

Local performers’ music hits the internet

It turns out, you can teach an old band new tricks. Now in its 45th year, Auburn-based rock band Choice recently shared its music on iTunes and other music-streaming services for the first time.

After a long career as northeast Indiana’s favorite party band, playing faithful versions of classic rock hits, Choice is releasing original songs written by its experienced musicians.

“It’s one thing to be a cover band. It’s another to have original music. You want to leave a legacy of that,” said Mike Littlejohn, the newest member of Choice with 13 years in the lineup on bass guitar.

Choice is part of a sudden surge of online music from Auburn musicians.

Austin Marsh released his first full album, “Bohemians,” on streaming services March 5. Backed by a solid band, Marsh displays the maturation of his songwriting and multi-instrumental talents.

Sarah Reasner of Auburn and her collaborator, Cami Akhamie of Florida, posted their album, “I Choose Love,” on YouTube about three months ago. Friday at 8 p.m., they’ll release a full concert on YouTube, Facebook and the silver-birch.studio website, with no charge to watch and hear their versatile worship songs.

And you can log onto iTunes and buy two Choice songs — “Two

Lane,” written by Dan Cory, and “Last Chance Texaco,” composed by Littlejohn — for 99 cents apiece. Both tunes lay down an easy-rolling groove that makes the perfect backdrop for a road cruise.

You also can find Choice on Pandora, Spotify, YouTube, Amazon and Apple Music.

More songs are on their way to the internet, Littlejohn promised.

“I think we’ll be releasing one every two weeks or week-and-a-half for a while,” Cory said. “It’s fun for us — just to see what happens.”

Over the past five years, Choice members have recorded some 30 compositions of their own, Littlejohn said. They played a sampling of their originals in a concert at the DeKalb Outdoor Theater in Auburn three summers ago.

Following that one-of-a-kind concert, fans asked how they could obtain copies of the songs.

“It’s not about the money,” Cory said about selling the music on the internet. “We’re just trying to get it out there for them.”

Early versions of the songs are being upgraded, thanks to better recording equipment and a richer sound provided by additional performers.

For the new recordings, the band added three musicians to its five-man mix and labeled the songs as “Choice and Friends.” Joining

the band are vocalist Pam Good, the wife of drummer Mike Good, singer and keyboard player Carol Foley and trumpet player Steve Butler, a former Choice member. Other core members of Choice are Dan Guinn and Mike Penland.

The extra musicians add “frosting” to the songs, Mike Good said. “It’s so much fun. We have a ball” recording them again, he added.

“We’re still writing new ones,” Littlejohn said. Plans call for uploading a new song by Pam Good and Cory, entitled “Sea Breeze.”

“Am I Ready,” written by Cory and sung by Pam Good, made its debut last year in a service at Auburn First United Methodist Church. It also will be made available soon for streaming and downloads.

To place a song on the Internet, a band needs to choose a distributor. The tune then goes through a process in which the music and artwork are reviewed for originality.

“Everything’s scrutinized,” Littlejohn said. When a song passes muster, the distributor sends it to all the major services. Cory said Choice’s music went to a total of 15 platforms.

The band pays a one-time fee — which Littlejohn described as “very nominal” — for unlimited uploads. The distributor keeps track of sales and sends the band a payment at the end of the year. I was surprised to learn that when I purchased “Two



CONTRIBUTED

Artwork for Choice and Friends’ music online

Lane,” all 99 cents went to Choice’s account, with no cut to anyone else.

“The world is so different. You used to have to have a record company to do things you can do on your own, now,” Littlejohn said.

“It’s a process we enjoy,” Cory said about recording for the internet. After 40-plus years of road trips and late nights, the band finds it relaxing to make music in the

comfort of its “Barn Studio.” “This is kind of what we’ve evolved to over the years,” Cory said about Choice’s new style of playing its original songs in a studio. “Some people take longer to evolve than others.”

