

Making music



The quantity and quality of music and musicians that have emerged from Northern over the years is noteworthy, so to speak. Whether they were nurtured as a music major in the music department, as a member of the marching band, by a fellow musical roommate, or as a part of a student band playing weekend gigs, something about the process of undergoing an education at Northern leads many to a lifetime of memories tied to music or to making a career of it. Here are some of the folks out there doing just that, or on campus spreading the science, art and joy of sound around to a new batch of inspired students.

Today's NMU Music Department has 10 full-time faculty members overseeing about 100 music majors and minors and a dozen ensembles. Additionally, a large number of Northern students who are not music majors or minors interact with the department by

participating in one of the ensembles or by taking a music class for liberal study or elective purposes.

Did you know that:

◀ NMU certified music graduates have a 100 percent placement rate due to the national shortage of certified music teachers. "There is the misconception that jobs for music teachers are hard to come by when actually there is a demand for someone who is certified to teach music," says Don Grant, department head.

◀ NMU is the only Michigan university to have Wenger V-Rooms, which were constructed as part of the Thomas Fine Arts renovation in 2005. The V-Room practice suites use technology to recreate the acoustics of world class venues. The technology enables students to switch the acoustics of a musical space like changing channels on a television set. Push a button, and a student is transported to center stage. Press another, and the student is seated in a gothic cathedral. Students can immediately sense how to adapt their playing/singing for differing environments. NMU's percussion ensemble room is the largest Wenger studio ever built.

◀ About 950 students take MU 125: Music in Society each year. Professor Floyd Slotterback always gets confused looks then chuckles from his Music in Society students when he introduces them to John Cage's 4-33 composition, in which the composer specified that the performer should

"sit at the piano, get out a stop watch, start it,

then sit and wait for exactly four minutes and 33 seconds. The music comes from the audience noises and environmental sounds, not from the piano," says Slotterback. "So, as the last listening identification question on my final, I play nothing but silence and ask for the name and composer of the work."

◀ The NMU Jazz Festival has been held for more than 20 years. Recent guest performers have included composer/arranger Fred Sturm, pianist Bill Carrothers and violinist Randy Sabien. High school jazz bands from throughout the state attend the festival and participate in workshops with each year's guest artist. The 2010 festival will take place on April 16 and feature jazz vocalist Kevin Mahogany.



◀ Reynolds Recital Hall, which was made possible in part by a contribution from the Phyllis Reynolds family of Marquette, is now where most of the NMU Music Department's 25-30 concerts take place. Opened in 2005, the 300-seat venue is known for its exceptional acoustics, a major improvement over Jamrich Hall, where concerts were held in the past.

They've got the music in them

By Rebecca Tavernini



Beddow, center, and his band

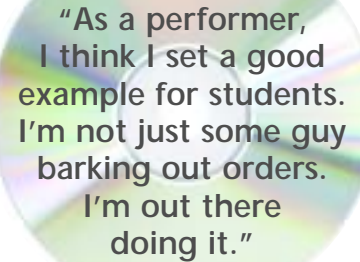
Bugs Beddow

I wake up with joy every morning, knowing it's going to be a music-filled day," says **Bugs Beddow '75 BME**, trombonist with the namesake Bugs Beddow Band, voted Detroit's Best R&B Band for the past five years. Not to be pigeon-holed, Beddow was also recognized as the city's Outstanding Classical Performer.

He describes his band's sound as "hot, danceable rockin' rhythm and blues with a lot of rhythmic stress—leading to toe tapping." They have nine albums. "I'm so proud of my band," he says, adding that they all sing on top of being amazing musicians.

Between his band playing 120-150 gigs each year and his own performance in 10 classical concerts, he teaches music at three different schools five days a week, offers private lessons in the evening and heads up White Sabbath, the youth Christian rock group at his church. He also runs his band's Web site and bookings and has been a voting member of the Grammy's since 2005. He chuckles, looking back at his days at Northern, when he thought that music would be an easy way to make money.

Beddow actually started in the pre-dentistry program, per his grandmother's wishes. But he soon discovered that "God's work for me was the trombone and music." He credits his teachers at Northern, like Robert Stephenson and Ron Caviani, Sr., for helping show him the way. "Caviani taught life lessons and music lessons. He kept me from getting a big head!" Beddow played in the NMU jazz, concert, pep and marching bands and wind ensemble. On the side, he was



"As a performer, I think I set a good example for students. I'm not just some guy barking out orders. I'm out there doing it."

in local bands such as Cooper Lake Drive and Rusty and the Troubadours. He recalls one show at Snuffy's, where "two huge guys got in a fight near the stage, and in slow motion I saw 400 pounds of Yooper land on my trombone. Because I couldn't play the second half of the set they only paid me \$10 that night!"

At NMU, he had the pleasure of playing with jazz greats Woody Herman, Stan Kenton and Maynard Ferguson. Since, he and his band have shared the stage with Spyro Gyra, Blood, Sweat, & Tears, Boz Scaggs, Robert Cray and Eddie Money, recorded with Earl Klugh and have an album out with Detroit legend Mitch Ryder, "How I Spent My Vacation." Beddow also was in the 1992 movie *Hoffa*, with Jack Nicholson, Danny DeVito and Armand Assante.

"As a performer, I think I set a good example for students," he says. "I'm not just some guy barking out orders. I'm out there doing it." He notes that it's a reciprocal relationship: "The children help keep me young and give me a lot of musical feedback. And they've taught me to be a nicer person."

Other teachers ask him how he gets to the students the way he does, commenting that they've been hearing kids singing or humming a certain tune all week.

"It doesn't cost any money to hum a song," he says. "It's good entertainment."

www.bugsbeddow.com



Kirsten Gustafson

“Mercury poured over velvet *and* satin” is how Kirsten Gustafson’s voice is described on MySpace. Still, she claims she’s a terrible karaoke singer.

“I need that live interaction,” says **Gustafson ’86 BA**. “It’s got to be created right now.” While she likes many kinds of music, “jazz has the most freedom in it. It’s almost 100 percent creative.”

That doesn’t mean this Atlantic Records recording artist can’t front a band. In 2007 she toured with the Nelson Riddle Orchestra, starring in a tribute show to Ella Fitzgerald. Previously, she was with Samba Bamba!, the house band at a popular Chicago club, also performing in New York and L.A. This was after a stretch playing in Paris bistros and nightclubs and being invited to perform at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in Switzerland—all on the heels of her critically acclaimed debut solo CD, “You Taught My Heart to Sing,” in 1992.

Despite having piano lessons as a child, playing French horn in high school and spending a life-changing summer at Interlochen at 16, she was not involved in music programs at all while at Northern, though she did sing with saxophonist Cab Whitmore. Her major was German, and she had planned to teach.

