



Nelson brothers pay tribute to famous dad in Raue show

By JAMI KUNZER – jkunzer@shawmedia.com

Featuring Ricky Nelson's hits coupled with family videos, the concert tells a story.

"It's a musical and personal timeline that goes throughout our pop's life," Matthew Nelson said.

"When we're on stage, we're not only there to represent our father, but our entire family," he said. "It's our entire legacy up there."

"Ricky Nelson Remembered" takes place at 8 p.m. Jan. 19 at the Raue Center for the Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake.

The Nelson family is listed in the "Guinness Book of World Records" as the only family in history to reach number one record status in three successive generations, beginning with Gunnar and Matthew's grandparents, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson.

"It just basically means everyone did something valid," Matthew Nelson said of the family's success. "Even if it ends there, I'm pretty proud of it."

Ricky's father, Ozzie Nelson, who created the popular television show, "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" featuring the entire Nelson family, had a No. 1 hit with "And then Some."

Ricky, who began his entertainment career in 1949 playing himself on his father's sitcom (then a radio series), scored his first top hit with "Poor Little Fool" in 1958 and placed 53 songs on the Billboard Hot 100 between 1957 and 1973. He died at age 45 in a plane crash in 1985.

His twin sons went on to have top hits of their own as the band "Nelson," including the No. 1 hit, "(Can't Live Without Your) Love and Affection" from their 1990 debut album "After the Rain." The band continues to produce and release albums independently under its own label.

Gunnar and Matthew might perform one or two of their hits as they reminisce about their father's encouragement of them to become songwriters, Matthew said. But "Ricky Nelson Remembered" is "predominantly about our dad's music and life," he said.

Among numerous historical photos and videos, the concert features classic clips from "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet." It also will include interviews with those who knew and worked with Ricky Nelson, including Paul McCartney, Chris Isaak, John Fogerty and Kris Kristofferson.

A Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, Ricky is the only artist to have a No. 1 song, No. 1 movie and No. 1 television show in the same week. "Life" magazine coined the phrase, "teen idol" after him.

From 1957 to 1962, he had more Top 40 hits than any other artist except Elvis Presley and Pat Boone. And Matthew said the reason Ricky wasn't inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame during the same year as Elvis is because Elvis' estate wouldn't allow it.

"The reality was he was such a threat to Elvis and his memory and legacy. Back then, it was Elvis and Ricky," Matthew said. "Those were the biggies. I think that's kind of cool. Elvis was most certainly the King. There's no disputing the fact that Ricky was the crown prince of rock 'n' roll."

Yet, Matthew said, he never truly realized his own fame.

"He was not the kind of guy to wave his own flag," Matthew said. "When he got on stage, he was very fierce, but in real life, he was very humble. He didn't really know himself, how truly loved he was. He really only got his props after he was gone."

The concert touches upon some of Ricky's struggles to stay true to his musical interests amid all of the success, Matthew said. It is reported that Ricky wrote "Garden Party," his last Top 40 hit, in disgust after a Madison Square Garden audience booed him for, in his mind, playing new songs instead of old hits.

"It's a blessing and a curse having a long career because people tend to want to keep you in a little box," Matthew said. "As an artist you want to meet that ... but you also need to grow."

The Raue show will be similar to last year's concert, but has grown, Matthew said.

"The show is evolving constantly, but obviously there's a certain amount of the usual suspects that the show brings with it," he said. "I think that's kind of the charm of it. It kind of lets people go back to a time and a place and something they're familiar with.

"The show's gotten a year better."

WHAT: Ricky Nelson Remembered

WHEN: 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19

WHERE: Raue Center for the Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake

Tickets start at \$31 at rauecenter.org or call the box office at (815) 356-9212.

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