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Child seduction arrest tops most-read list

KENDALLVILLE — A woman arrested for allegedly having sex with a teen was the most-read story of the week on kpcnews.com.

Crime stories continue to be popular in recent weeks as readers frequently click to read stories about new arrests and court hearings.

Nichole L. Thornsbearry, 35, of the 2900 block of North Oak Street, was arrested by Noble County police on a charge of child seduction, a Level 5 felony.

Senior Judge G. David Lauer set Thornsbearry’s bond in Noble Circuit Court Friday and ordered her to have no contact with any children under the age of 18. During Friday’s initial court appearance, it was divulged that Thornsbearry works with children in a school system.

Court documents allege Thornsbearry had sexual intercourse with a child at least 16 years of age and younger than 18. The alleged crime did not occur as a function of her job.

The story picked up nearly 4,000 after being posted to the web.

These were Top 10 stories on kpcnews.com from March 4-10:

- 1) Kimmel woman charged with child seduction — 3,984 pageviews
- 2) Police arrest couple who brandished weapon — 2,519 pageviews
- 3) Angola High School orders failing students to return to school — 2,035 pageviews
- 4) Linson retiring as East Noble superintendent — 1,276 pageviews
- 5) Kidds share memories as they pack for move — 1,254 pageviews
- 6) Auburn ranks 5th among U.S. ‘micropolitan’ areas — 1,179 pageviews
- 7) Wreck claims lives of two teenage brothers from Orland — 1,123 pageviews (50,864 total)
- 8) Longest-serving school chief reaches retirement — 1,091 pageviews
- 9) Kendallville, Shipshewana awarded Next Level Trails grants — 994 pageviews
- 10) Woman faces charges after found in shop cleaning — 982 pageviews (15,904 total)

On the KPC News Facebook page this week, Auburn’s being named a top ‘micropolitan’ area, the one-year anniversary of Indiana’s first COVID-19 case and East Noble Superintendent Ann Linson announcing her retirement were the top posts of the week:

March 5: Auburn’s ranking is based on corporate projects that include Butler and Ashley. Also, Angola ranks 32nd — 8,940 people reached, 306 reactions, 46 shares, 21 comments

March 6: First year ago today, Indiana reported its first COVID-19 case — 6,480 people reached, 39 reactions, four shares, 77 comments

March 4: Linson previously taught at DeKalb High School and worked at Impact Institute, then served as East Noble High School principal and assistant superintendent before taking over the lead in 2010 — 4,924 people reached, 25 reactions, 32 shares, three comments

On the individual newspaper Facebook pages, a story about Angola High School recalling failing students to its building, the retirement of Eastside’s longtime superintendent and Kendallville and Shipshewana getting state grants were the top posts of the week:

March 9: (The Herald Republican) Parents of Angola High School students that are failing at virtual learning are being ordered to send their kids back to school before the month is over — 1,577 people reached, 116 reactions, 51 shares, 82 comments

March 4: (The Star) Longest-serving school chief reaches retirement — 460 people reached, 15 reactions

March 4: (The News Sun) BREAKING: Kendallville, Shipshewana receive a total of \$1.38 million for trails projects from the state’s Next Level Trails program — 5,177 people reached, 181 reactions, 25 shares, 26 comments

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Protecting the ‘great experiment’

Joe Biden has always opposed eliminating the Senate’s filibuster rule, and for good reason. Proponents of its elimination ignore the reality that today’s majority will surely be in the minority again. And the losers will then realize the value of being able to thwart the winners’ worst impulses.

This is not a hypothetical question. In 2013, Democrats foolishly altered the filibuster rule — which requires 60 votes to end debate — so it no longer applied to federal judgeships. Four years later, Republicans followed their lead, ending the filibuster for Supreme Court nominations and enabling President Trump to fill three seats in four years.

Do you think Democrats might regret being powerless to block Amy Coney Barrett’s elevation to the court in the waning days of Trump’s presidency?