“One thing led to another,” she recalls. “Music is not a thing you can stop. It’s always in you. It plays in my head all the time. When I hear people talking, it turns to songs.”



These days, she continues harnessing her musical engine, back in the Marquette area, working on an album with **Dave Zeigler ’06 BS**, performing at local venues, awaiting the release of a new album, “Wait Until Dark”—a reinterpretation of Led Zeppelin and Emerson, Lake and Palmer songs (“quite a departure” she says)—and quietly celebrating the just-released “Ladies Sing for Lovers,” a posthumous release of Frank Mantooth compositions performed by twelve of his favorite singers, with Gustafson contributing “When Did You Leave Heaven?” She’ll also be featured on a live CD celebrating the 75th anniversary of Baker’s Keyboard Lounge, Detroit’s oldest jazz club.

In the meantime, she does voice overs and jingles, is a representative for a natural food and herb company and manages property. “I’ve done all kinds of work. You have to do that as a musician,” she says. Her favorite day job, though, was photo retouching—before the digital age. “Using color discernment skills, working with a brush... I just love things like that.”

That sounds a lot like the techniques she brings to her heartfelt, colorful interpretation of jazz standards.

www.myspace/kirstengustafson



Pearl Django, with Leppanen at top right

Rick Leppanen



“You can say I’m an accidental musician,” explains **Rick Leppanen ’72 BS**. “Coming home from football practice at Marquette Senior High School, I got in an auto accident and ended up in the hospital for 101 days. My mother said, ‘You need something to do,’ and bought me a guitar.”

He taught himself to play and eventually music took over his pursuit of a civil engineering degree. Though he ended up with a degree in math, his senior year consisted

of only music classes (and playing in local rock bands). On the cusp of graduating, he was offered the chance to go on the road with a band and headed to New York City. Though that fell through, after he got to the Big Apple, he learned of someone who needed a bass player in Florida for a variety showband, playing wholesome music—The Main Street Singers. The popular group would later be the centerpiece of the 2003 Christopher Guest mockumentary *A Mighty Wind*.

Eventually he and his partner, **Cherrie Adams '80 BME**, ended up in Seattle, she as an award-winning elementary school music teacher, and he with a new band dedicated to playing gypsy jazz or Hot Club music. The band, Pearl Django, is inspired by the French creator of the 1930's/'40's musical genre, Django Reinhardt, and was one of the first U.S. groups to make it their primary style of music.

Leppanen, who plays double bass, describes it as “a sweet, intimate sound, with lots of use of melody.” With no drums, and a soothing presence of accordion, keyboards and strings, it instantly creates a sense of sitting in a Left Bank café on a summer day. Pearl Django has been together for 15 years (and yes, the name is a nod to fellow Seattle rockers Pearl Jam, or Pearl Djam, as Leppanen spells it). When they were featured on National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” in 2001 “it was a major shot in the arm,” reports Leppanen. So

was airplay on KPLU, the most popular streamed jazz station in the world. They’ve also been voted Best Jazz Band in Seattle. All that has led to nine albums with sales of over 60,000 CDs (an impressive number for jazz sales), which Leppanen manages through the band’s Modern Hot Records Label. “You have to wear

many hats to survive as a musician,” he comments, adding that, “you’re always re-auditioning for work, having to prove yourself time and again. There’s lots of competition; it’s a fun job and lots of people want to do it.

Leppanen loves the familiarity, collaboration and evolution of the group, which tours internationally. “Our music has a strong feeling of movement. We’ll often keep developing or changing a song after it’s recorded. Doing something identical to the last performance means you’re not a jazz group. We want to keep growing.”

www.pearldjango.com



Chasin' Steel, with Adam Carpenter holding fish

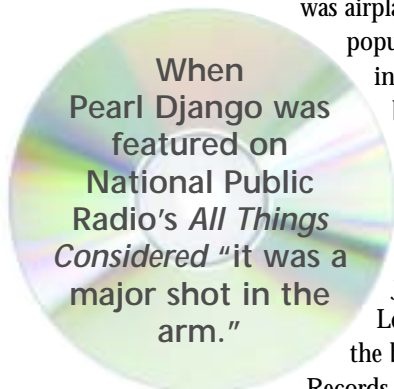
Chasin' Steel

“Spring Runoff” sounds like a swiftly flowing U.P. stream in April. “Wanna Be a Trout Bum” is about living downstate longing for the U.P. And “Drink My Dinner,” well, you can guess.

“Marquette makes our music sound the way it does,” says **Adam Carpenter '95 BS** of Chasin' Steel. “The isolation of the U.P. put us in a bubble while we were developing our sound. We wanted to appeal to Toivo Maki and the everyday person.” What developed was a hybrid of acoustic bluegrass with a high-energy rock n' roll edge and a bit of country thrown in. And a great friendship among Carpenter and brothers **Jacob '04 BS** and **Jonah '03 AAS Kuhlman**.

It all started in typical U.P. fashion, too, at a Trout Unlimited meeting, where Adam, who was on the board, met Jacob, who was president of the group's student association. Their love of fishing is behind the band's name, referring to steelhead salmon. They combined their already impressive musical skills and even some songs Carpenter had crafted as a student at Northern. This summer, seven years after meeting, they'll be the featured act at the Trout Unlimited National Convention. With two albums, gigs at the Michigan Fly Fishing Festival, on a Caribbean Bluegrass Cruise, and as opening acts for such big names as the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Dierks Bentley, Chasin' Steel has found their niche. And they still find time to scout out a good fly fishing stream when they're on the road.

Fittingly, Carpenter, lead vocalist and mandolin player, is also host of a daily radio show, “The Outdoor Report,” and uses his skills as a public relations major to market the band. Banjo maestro Jacob gives lessons at a music store and Jonah, on guitar and hammered

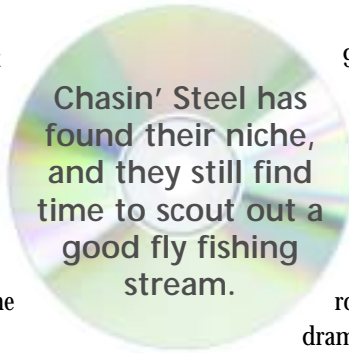


dulcimer, is a production supervisor at a manufacturing plant.

"It was a real blessing when we got together. They're phenomenal musicians," says Carpenter. "We sometimes become spectators watching the others play and have to snap out of it and get back to our part in the song.

"People are turned on by the energy in our band. We can't stand the idea of being background music," Carpenter adds. "We want everyone to get up and dance!"

www.chasinsteel.com



Chasin' Steel has found their niche, and they still find time to scout out a good fly fishing stream.

