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By JAMI KUNZER – jkunzer@nwherald.com

## Mullen creates 'essence of Queen' on Raue stage

One night of Queen wasn't enough.

Gary Mullen & The Works once again will pay tribute to the legendary band when they perform Saturday at the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake.

The only show endorsed by Queen's remaining band members, the concert was a huge success a couple years ago, said Amy Malpica, Raue director of marketing.

"It's just a fun show," she said. "You see multi-generations coming. You've got your 10-year-old all the way up to the 70-year-old. They're all dancing together in the aisles. Everyone knows the classics."

Mullen, as Queen front man Freddie Mercury and backed by a four-piece band, will perform Queen hits, such as "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Somebody to Love," "We Will Rock You" and "We Are the Champions."

It's more of a recreation of a Queen concert than a Vegas stage show, Malpica said. Mullen was invited by original Queen member Brian May to attend a Queen & Paul Rodgers show where he met May backstage.

A lifelong fan of the band, Mullen started his career as Freddie in 2000 when he won the overall live grand finale of the British television show, "Stars in Their Eyes." Polling 864,838 votes, he set the all-time record for votes on the show.

In 2002, he created "One Night of Queen," formed The Works, and he's been touring ever since. The band performs more than 150 shows a year throughout the nation.

The band name – The Works – came from the 1984 Queen album of the same name.

Mullen shared his thoughts on the upcoming concert and his success:

**Why Queen? What is it about the band and its songs that seem to draw people in and keep them coming back for more? Why does it live on?**

Their music's timeless. You listen to their songs, like "Bohemian Rhapsody," even in this day and age, it's fresh.

"We Will Rock You" is played at pretty much every major sporting event in the world. Just like the Beatles and Led Zeppelin, the music lives on.

**What can we expect from Saturday's show?**

It's very high-energy. Basically, it's a rock concert. It's not like a musical as such. It's two hours of rock concert, with the stage setting and costumes. I'm just trying to create the essence of a Queen show. People expecting to see a musical will get a shock. "Oh, what's this?"

It's giving the same vibe as a Queen concert with the same energy.

**How does your show differ from other Queen tributes?**

You can't really call me another show because other shows do what they do. We're trying to create something we as a band would go and see. If it was us paying, you want to see someone that has fun on stage. And we have a lot of fun on stage.

**Queen was such a high-energy band. Every song was played with feeling. That's what we do.**

For ourselves, we play every show like it's our last because you never know if it's going to be our last. We just go on and do what we do. We have a lot of fun doing it, and hopefully, that comes across to the audience.

**Any favorite songs?**

I've got quite a few. One of my favorites to perform is "Somebody to Love." It's the part of the night where the audience sings along. If you want to sing and want to get up and dance and jump around like crazy, that's good. You can do that. We get the audience to join in and sing along during the middle part, the gospel choir part. That's where the fun starts.

**You were able to meet original Queen member Brian May. What was that like for you?**

It was like, "We're not worthy." For the first couple minutes of meeting the guy, I couldn't speak. He was asking me questions. "How's your tour going?" I felt like a bit of an idiot, to be honest. He's such a lovely guy, so modest. He was everything I expected him to be, quiet and humble for someone who's achieved so much.

**What do you think the late Freddie Mercury would say if he could watch you today?**

Oh, I hope he would enjoy it. I hope he would see it for a tribute. It's not guys making money for something that's no longer here. It's played the way the music should be played. I met one of his friends, asked him what would Freddie think? He said, "Freddie would think you're doing a wonderful job." That would be great. For Brian to meet me and say, "Good job," you can't really get any better than that.

**Any other projects you're involved in?**

We were looking to do a tour in Japan before the tsunami hit. I've recorded a couple songs in Japanese, Japanese folks songs. I've also recorded an album, which I'm waiting to go live on iTunes, which is a hobby with my best friend, a side project. People can buy it in the next couple months on iTunes. This show takes up the lion's share of my time. We spend so many months of a year performing that everything else we do is a hobby. This is the job.

**ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN**

**WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Saturday**

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

**TICKETS: \$59, \$62, \$65 at 815-356-9212 or [www.rauecenter.org](http://www.rauecenter.org).**

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