

Chicago tribute band, Chi-Town Transit Authority, to play Greenwood Performing Arts

- By ST. CLAIRE DONAGHY sdonaghy@indexjournal.com | Jan 7, 2018



Atlanta-based Chi-Town Transit Authority is bringing the legendary sounds of the band Chicago to Greenwood Performing Arts for the series' 7:30 p.m. performance Jan. 12 at Greenwood Community Theatre.

Tickets are \$45, available at the Greenwood Community Theatre box office, 864-229-5704.

This newly formed seven-piece band has been wowing audiences at performing arts showcases with renditions from the famed “rock band with horns.”

The band Chicago is known for hits such as “Just You ‘n’ Me,” “Saturday in the Park,” “You’re the Inspiration,” “Hard Habit to Break” and many more. The band has a tremendous music catalog spanning decades.

For Laurence Cohen, trombonist for Chi-Town Transit Authority, Chicago’s early years particularly offer up musical gems. Perhaps that’s why the tribute band’s name is inspired by the name of Chicago’s debut album from 1969, “Chicago Transit Authority.”

Chicago’s big hits were great, Cohen said, but he said the band’s first two albums are worth a listen now.

“Those albums might not have charted big hits, but they are great songs, great rock ‘n’ roll,” Cohen said. “At the time Chicago was emerging, their horns were used in an extremely innovative way. Many ‘60s bands had horns, but they were kind of background. With Chicago, they are front and center.”

Among those earlier songs, Cohen has enjoyed rediscovering “Wake Up Sunshine,” which is happy and Beatles-esque, and the more rock and blues-influenced, “South California Purples.”

Although Chi-Town is based in Atlanta, Cohen actually grew up in Chicago and got his first professional job as a 16-year-old musician playing the amusement park Six Flags Chicago.

Chicago the band’s music, Cohen said, “is a blend of a lot of things,” rock ‘n’ roll, jazz, bebop and classical. When I started playing trombone is about the time Chicago came out with their first album. I’ve been living and breathing them forever.”

The music, Cohen said, is all different.

“The keys, the time signatures, it’s really an incredible mix of things,” Cohen said. “I never get tired of it.”

Cohen said Chi-Town’s trumpet player connected with a drummer he hadn’t seen in years and a booking agent planted the idea about a Chicago tribute band.

“They got the ball rolling,” Cohen said. “As weird as it sounds, there were some Craigslist ads and lots of feelers out for more musicians. I responded to a Craigslist ad and wondered, ‘What am I getting myself into?’ We found a great guitar player and a great bass player, who can sing the Peter Cetera stuff, which is some of the most difficult.”

Strong musicianship and vocals make it challenging, Cohen said.

“With seven guys in the band, we try to be as authentic as we can with the music and we are really students of Chicago’s music,” Cohen said. “We listen to it and ask ourselves, ‘How did they get that sound?’ One of the things that is really helpful is listening to live recordings instead of studio recordings.”

Members of Chi-Town Transit Authority come from different walks of life.

“We range in age from early 40s to mid-60s, but we love Chicago’s music,” Cohen said. “We don’t try to look like the original members, or act like them, but we hope we can let the music happen and bring it to a wider audience. We’re very excited to be coming to Greenwood.”



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