90 percent of the people who know who I am came across my music on the Internet. I make about 90 percent of my music sales through my online store and iTunes. The Internet has had a huge impact on music."

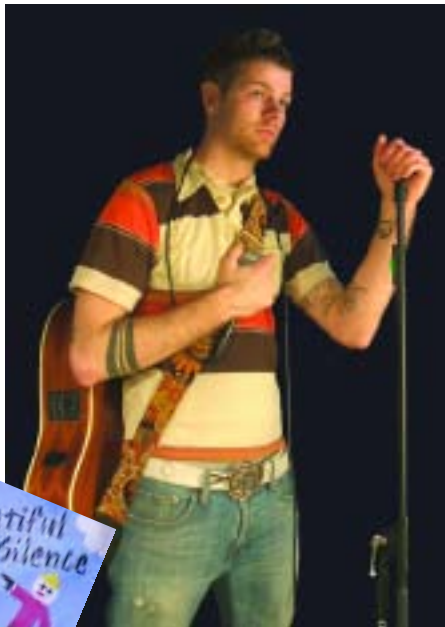
Faccio says that in the eight years since he started playing music (after getting a paper route in order to buy a guitar) there has been a dramatic transformation of the tools available online for independent artists. Still, "You can't just make a good record and expect people to find you. You have to find them," he says. The very tools that have allowed him to create his music and a huge following are also the ones enabling others to as well. "You really have to be something special to get heard in the flood of music there is out there."

The toughest thing about being an independent artist, he says, is paying for everything himself with any money made going back into things like paying for gas, food and restocking merchandise. "The advantages are great, though, especially as a songwriter, because when people hear them and like them, there is a real feeling of satisfaction I get from that."

Given that Faccio works full time as an aircraft mechanic, goes to school full time at NMU and is serving in the Army National Guard, it's remarkable that he has time for music, which he fits in by performing weekend shows and writing and playing on his own any chance he can. "Music gets me through every day. It's amazing how it can influence your moods and make you feel better."

Specializing in sound and lyrics he describes as "head-over-heels admiration set to light drum machine pulsations and acoustic guitar accents," it's easy to see how he could be a virtual crowd pleaser.

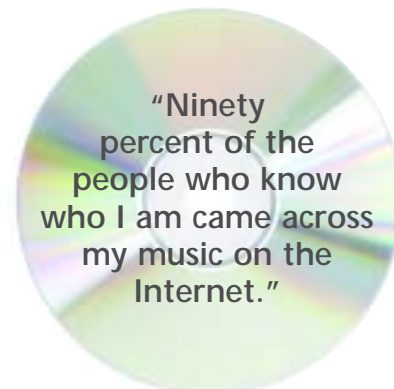
www.abeautifulsilence.com



James Faccio

A modern version of a one-man band is how one might describe **James Faccio '06 Cert.** of A Beautiful Silence, who plays guitar, bass guitar, drums and piano. But you won't find him busking on a street corner, with his guitar case open for tips. Instead, more than a million people have found him on MySpace and YouTube.

"Without the Internet, honestly, I wouldn't be as far as I am now," says the 22-year-old who also writes, records and produces all of his own songs. "I would say



"Ninety percent of the people who know who I am came across my music on the Internet."

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Current members of Terracotta half-life, from left, are Kevin Baker, Chris Potter, Jennie Peano, Obadiah Metivier and Matt Olson. Aaron Kippola and Steve Leuthold are not pictured.

Terracotta half-life

Keeping a band together is never an easy thing, explains **Obadiah Metivier '08 BS**. “After playing with previous bands that disintegrated for various reasons, I decided to start my own project so that I could ensure its continuity. Terracotta half-life was the result. Over the last four years or so, we’ve had about 16 different people in this band. Most were NMU students at the time and many have moved elsewhere in search of jobs after graduating. I think it’s important to share a strong vision of what the band should be, and to take the necessary steps to make it reality.”

Keyboardist **Kevin Baker '09 BS**, agrees that it’s cool Metivier has kept the band together despite all of the changes in the lineup. As much as he enjoys being a part of the band, with its musical style described as

“tropical funk,” he can’t help hoping he’ll soon be creating another

hole to fill. “As a recent graduate, I’ve actively been pursuing jobs pertinent to my degree in psychology/human biology,” he says.

“It’s a drag considering that this inevitably means having to leave the Marquette area and my gig with Terracotta half-life.

Where I’ll end up is really in the air, but music is always going to be a big part of what keeps me going.”

On the other hand, singer **Jennie Peano '08 BFA**

(who studied voice with Kirsten Gustafson—see page 11), is thinking that going back to school will actually help her find more time for music. “I have a BFA in photography, but I discovered that doing photography as a full-time job would leave me with very little time for my music,” she says. “I am currently going to school to be an RN. By being a nurse, I will have the option to work only a few days a week and have plenty of free time for singing and writing music. I don’t ever want my creative outlets to feel like work. Music is how I express myself and escape from both the chaos and the mundane chores of everyday life.”

Membership in the band is not limited to students or recent grads, however. Art and Design professor Steve Leuthold plays wind instruments with the group. “Keeping a band together requires a delicate balance of democracy and leadership; a shared sense of musical direction amongst the members, combined with a tolerance for varying tastes and ideas; and a mutual respect so that major personality clashes do not occur,” an equilibrium he finds that exists with Terracotta. “Having places to gig, projects to record or other long-term goals also provides cohesion. Mostly, there should be a spirit of fun or people will lose interest.”

Metivier, a computer information systems alumnus who runs a Web design company called Middle Ear Media, adds that having a good, solid band—even one that’s constantly transforming—is not enough. “Live music requires interested, supportive audiences. Get out and hear some live music this week!” ■

www.terraccottahalfife.com



Moonlighting musicians

By Kristi Evans



Professor Phil Watts and family

For the past several summers, Phil Watts has returned to the Appalachian Mountains near his native North Carolina. The NMU HPER professor gets in some rock climbing, a favorite hobby and the focus of much of his scholarly research. But his real motivation is to invigorate his longtime passion for the old-time “hillbilly” music made popular by the Carter Family in the 1920s and featured more recently on the *O Brother Where Art Thou* soundtrack.

Watts and his family attend an intensive week-long seminar at the Augusta Heritage Center in West Virginia. It features classes led by traditional musicians and those dedicated to preserving the art form, workshops and jam sessions, adding up to total immersion in Appalachian music.

“I grew up with it and I try to keep that interest alive even though I’ve been in Marquette for 31 years,” Watts says. Watts serves on the board of the Hiawatha Music Cooperative, which hosts a summer festival at Marquette’s Tourist Park and offers a scholarship to send a young person to the Augusta Heritage Center. He also participates in local acoustic music jams. “I’m a real believer in community recreational music instead of always having to be on a stage

performing everywhere. We just sit in a circle and take turns leading songs.”

