



THE
FREDDIE
LONG
BAND



Many young musicians pick up an instrument and dream of playing for the hometown crowds and opening up for famous musicians but few have the chance to make their dreams come true. Frederick native Freddie Long has been lucky enough to make this happen since forming The Freddie Long Band in 2005 but he knows his journey is far from over.

"I was in my first 'rock' band in middle school. It was basically the same type of vibe I have now but a lot more terrible," says Long with a smile. "Of course we all thought we were the coolest kids in school but it's all a learning experience. You've got to start somewhere."

Long learned to play the piano before picking up the guitar. "I remember my parents had an old stand up piano. I didn't want to play it but then they sold it and a year later I was asking them to buy me a keyboard," says Long.

The keyboard was his first instrument but during live performances he moves effortlessly between this and other musical tools including the acoustic guitar, harmonica, and his bluesy vocals. Backed by bassist Randy Mazzi, electric guitarist Chris Bell, and original drummer Ken Deater, Long was able to develop sets that included a mixture of covers with a twist and originals that keep the girls dancing and the guys bobbing their heads.

The Freddie Long Band's upbeat danceable songs mixed with accessible lyrics make a combination hard to resist. Fans and critics alike have enjoyed their blend of high-spirited pop rock songs and acoustic ballads. Their debut album, *Strangers and Friends*, received a nomination for a WAMMIE (Washington Area Music) Award and was named one of Indie-Music.com's Top 25 releases of 2007.

For some it may be a guilty pleasure but for others it speaks volumes. "It's really important for people to relate to our music and have it enrich their lives," says Long about their appeal. "I want people to feel like they are a part of something."

Being a part of something is exactly what keeps their demand high. Since the original group came together, The Freddie Long Band has played Frederick's largest events including the annual "In the Street" festival and the Summer Concert Series at the Baker Park Bandshell in downtown Frederick. One shining moment for the band on a local level was opening for Blue Oyster Cult during the City of Frederick's Fourth of July celebration which draws tens of thousands of Frederick residents.

The Freddie Long Band's musical achievements extend past the Frederick County border and into the surrounding region. The group recently opened for nationally known country star, Jo Dee Messina at the Maryland Theatre in Hagerstown, Maryland. "The whole time I was playing I thought, 'what am I doing here?' I was still that kid in high

school sitting on his bed writing songs. It was a very special moment," Long reminisces.

After the Jo Dee Messina concert, the makeup of The Freddie Long Band went through an adjustment period when Deater moved onto the next phase in his life. The group took a short break and began auditioning new drummers and found the perfect fit with Mike Ball. The short break also gave Long the chance to pursue other additions he had been considering.

"A lot of the new material I'd been writing included a sax line," Long says about the new addition, "I was thinking about expanding the sound a little bit. The saxophone is the one of the most, if not *the* most, expressive instrument." The band welcomed Eric Brooks to form the new line-up of The Freddie Long Band. "The more people in the band, the more energy it creates. Bringing Mike and Eric into the band will give our sound an added richness," Long observes.

As The Freddie Long Band continues their musical path, the same spirit and drive they show today will keep inspiring their audiences. There is no doubt that they will continue to open for national acts, win awards from indie websites, and receive critical praise. Their albums will mature and grab new admirers as they move into the future. Freddie Long's dreams will carry on.

Words by Joanna K. Lubbes
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