"ukes" to "ooks."

They did a benefit show and it was so well received, they made a video playing "Kids," by MGMT. The timing couldn't have been better—MGMT played Coachella and the Ooks YouTube video went viral.

Afterwards, "We heard from people all over the world, who said they were thankful and grateful that our music wasn't processed," Marshall said.

"Organic is how they described the music," Hildebrand said.

"With ukes, you rely on yourself to be the music," Marshall said. "You become the uke and the uke becomes you."

"People hear sounds they are not accustomed to; it's a different frequency," Hildebrand said. "It's fresh and it's new and it makes people happy."

"I agree," Marshall said. "I have been in bands for more than 20 years, but having this tiny little instrument in my hands is humbling in a way. It's a little guitar, but has big sounds."

The two men describe what happens on stage as magical. "It blends together and it works," Marshall said. "We're fortunate."

Maybe the best thing about ukes, said Hildebrand, "is that they are small and portable. We can break these things out anywhere and be inspired."

Hildebrand says the group plays all sorts of music. "We dig everything from Americana, bluegrass, rock, punk to funky and all else in-between."

In addition to putting the Ooks' twist to others' music, members of the band also write original songs, and about half of the Fourth of July program will be original material.

The group plays local gigs, national shows and benefits. "A good show is when you walk around with a great feeling," Marshall said. "We helped raise \$16,000 for an orphanage. That's a good show."

Hildebrand's father, Patrick Sr., came to Pacific Palisades in 1969, working in Earl's Bay Music Shop, which he bought two years later.

Subsequently, he moved the store to Antioch and renamed it Music Bag. Hildebrand remembers kids were in and out of the store and hanging around the nearby Village Green, which led townspeople to dub them "greeners."

"From the 1950s to the 1980s, it [Pacific Palisades] was a good place to be a kid," Hildebrand said. "There were lots of mom-and-pop shops."

Hildebrand remembers there was an economic shift in the town in the 1980s and rents skyrocketed. "My dad had to figure out how to stay in business. He found the store's current location hidden in the alley behind Elyse Walker and Beech Street Cafe.

"He said it was a miracle and amazing to find the place," Hildebrand said. The name Amazing Music was coined and stuck. "The store has been on the site for 34 years. "Now we're teaching some of the grandkids of kids my dad taught."

Hildebrand is married to Kat Howell, a doula, and they have two children: Kalani, 13, and Micah, 8.

Ooks T-shirts and CDs will be available at the concert. To book the Ooks, phone: (310) 980-8312 or e-mail marshalled@mac.com. Visit: theooks.com. To view the video, visit: youtube.com/user/OoksOfHazzard.