The guitar is his main instrument, but Watts also dabbles in mountain dulcimer and the old-time claw hammer banjo. His wife, Annette—a Virginia native—plays autoharp. The couple enjoys singing old “modal” harmonies and their daughter, Salem, joins in on vocals and guitar.

Watts is one of several NMU faculty and staff members who moonlight as musicians. While his interest is in recreation rather than public performance, there are some who enjoy entertaining audiences in their free time. Here are just a few examples:

- **Dan Truckey ’90 BS**, director of the Beaumier U.P. Heritage Center and Northern’s International Performing Arts Series, is a singer/songwriter. He performs a variety of genres as a solo artist and contemporary folk with his brother, Drew, as the Truckey Boys. The duo released one CD and Dan has three solo recordings to his credit. Truckey started performing folk when he was a student at NMU. He also played in the university jazz band and even joined the cast of an opera under the direction of professor Rob Engelhart. He complements his vocal skills by playing guitar, bass, saxophone and percussion.

“I perform music because I would go crazy if I didn’t, and I have an understanding spouse,” Truckey says. “I need that creative outlet because I wouldn’t have one otherwise. I’m not an artist. I can’t write prose very well. Since I was a child, music was my main creative bent. I love being around other musicians as

well because I’m as much a fan of it as a performer.”

- Biologist Brent Graves is a member of two local bands: the Flying Martini Brothers, which performs an eclectic mix and also features art and design faculty member Rob LaLonde; and Two Track Ramblers, a bluegrass-type group that includes NMU alumni **Jason Moody**, **Doug Kitchel** and **Jamie Kitchel**.

“When my kids were little, my wife was working nights. I’d go out and play and come home and pay the babysitter more than I made. It’s really not about the money. Anything I make I put back into equipment and instruments anyway. It’s a lot of fun to get out in front of people and play. There’s a tight-knit group of people in town who play quite a bit.”

- **Mike Letts ’84 BFA** recalls keeping busy in bands four to five nights a week as an undergraduate with all of the Marquette establishments that offered live music. Letts eventually joined the NMU art and design faculty, but music remains a vital part of his life. He writes original songs, plays guitar and sings with the Flat Broke Blues Band. NMU alumni **Walt Lindala ’90 BS**, **Mark Johnson ’94 BA**, **’99 MA** and **Lorrie Hayes ’83 BFA**, **’86 MA** are also members. Letts has also performed with The Queen City Rockers, New Riders of the Seney Stretch, Country Tradition and others.

“As an artist, music is a product of my creative process, especially in doing original music. It’s no coincidence that many on the art faculty play instruments. Many students share that interest, so they will come out to our gigs. Seeing a role model of ways to live a creative lifestyle is a big motivator. Music is excellent for keeping an active mind, and it’s a great feeling to help people have fun and get them dancing.” ■

Carrying a tune at NMU over four decades

By Kim Hoyum '06 BS



After 40 years of teaching at NMU, and at 70 years of age, Elda Tate isn't planning to stop anytime soon.

The numbers don't make her a relic; her student-organized birthday party was a hot event on Facebook, and she holds classes with trademark enthusiasm and humor. She also continues to perform on her chosen instrument, the flute, in concerts and recitals in the area.

"I love to teach," Tate says, adding she enjoys the music theory and history classes, but the flute class is something different. It's a way to return to how earlier cultures saw music, as a basic skill everyone learned as part of everyday life.

"The Native American flute is an instrument anyone can play, and it sounds so beautiful," she says. "Some of the things we play take so much work and so many years to sound good, and it's something people can get into music by playing without investing their whole lives."

Tate is originally from the Gulf Coast of Texas and attended Delmar College in Corpus Christi before getting a doctorate in music from the University of Texas. She then moved to New York City to study flute under the principal flutists of the New York City Opera and the Metropolitan Opera. She spent time there playing in opera and symphonic orchestras before getting into teaching.

Northern was looking for a flute professor and found her.

"I was in New York playing and studying, and one of my best friends was teaching here. There was an opening and he called me and urged me to apply," she recalls. "I was interested in teaching at a university, so I decided to try it."

It's a way to return to how earlier cultures saw music, as a basic skill everyone learned as part of everyday life.

Since then, Marquette has been the inspiration for her interest in American Indian music.

"The way of life and the connection to the Earth, and this is just such a beautiful place, it makes sense to study that," she says.

Her colleagues, past and present, have only good things to say about Tate, who also served as department head for 14 years.

Current NMU Music Department head Don Grant also attended Delmar College and said as a new student, he recalled seeing Tate's photo posted on the department wall there, as an instrumental music competition winner.

"I knew who Elda was before I knew Elda," Grant says.

In the years following, they became classmates in the same doctoral program at the University of Texas.

"She's the kind of person that if you need something done, you can count on Elda to get it done," he says, noting she has taught "just about everything" in the music department.

Grant praised Tate's commitment to teaching and to NMU.

"(She's) a very altruistic spirit, very dedicated to her students and very dedicated to Northern. I don't know many people anywhere in teaching who've been in one place for that amount of time."

Diane Veale teaches music in Spencer, Wis., but was a graduate assistant in NMU's Music

Department in the early 1980s and still maintains a friendship with Tate, her former teacher.

"She always had a sparkle about her," Veale says. "It's hard to believe she's 70. She was always just so creative and open-minded, and so curious. I always admired that about her, that thirst for knowledge, which she still has."

Veale says Tate's love for life makes her beloved by her students and an asset to NMU.

"She's just always looking for the humor in things and always very light-hearted. The things she takes seriously, she really takes seriously— but she's serious about having fun." ■

Reprinted with permission by The Mining Journal, September 13, 2008.

A Drum Lesson

By Cindy Paavola '84 BS

Mike Treacy didn't make the Native American hand drum for his Native American Experience class project because he wanted to delight his three young children—although they do love Dad's drum. He chose to make the drum because he loves building challenges.

Having worked in the parts manufacturing industry for about six years, Treacy says that one thing he misses about his former occupation is building things from scratch. "At my old job, the engineers would walk in and tell us, 'I just a told customer we could do this, now you guys figure out how.' I loved that part of the job."

Treacy, who plays guitar, bass guitar and mandolin, also has an interest in music of his Irish heritage and was pleased to find numerous similarities between the bodhrán, a



hand-held drum used in Irish folk music, and the traditional Native American hand drum.

"When trying to understand another culture it is often easiest to focus on the similarities first. After that, even the differences tend to seem less different," he explains.

For materials Treacy selected a maple hoop for the frame, elk hide for the drum face, and water buffalo rawhide lace.

