

Black and White Band: Rocking for a Generation

It's official: Black and White Band have been rocking RI for a generation! Since 1991, fans of R&B have been flocking to see B&W do their thing at little clubs, giant festivals and everything in between. Drummer (and *Motif* contributor) Don DiMuccio and bassist Kevin Martin are the only founding members, but the band teams up with a bevy of talented musicians to achieve a sound audiences have been digging since the Clinton era.

Their career highlights are impressive, including appearances on bills with heavy hitters like America, The Animals and Jefferson Airplane. Citing influences like The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Stray Cats, Robert Gordon, The Blasters and The Paladins, Black and White is the swingin' blues-rock band you want to take the party to the next level. They're coming off a busy summer (that included gigs at The Jamestown Concert Series and The Oxhead Tavern), so I thought I'd take a few minutes to talk to Don DiMuccio about the evolution of the band:

Jake Bissaro: How did you guys get started?

Don DiMuccio: We were in our teens, and usually not old enough to even go to the places we were playing. The Last Call Saloon in Providence was a cool blues bar that was like our Cavern Club. Being so young, we were really lucky to get to play with and watch greats like Ronnie Earl and Duke Robillard. At that point, we were just trying to absorb absolutely everything we could.

JB: You've been around for more than a few new styles of music. How has the scene changed in your experience?

DD: The first gig we ever did was a Wednesday night at a club, and there were a few hundred people there. We just thought, "Wow, we've got it made! Let's just do this forever!" Of course, that was not the case. The alternative explosion was the biggest thing around that time, but other genres like rap started to become popular and it became tougher to get people to the shows. But luckily there's been a core of fans who still enjoy our music.

JB: In recent years, you've switched the format to having B&W revolve around a rotating roster of frontmen. Why did you make the decision to do things that way?

DD: 2004 is when we decided to revamp the whole thing. After lineup changes over the years we thought, "Why invest in just one person when there is all this talent available?" Now we have people like Gary Gramolini from Beaver Brown Band, Dave Howard from Roomful of Blues, Professor Harp, and a lot of others. And it seems like now other bands are taking on that tack as well.

JB: That was probably a savvy move as far as repeat audiences go, too.

DD: Exactly. I think we've really hit a stride in that way; you could come see us 10 times and get a different experience every time.

JB: Twenty-five is a long time in band years. What do you think the keys to success have been?

DD: Well I hope to speak to you about it in another 25! I'd say it's mainly just treating it like a business, which is what it is. When you're doing a gig, you're catering to the venue and the audience and delivering the professionalism they want, and we try to top those expectations. I handle the business side of things and Kevin does the electrical stuff, which helps keep it organized. The other thing is we're not afraid to play gigs where other bands might go, "What's the deal with this little music festival?" But you never know. It might be a big success!

JB: Is there one moment from the past 25 years that sticks out?

DD: We were in the semis for the WBRU rock hunt, which was pretty cool, but the most memorable moment would have to be opening up for Bo Diddley in the '90s in Providence. It was early on in our career, and we were just so in awe the whole time. Unlike other famous people I've met, he actually sat down with us before the show, talked to us and gave us advice. The guy couldn't have been any cooler.

JB: What's coming up for B&W?

DD: We've recorded some songs [check them out on the band's Soundcloud] that I wrote for different singers, and we want to turn that into an album soon. We're also excited about playing Misquamicut Fall Fest on September 20 and the Great International Beer Festival at the Convention Center on October 24.

For recordings, tour dates, a timeline, and more, visit blackandwhiteband.com.