



SUPPLIED PHOTO

With its self-titled debut released in March, local band Sally's Krackers is reviving our musical roots.

Young band proud to live in the past

Sally's Krackers inspired by world's first rock stars

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Special to Sun Media

For local band Sally's Krackers, keeping things fresh means rocking it old school.

The band achieved some local fame as a high school act playing grungy alternative rock early in the decade, capturing numerous "Battle of the Bands" titles that ultimately won the band its first studio sessions.

But once the members were through their three years of stardom at Austin O'Brien high school, the band decided to update its sound by looking to the past, going back as far as the 1930s. Blues and early rock legends like Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters and Buddy Guy are some of the artists cited as influences on Sally Kracker's current sound.

Old favourites

The self-described, "modern band that lives in the past," is bringing its roots rock sounds to The Pawn Shop tomorrow night with opening acts Big River and Sean Brewer.

Singer/guitarist Matthias Kroller explains the band's sound evolved through newfound improvisational skills and good old-fashioned record collecting.

"I think listening to old records is kind of becoming a thing of the past.

It's just a hobby we have, going to garage sales, picking up old vinyls. We all have library cards and just try and collect as much old music as we can," he says. "All those musicians of course are either really old or dying off, and we're trying to keep the music alive as much as we can."

Music community

The band's attitude toward the local music scene also shifted with the stylistic change, as the guys have learned the value of camaraderie over competition.

"When you're playing battle of the bands, you always feel like you're in some sort of competition and you're looking at other bands like they're rivals or something," Kroller says. "And now we've learned that it's better to build more of a community of musicians and bands."

While Kroller says the band has developed some good friendships within the local scene, he's also maintained some old high school fellowships by getting out and playing shows.

"That's another great thing, that's the only way you get to see some of those people from high school that you haven't seen in five years," he says. "All of a sudden they pop out and they're like, 'Wow, you guys are still together after all this time, same members and

everything.'"

Kroller - along with his brother and bandmate Johannes, who handles violin and vocals with the Krackers - grew up surrounded by music, but living in communist East Germany until the age of 12 may have given him a little extra appreciation for his musical freedom.

"My dad was a rock musician back then in the '70s and they had a lot of censorship on music. You couldn't perform any songs or lyrics that weren't approved by their agencies and stuff like that," he says.

International tour

Kroller has been back to Europe to exercise his musical autonomy, playing Portugal with Sally's Krackers a couple of years ago and more recently touring small cafes across Europe as a duo with Johannes.

Now that all the Krackers' members are finally done with school for the first time as a band, Kroller hopes to head back out overseas with the whole crew next spring rather than make a cross-country trek at home.

"Touring Canada is getting too crazy with the cost of gas and the distances," he says. "It's a little intense."

Sally's Krackers' self-titled album was released in March and is currently available at stores around the city and online internationally through CD Baby.