The effort was as much a math

project as a one related to music and culture because pivotal steps included finding the exact center of the hide and calculating perfectly spaced holes through which to lace the webbing into the intricate cross pattern that pulls the hide tight and establishes the tone of the drum.

For the drum beater, Treacy used a stick he found at the NMU fire site located next to Whitman Hall. "I thought that added some deeper meaning to the drum."

Throughout the process Treacy took photographs and created a step-by-step instructional CD on Native American hand drum building.

Treacy's taking an Ojibwa language course this fall, and plans to continue making drums. "I've got a deer hide waiting for me downstate so one day I can build another, larger drum," he says.

If you'd like to build a Native American drum, check out Mike Treacy's step-by-step instructions at www.nmu.edu/horizons. ■

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- **Construction Management and Technology Career Fair:** Thursday, September 24, 2009
- **Fall Job Fair and Career Expo:** Wednesday, October 7, 2009
- **Summer Employment Job Fair:** Tuesday, February 16, 2010
- **Upper Great Lakes Collegiate Job Fair:** Wednesday, March 17, 2010

To register your company for any (or all) of these events, please visit www.nmu.edu/jobfairs

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By Cindy Paavola '84 BS

video clips and answer questions about it on their own computers. "The students enjoy participating because they get to kick back and watch a short movie and then answer simple questions like, 'Was the main character trustworthy?' or 'Was he a good guy or a bad guy?'" He has found that changing the soundtrack impacted the perception of the main character and how much he contributed to the overall evaluation of the film.

In popular music, Shevy is researching the meanings that come to people's minds when they hear certain genres of music. He has been comparing country, hip-hop, punk, and German folk music.

"As you would expect, people associate a number of different ideas with each genre. I also found that those different associations can influence the way listeners judged people and organizations associated with the genre," Shevy says.

This has practical application significance, especially to the advertising industry. "For example, if you produce a message promoting a charity, the genre of music you choose—just the sound of it, not with any lyrics—may change the criteria by which audiences will evaluate the person presenting the message and the charity," he points out. "Imagine if there were a type of music dictionary available for this purpose, a scientific body of work that included different styles, genres and instruments and the documentation on what each would most likely communicate if used, along with cultural and geographic differences between listeners and over time."

Music is considered a universal language, but Shevy and a colleague at a university in Munich are exploring whether it actually does say the same thing to all of us. The pair is testing cultural reactions to different music genres between German and American listeners.

"We're finding that some of the meanings change as it crosses borders, while other meanings stay consistent. For instance, ethnicity is a main element that defines hip hop music in the U.S. In Germany, they don't make that distinction. Another example is that both Americans and Germans associate country music with friendliness."

Shevy recently received an NMU faculty grant to expand his study of non-diatonic music perception and bring in more NMU students to help collect and analyze data. "This study could lead to breakthroughs in creating music different from what we've been hearing our whole lives. The goal is to better understand what rules we use to make sense of the music we typically hear, and then see whether we can apply those rules in creating music that is not only new, but enjoyable and understandable." ■

The Psychology of Music

We've all done it—squeezed the arm of a movie theater seat tightly as chords of daunting music began to play, warning us that terror was coming in the next frame, or started to chuckle when notes started skipping crazily just before on-screen antics. With or without words, music speaks to us.

"As far back as I can remember, I have been interested in the way that music can bring media productions to life," says Mark Shevy, assistant professor in the NMU Communication and Performance Studies Department and son of NMU alumni **Delmar '65 BS and Sally (Holmund) '67 BS Shevy**. "It can help make a comedy seem funnier; an argument seem more persuasive; a victory seem sweeter or a defeat more solemn.

"Despite all this potential, music communication has not been studied as much through empirical research as other forms of communication have. That's where I come in. I am trying to figure out how music impacts us psychologically, so that we can find ways of using it more effectively or for developing new forms of music that will really connect with listeners."

Shevy's curiosity about choice of music began as an undergraduate. "While creating video and audio projects as a telecommunications student at Michigan State University, I'd find myself wondering what music to use to convey just the right message. Over time it occurred to me that a lot of the film and video production industry is not approaching the music element scientifically. Often, music is the afterthought, the thing that is done right at the end. In the case of many commercials, different kinds of music are tried to see what fits—not very scientific."

Shevy's studies of music communications explore the cognitive and emotional effects of multimedia music—in film, television or other video—popular music and new non-diatonic music. In multimedia music, his research explores how the mood conveyed by music changes the audiences' evaluation of a character and the film overall.

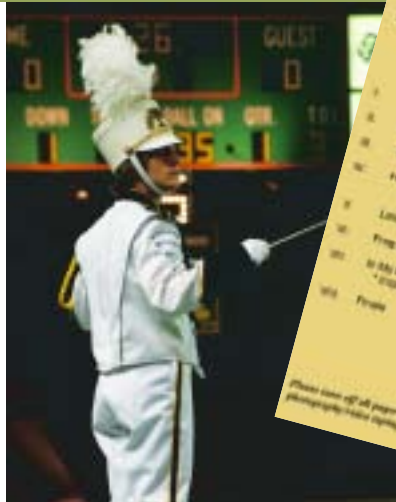
He conducts the studies online so students can view

Understanding autism through sound and vision

By Andrew Dylan Smith '09 BME

Last semester, for my ED 361 course, Special Education and the General Classroom Teacher, we were assigned a multi-genre project based on a book we'd chosen. I read Cynthia Lords' *Rules*, a story about a girl trying to lead a normal life while living with her brother David, who has autism. She alternates between trying to pretend her life is normal, taking care of him, and teaching him rules that help him to live like a normal child and understand the world around him (i.e. "No toys in the fish tank," "Late doesn't mean not coming," and "Sometimes, when others laugh they are laughing with you. Sometimes, they are laughing at you").

Rachel Maki, a vocal music education major, and I decided we wanted to go beyond drawing and writing, so we collaborated to create "Child So Suite," an 8-movement suite inspired by *Rules* and different facets and characteristics of autism. We composed it using Finale, a program made available to all music



The author conducting the marching band in another of his roles.

majors, which allowed us to create both the score and render a MIDI audio file. We contacted the Music Department and requested the template used for NMU Symphonic Band concert programs, and modified that to fit our composition and mock performance, to fulfill the assignment's requirement to be "genuine." We also created an extensive page of program notes.

