

This article was originally quite long, and discussed three Boston-area performing artists or groups. We have excerpted only those parts that refer to ORPHEUS REBORN, and reformatted the material to make it easier to read.

Boston Sunday Globe

VOLUME 269, NUMBER 36
FEBRUARY 5, 2006

Globe West

Silver age of rock

Baby boom performers couldn't stay away

By Susan Chaityn Lebovits
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

When Harry Sandler was in his 20s, he lived the rock-'n'-roll dream. As the drummer from Orpheus, he opened for Led Zeppelin, the Who, Janis Joplin, Cream, and Blood, Sweat & Tears.

But time marched on and Sandler traded his drumsticks for a Rolodex and the groupies for a wife.

"I've gone from dealing with Keith Moon to dealing with the head of the NAACP," said Sandler, who is a vice president of the American Program Bureau, a Newton-based organization that books international personalities including Nobel laureates and sports figures — for speaking engagements.

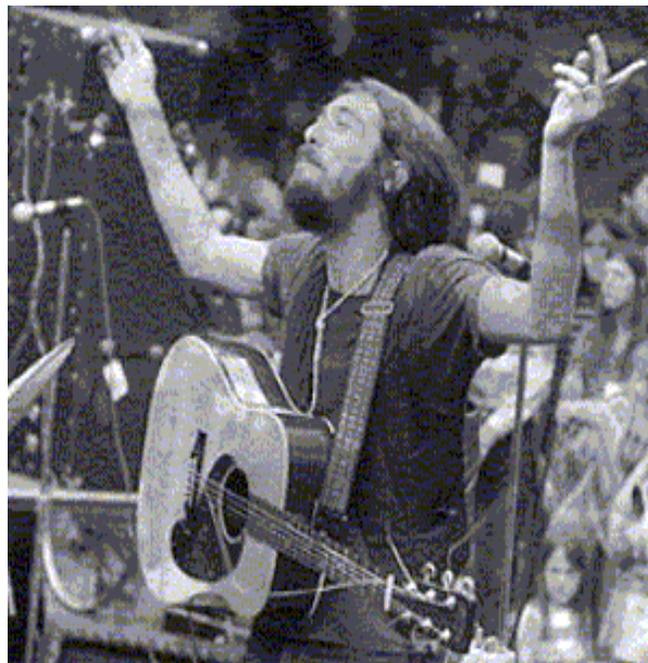
But unlike most rockers who are permanently sidelined from the scene by a need to make an honest buck, Sandler, 59, has returned to the stage. His Orpheus Reborn is one of three baby boomer bands in the western suburbs whose members prove that even the likes of lawyers and CPAs can learn to rock again.

They are under no illusions about their chances in a youth-oriented business, though they take full advantage of new technologies, such as Web-based promotions, to spread their sound.

But for most of them, the payoff is not a matter of CDs sold or songs downloaded, but rather the emotional high of rekindling a love affair they thought had burned out decades ago.

While only one of them has been able to quit his day job, all agree that if they could make a living with their music, they'd do so in a drum beat.

"I'm clearing out my desk virtually!" Sandler joked.



Harry Sandler with Orpheus at 26 (top), and at age 59 (above, center) with bandmates in Orpheus Reborn.

Orpheus was formed in 1967 and the group recorded three albums and four singles for MGM records. Its song “Can’t Find The Time” hit the Billboard magazine charts and was covered by Hootie and the Blowfish for the soundtrack to “Me, Myself and Irene,” a 2000 movie starring Jim Carrey.

The band toured for two years, but broke up in 1969 over artistic differences and disparate visions.

“Some recognized that, as performers, we were nothing without the public,” said Eric Gulliksen, who sings and plays bass. “Others were not concerned, believing that the music was enough, and didn’t care whether the public liked it or not.”

In 2004, four of the five original Orpheus members — including Gulliksen and Sandler — reunited and added two more members to form the pop-country group, Orpheus Reborn. They jam every Sunday in Sandler’s Chestnut Hill house. They have played a few local gigs and have another booked next month.



Orpheus Reborn

Members: From left: Eric Gulliksen, 63, market research consultant (bass guitar), Bob Dunlap, 55, professional musician (lead guitar), Harry Sandler, 59, vice-president at the American Program Bureau (drums), Kathi Taylor, 52, artist and musician (percussion), Jack McKennes, 63, video production and solo musician (guitar), Stephen Martin, 59, freelance writer (guitar and harmonica).

Genre: Pop-country rock

Biggest hit: “Can’t Find The Time To Tell You”

Website: www.orpheusreborn.com

Next gig: March 16 at Johnny D’s in Somerville 617-776-2004

While Sandler went from being a celebrity to boosting them, Gulliksen earned two Master’s degrees, received 17 patents, and became vice president of marketing for Koehler Manufacturing Co., a Marlborough maker of mining equipment that has since been bought out.

“I spent many years traveling the world crawling around in underground mines,” said Gulliksen, who is now a market research analyst and consultant with Venture Development Corp. in Natick.

While music has become his number-one passion, he is enough of a realist to realize it may not become more than a serious hobby.

“We all want to go back something fierce,” he said, adding that occasional gigs are “a lot more satisfying than not doing it at all, but none of us are willing to give up our dreams.”

Kathi Taylor, 52, is one of the new members. A singer and drummer, Kathi used to perform with an all-girl group, the Mustangs.

“Our big claim to fame is that we opened for Edie Brickell at Denmark’s Roskilde Festival in 1989,” said Taylor, now an artist who melds painting and photos.

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(biographic material, etc. on Wellesley performer John Cate, and Needham group The Maple Street Project, deleted)

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So, what makes these folks in their 50s and 60s so attached to rock? “Boomers were entrenched in the revolution,” said Jeff Price, a Newton native and president of spinART records in New York. “In came the Beatles, Elvis Presley, Led Zeppelin, and the Beach Boys. The ‘60s brought a political movement and music became associated with a cause to describe yourself.”

Price, who started spinART 15 years ago, said the music has a different meaning for baby boomers than it does for the youth of today. “We’re in the middle of the Iraq war, but we don’t have a Vietnam, a huge social movement, and a lot of the strife. It’s a different environment.”

Big labels “now have the need to generate earnings,” he said, “and the way to do that is a quick success — to sell huge amounts of records, like 14 million. Selling 100,000 records is seen as a failure.”

While Internet sites offer even amateur musicians a chance to distribute their sound, Price noted that the MTV factor still stands in the way of breakout success for older performers.

Indeed, that was the point of MTV’s first song in 1981, “Video Killed the Radio Star” by a British group, the Buggles. The satirical song needled less-than-glamorous musicians who in the past could rely on fans to fantasize about their looks.

The resurgent baby boomers are undeterred.

“Some say that older folks like us shouldn’t have dreams of returning to the stage,” said Gulliksen, 63. “We refuse to accept that.”

“Reinventing yourself is never easy, and the older you are, the harder it is to get people to accept you in something new — no matter what the industry is.”

(John) Cate said he “would love to hear his stuff on the radio,” but believes it’s a young person’s game.

“It could happen for us, but video did kill the radio star.”

Susan Chaityn Lebovits can be reached at slebovits@globe.com.