But now Biden faces a crisis, an inflection point, that’s forcing him to reconsider his position on the filibuster. Following their defeats last fall, Republicans across the country are mounting a concerted effort in state legislatures to change the rules and make it harder to vote. The Brennan Center for Justice counts 253 bills introduced in 43 states that would restrict the franchise and damage basic democratic norms.

Michael McDonald, an expert on election law at the University of Florida, warns: “I don’t say this lightly. We are witnessing the greatest rollback of voting rights in this country since the Jim Crow era.”

A Washington Post editorial adds that Republicans “have embraced a strategy of voter suppression because they fear that, if the rules are fair, they will lose.”

What makes the crisis even more acute is that the Supreme Court, with its 6 to 3 conservative majority, is unlikely to uphold legal challenges to those laws once they’re passed. The best option for Biden and the Democrats is to adopt federal legislation that sets national guidelines and impedes the GOP’s attempts at voter suppression.

Two bills are moving steadily through Congress that would do just that. One measure, which has already passed the House on a party-line vote, would mandate procedures like automatic voter registration, expanded early voting and free mail-in ballots. The second proposal would restore provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 — gutted by the Supreme Court in 2013 — that imposed federal supervision over states and districts with a history of discrimination.

Here’s Biden’s first problem: Those bills will inevitably be blocked in the Senate by Republican filibusters. So the new president must make a choice: stick

with his loyalty to the filibuster and lose on voting rights? Or alter his position and entertain changes to the Senate rules?

The argument for change is rapidly gaining strength. For one thing, the entire Republican voter suppression effort is premised on a Big Lie: that the last election was somehow stolen by the Democrats, and that stricter laws are necessary to prevent future fraud. But, as countless courts, election officials and Trump’s own attorney general have concluded emphatically, THAT IS NOT TRUE.

Here’s the president’s other problem: Even if Biden were to change his position, Democrats almost certainly don’t have the votes to eliminate filibusters entirely. With only 50 seats in the Senate, they can’t afford to lose anybody, and Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia has made his position very clear. Asked if he’d consider ending the filibuster, he recently told reporters, “Never!”

But there is another option, one that Manchin has indicated he might support: amending the filibuster rules to make an exception for bills on voting and civil rights. Those rules are hardly sacrosanct; they have been altered many times. For instance, the number of votes needed to break a filibuster was dropped from 67 to 60 in 1975.

Carve-outs already prevent filibusters on budget bills, trade deals and military base closings. Voting rights are at least as important — if not more — than any of those issues. In his eulogy last July for civil rights icon John Lewis, Barack Obama made this precise point: “If all this takes eliminating the filibuster, another Jim Crow relic, in order to secure the God-given rights of every American, then that’s what we should do.”

In 1965, my late father-in-law, Hale Boggs, then a congressman from Louisiana, risked his career to endorse the Voting Rights Act. Boggs said on the House floor, “I shall support this bill because I believe the fundamental right to vote must be a part of this great experiment in human progress under freedom which is America.”

Biden and the Democrats must amend the filibuster rules to protect that “great experiment” once again.

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Commentary

To the **Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum**, which won a competition for a \$249,275 state grant to create a new E.L. Cord Gallery of Entrepreneurship. The permanent exhibition will tell the story of Auburn Automobile Co. owner E.L. Cord.

To **local communities that rank among Indiana’s safest**. Ligonier was rated the second-safest small city — among communities with less than 10,000 residents — by online insurance website AdvisorSmith. **Garrett** was seventh-safest in the small city category, while **Auburn**

ranked fourth among midsize cities with populations 10,000-50,000.

High 5s & Hisses

To **DeKalb High School sophomore Nate Fillenwarth**, who launched a project selling bracelets for \$5 each to raise money for Hoosiers Feeding the Hungry. The \$5 donation is enough to feed a person for an entire week, according to the statewide hunger charity, based in Garrett.

HIGH FIVES AND HISSES is a Sunday feature compiled by this newspaper’s editorial board. If you have a “high five” or a “hiss” to nominate, call or email the editor of this newspaper.