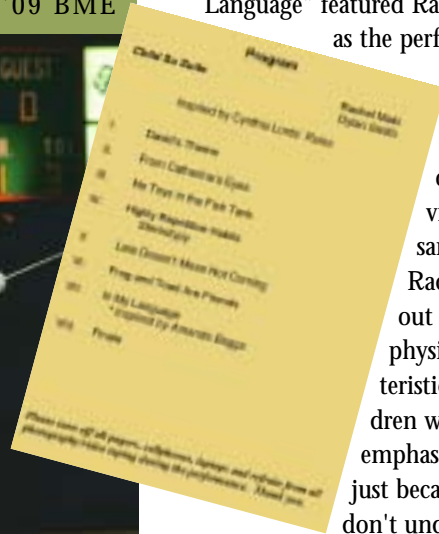
For the movement "Frog and Toad are Friends," we created a video

montage of images from the book that David loved so much that was accompanied by a light theme we wrote for it. The movement "In My Language" featured Rachel Maki as the performer.

Inspired partially by the online video of the same name, Rachel acted out several physical characteristics of children with autism, emphasizing that just because "we" don't understand

their methods of communication doesn't mean that people with autism are not communicating—they are just doing it in their language. Rachel also brought the rest of the class in performing different rhythmic sound-creating actions around the room, from lifting and dropping chairs to rubbing and scratching the overhead projection screens and window blinds.

From class feedback, we gathered that it was quite the moving, if not unconventional, experience. ■



Arts Chorale reunion remembers the famous Finnish Tour

By Elda Tate



reunion in Marquette, instigated by choral member **Margaret (Sell) Vainio '76 AS**. This group was the first of Amman's choirs to go to Europe. Margaret had a friend from Finland in the '70s and wound up marrying

Arts Chorale students from the mid-'70s under the direction of Douglas Amman (shown in red shirt) gathered last summer for a mini-

her friend's brother after this tour and she has lived in Finland happily ever after.

Now, when Margaret visits the U.S., she says the singers come out of the woodwork (or woods) singing. The Finnish people, especially, are always singing and singing about everything! At Presque Isle during FinnFest, they were reported singing about the sunset, the rock, the ice cream stand, band shell, anything handy.

The tour members were joined by additional former members of Amman's choirs, nearly all of them now music teachers. There was, of course, singing.



The Pride of the North

By Rebecca Tavernini



field photo by Kathleen Sholly

In his first year as director of the NMU Marching Band, Steve Grugin painstakingly plotted out a drill for players to form the letter “N” so they could play half of the fight song facing one side of the field and then reposition themselves to face the other side for the second half. Then a few of his band members pointed out that whether you look at it right side up or upside down, it’s the same. That, of course, led to quite a bit of teasing. Not the least bit deterred, Grugin eventually borrowed a classic move from his own alma mater, Ohio State, and taught the band to form a script “Cats,” with the drumline crossing the “t.”

This is just one of the marching drills the 90-plus member band performs each year—putting on a different pre-game and halftime show for each home football game, equaling about 20 memorized musical pieces and drill formations. Add to that marching in the Homecoming parade and other special events. Grugin is assisted by drumline instructor James A. Strain, and also directs the pep and symphonic bands.

One particularly memorable show during Grugin’s 12 years as director is the Saturday game following 9/11. “We had been planning an upbeat, Gershwin show, but changed our plans in the middle of the week, just after the attacks, to a patriotic show,” he

recalls. They learned a star formation, were joined by the University Choir for “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” and unfurled a gigantic flag.

“Working with the students and watching the progress that they make throughout the season is very rewarding,” he says. “For students, there’s a lot of time and work involved. In today’s world of instant gratification, where you can plug in Guitar Hero and play without knowing anything about music, it really shows how dedicated our students are, and the effort they’re willing to put into the band.”

Any NMU student can audition and about half of the members are not music majors. The students get a lot out of being a part of it as well. “They enjoy performing the shows, and there’s certainly a strong social component,” adds Grugin, pointing out that he’s aware of three weddings this summer of current and former band members who met their future spouses in the band.

Over the band’s long history—it’s been active since the early days of Northern State Normal (and acquired its nickname The Pride of the North in the early 1960s)—thousands of memories and friendships have been made.

“I arrived on campus one week before classes began for marching band camp,” recalls **Christopher Charboneau ’93 BME**. “By the time the week was finished, we were truly a family. The relationships that many

of us built during the marching season (also known to some as football season), have remained as strong friendships today. Perhaps the biggest thrills were conducting the band in London on New Year’s 1990, leading the band in the final performance at Memorial Field, and starting a new chapter in NMU history by being the first drum major to conduct the band in the Superior Dome in 1991. And yes, I was the guy playing the drum set in the pep band when the Wildcat hockey team won the national championship. I’m still trying to get the green and gold paint off my face!”

Dave Lea ’74 BME, writes, “Under the direction of Dr. Loren Richtmeyer and Dr. Lautzenheiser, I recall practices on the field where we started out in shorts and t-shirts and two hours later were marching in snow! I had the pleasure of traveling with the Pride of the North to Detroit for a Lions’ halftime and to Chicago’s Soldier Field for a Bears’ halftime. I remember losing a marching shoe in the awful mud of Memorial Stadium, only to have it show up several weeks later. The Pride always put on an energetic show, with the ‘Golden Girls’ who danced and twirled. The fans loved it all, and so did the band.” ■

Northern's Musical Ambassadors



By Kristi Evans

The Fantastics, billed as Northern's "musical ambassadors" of the 1970s, were ahead of their time. Long before internationalization became part of the campus dialogue, this vocal and instrumental group entertained military personnel overseas as part of the morale-boosting USO Shows. Unlike Bob Hope and other big names, the Fantastics had to audition for the highly competitive and coveted university slots. They impressed a USO talent scout with their signature blend of music and comedy, earning the right to join holiday tours of such locations as the Caribbean, Mediterranean and Alaska.

"You almost never find a more appreciative audience than soldiers far from home," says Cyndi (Franklin) Cini, who sang with the group in 1975-76. "It was hard to grasp the sacrifices they were making until you saw how isolated they were in places like the Aleutian Islands radar sites. The soldiers were so happy we came. Some saw the same show two or three times and wanted to talk in between. We always had a good time making their holidays brighter."

Cini emotionally recalls when the group was snowed in and delivered an impromptu performance in an Air Force hospital terminal ward. She sang Barbra Streisand's "The Way We Were" to a cancer-stricken man and his wife. "We found out it was their special song. They were looking into each other's eyes the whole time and smiling, but the tears were flowing. I'll never forget that moment."

The nomadic life of USO entertainers was rewarding because of such payoffs and occasional sightseeing between shows. But it was far from glamorous, particularly in the Arctic Circle in the depths of December. Del Towers' log of the month-long Alaskan adventure remains intact in a scrapbook his wife compiled during his four years as director of the Fantastics. The first page, yellowed with time, features the following entry: "We will be flying in DC-130s. In some waters we fly over, planes are visible beneath the surface. Some places we are going will reach temperatures of 80-90 degrees below zero. Our clothing (parkas, mukluks, etc.) will be handed out on Dec. 22."

Not surprisingly, several friendships and even a few romances blossomed from the extensive time spent together traveling, rehearsing and performing. Cini's NMU roommate, **Becky (Roisen) Burbary '77 BS**, met Tim, her husband of 32 years, during their stint with the Fantastics. The couple performed professionally in the Detroit area for a decade after they married.

"When you're confined to

a smaller group, you tend to develop a special bond," Becky says. "The Fantastics took people with diverse interests—we weren't all music majors—and allowed us to try something new that enhanced

our lives and broadened our education. It enticed me because it pushed my limits on vocals and keyboard and was different from anything I had ever done before."

The Fantastics appealed to other students because of the added perk of full-tuition scholarships for the revolving roster of 11-16 members. According to a newspaper

clipping in the NMU Archives, 300 applicants auditioned one year. They were

judged on musicianship, potential, attitude, experience and personality.

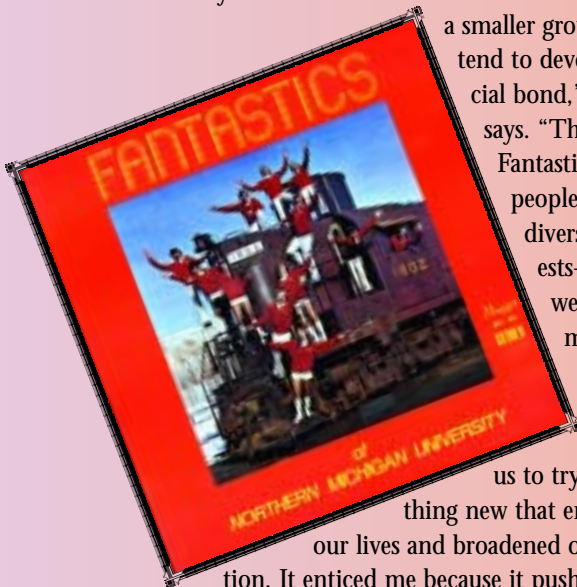
"I first saw them at Bay College and decided it would be a fun group to be part of," recalls **Bob Fleetwood '77 BME, '83 MAE**, a music teacher in Marquette. "The scholarship was the icing on the cake. I received another one from the university's board, so I loaded up and took 24 credit hours. It was a great experience, but it just became too time-consuming for me. I decided to bow out before the Alaska trip."

Detroit native **Chuck Ramsey '77 BME** most enjoyed the opportunities to venture away from campus: "Up to the time I joined the Fantastics, I hadn't been anywhere. The traveling had a big impact on me and eventually influenced my desire to give my own students international experiences as a music instructor and administrator."

The Fantastics' roots trace back to 1970. They were never part of the Music Department, though their first director was Tim Lautzenheiser, a former percussion faculty member. The group recorded its only full-length studio album in Tennessee early in the decade. It was produced by Fred F. Carter, the father of country singer Deana Carter. The cover of the 33 LP shows the crew aboard a train engine. They're decked in red, v-neck sweaters with "NMU Fantastics" embroidered in white lettering to match the turtle-necks, men's pants and women's hot pants and knee-high boots (despite the snow in the background). The group recorded two 45s in later years.



Photos courtesy of Central U.P. and NMU Archives



Like the album material, the Fantastics shows featured an eclectic mix of genres, from big band and Broadway to folk and pop. Del Towers took over as director in 1974. Trained in classical music, he had performed contemporary tunes five nights a week with the Spellbinders on Detroit radio station WJR's Bud Guest Show.

"Very few universities had groups like this at the time," Towers says. "I had some talented and energetic students to work with. We entertained throughout the Midwest. We also did recruiting tours at high schools. At the end of each show, the musicians were ready to hand out brochures to students who came up to talk to them or ask for an autograph. Northern got a lot of nice exposure this way."

The Fantastics even brought rare harmony to the

"Very few universities had groups like this at the time. We entertained throughout the Midwest."

Michigan Senate chamber. They were invited to entertain legislators at the State Capitol during a half-hour show in October 1975. Following the "almost-unprecedented" performance, they received a special legislative commendation. An Associated Press news story followed: "Monday's session of the state Senate came to an

early halt as a music group from [NMU] pre-empted rhetoric and pontifi-

cating. Most observers agreed the fast-paced show provided the most melodious sound to emanate from the Senate in years."

The power of music transcended politics that day, but a few years later, the State Legislature cut the special appropriation that had funded the group since its creation. It was the final note in a fantastic era in NMU history. ■



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Excels' fame reached past U.P.

Articles by Steve Seymour

As their name suggests, the Excels' achievements may have been superior to those of any other rock band to come out of the Upper Peninsula in the 1960s. The group played extensively throughout Michigan, recorded five 45 rpm singles, opened for numerous name acts and appeared on several celebrated television programs.

The band was established in 1963 after a chance meeting of three of the original members: vocalist **Clark Sullivan '68 BS**, who went on to a solo career; bassist Carl Holm, who is now NMU director of housing and residence life; and lead guitarist **Dick Manning '71 BME**. With the addition of drummer John Zelinski, the group was complete. Other members through the years were keyboardist Ken Forrest, drummers Steve Contardi and Garry Stockero, bassist Ed Rogers and multi-instrumentalists Terry Quirk and Howard Ylinen.

It was during the early months of 1964 that the Excels started getting lots of exposure. "We would have jam sessions on campus that would turn into full-blown events," said Sullivan. "With many of the students from different parts of Michigan and different parts of the country, we

started getting booked at various venues throughout lower Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio."

In search of a recording deal, the Excels headed to Detroit later that year. They met Ollie McLaughlin, an influential disc jockey and owner of Carla Records who discovered Michigan-born rocker Del Shannon. A demo tape earned them a contract.

Beyond their 45 rpm singles, the Excels accomplished much, including sharing the stage with some prominent rock bands. They opened shows on the Marquette campus for Jay and the Americans, as well as Little Anthony and the Imperials and opened for Chubby Checker during another concert. Other acts the Excels played with include the Buckingham, Dave Clark Five, Sonny & Cher and the Association. They also performed shows or had mini tours with the likes of Gary Lewis and the Playboys, Paul Revere and the Raiders, Bob Seger and the Beach Boys.

After an adventurous trip through the 1960s, the Excels faded as the new decade dawned. Still, they came closer to national fame than any other U. P. band of the era, leaving a memorable rock 'n' roll story in their wake.



Wayfarers' trip lasts decades

Hollywood couldn't have scripted it better. Three NMU music students hear about an opening for a

house band, rehearse for a few hours, drive to the audition and get the gig. They play together for two decades and even tape a long-playing record album.

In 1972, percussionist and sax player **Larry Henry '72 BME, '73 MME** heard that a supper club in Munising was looking for a house band to play dinner and dance music. Quickly assembling a band, he contacted **Keith Polkinghorne '76 BME**, a vocal music major who played Fender bass, and **Bill VanEffen '74 BME**, known for his abilities on the Hammond organ and trumpet.

The band was a hit, playing a number of years in Munising. By early 1974, the Wayfarers made the LP—unusual for a local band at the time—"by popular demand," according to the liner notes. The disc was titled "The Wayfarers...Live," even though the tracks were laid down in the NMU band room. The LP's tracks include covers of hits of the era stars such as Santana, Bread and Chicago, along with a medley of oldies by Bill Haley, Danny and the Juniors, Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins. It features a cover photo of the trio on the Black Rocks of Presque Isle.

As they became more well-known, the Wayfarers served as the winter house band at Marquette's Holiday Inn. True to its name, the band also did lots of traveling throughout the U.P.

All three members graduated from NMU and became music teachers. The Wayfarers continued to play with various members over a period of 20 years. ■

The preceding material was reprinted with permission from Steve Seymour, who offers a treasure trove of Upper Peninsula music nostalgia, photos and recordings on his blog, Rock 'n' Roll Graffiti. To see the full version of these stories and much more, visit <http://rocknrollgraffiti.blogspot.com>.



"The music you forgot to remember"

By Don Wilkie '84 BS

It is 1991 and WBKX, Northern Michigan University's student-run radio station, is not easy to find. Only the six-inch call letters stenciled on the studio door identify it. Even during bright, sunlit days WBKX sits in the shadows, tucked away inconspicuously in one small room in West Hall, a campus residence hall.

But I'm no stranger to WBKX,

and Sunday morning during the school year finds me right here, ready to go to work. For the past five or six years, I've been hosting "Dinosaur Sunday," from eight until noon.

The show features, as I continually remind my listeners, "the music you forgot to remember, but the music I remembered not to forget." I try to provide them with more than "golden oldies." I favor groups such as the Stones, the Who, the Grateful Dead, the Airplane, Led Zeppelin, the Moody Blues, Spirit and so on—

giants from the late 1960s and early 1970s—but I don't often play their top hits. I prefer the more obscure cuts. I also do my best to introduce listeners to Ten Years After, Spooky Tooth, the Flying Burrito Brothers and other lesser-known groups. Nothing suits me better than to turn someone on to a new group, a new tune, a new mix of entertainment and enlightenment.

When I arrive on Sunday morning, the studio is dark. The small room seems even tinier because of



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While Dinosaur Don played rock from the '60s and '70s on Radio X, many musical legends performed on campus, such as Stephen Stills and Manassas, B.B. King, Bachman-Turner Overdrive, Chicago, Gordon Lightfoot, Dave Brubeck and Sons and The Association.

the equipment filling it. Actual working space is around four feet by four feet, about half the size of an elevator car.

I sit down, two turntables on my left and two CD players on my right. This alignment amuses me, this symbolic faceoff between cherished tradition and new technology. After all, I'm an anachronism myself, an LP child in a CD society.

The "board" looms directly ahead of me, offering more than a dozen different dials. I can control output from two microphones as well as the turntables, tape decks and players. Two LED gauges with "NO yellow at any time!" marked on them remind me to monitor my signal strength. Some jocks don't care, but I keep a close watch. Not everyone is ready to rock full volume on a Sunday morning, after all.

An 8-track cartridge deck and a phone litter the desktop. Assorted notes and memos from other jocks ("What idiot filed Marshall Tucker Band under 'T' instead of 'M'?") and station management ("Don't forget to read the PSAs!") fight for my attention. And then there are the forms—program logs, playlists, WBKX Weatherwatch data sheets, and public service announcements to be read.

I also have a form to keep track of requests, but I don't use it very often—Dinosaur Sunday listeners don't phone in many requests. I'm not sure why that is—either I'm playing music they like, or they just don't know any songs to request. This is, after all, the music they forgot to remember.

The current release shelf on my right holds "blue dot" and "red dot" selections—albums and CDs



Nick Danger (aka Jim Gleason '90 BS) and Dinosaur Don (Don Wilkie) in the Radio X studio during the mid-'90s, after moving from "one small room" to the current location in the University Center.

designated for heavy play. Ordinary WBKX format calls for a red dot just after the top of the hour, and a blue dot just after the quarter hour, then a red dot after the half hour, and so on; it's confusing as heck, but I don't worry. For "Dinosaur Sunday," I can ignore all those dots—and I do.

Record shelves blanket the walls, containing thousands of albums arranged alphabetically by artist. The older rock albums, the ones I play, sit on one side, as the New Music section sneers punkishly at its older brother from across the room. Reggae, blues, and other "specialty" collections each merit their own section. The CD rack, a recent addition, has space for five hundred or so discs.

Again, the contrast between old and new is evident; the CDs play crisp and clear, while the older, more classic albums feature skips, clicks, pops and other sounds of age. I make it a point never to apologize for the quality of older selections; sometimes reminding listeners after a particularly scratchy cut that in music, like in life, we sometimes run into a little static.

I pick out the albums I want to begin with, usually something fairly gentle, like a Crosby, Stills and Nash ballad, or maybe a slow Santana

instrumental. I plug in the sign-on cart and the one containing my theme song, "I'm a Little Dinosaur," by Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers. Another "Dinosaur Sunday" is under way.

Like the underground radio jocks from times gone by, I have free reign over my choice of music. After all, music is more than a few well-tuned notes and catchy lyrics. It's a celebration of lifestyle, of emotion, even, at times, a celebration of politics. Songs such as Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," or Grand Funk's "People Let's Stop the War" remain as potent and timely today as they did when written during the Vietnam era.

As I sit in the tiny studio with the lights down low, Sunday morning is transformed into the darkness and warmth of latenight underground radio, through the magic in the music. ■

WUPX (formerly WBKX), a student organization, will be celebrating its 40th year in 2010, having transformed from an AM station to a cable-only station, then in 1993 to an over-the-air station at FM 91.5. While the walls are still lined with vinyl albums and CDs, the station also offers podcasts and live listening over the Internet (www.wupx.com).

Each semester, approximately 100 students DJ shows, plan concerts and events, host campus discussions and call-in talk shows, and learn valuable scheduling, technology and communications skills. All while providing an eclectic, much-appreciated alternative music station to listeners across campus and Marquette, playing the gamut from Americana to Icelandic, indie to extreme death metal.

Band photos courtesy of Central U.P. and NMU Archives
Dinosaur and Nick photo courtesy of Jim Gleason