

# The Kings' reign continues

**The pop rockers behind the 1980 super-hit *This Beat Goes On/Switchin' to Glide* roll on, pleasing an ardent fan base and helping out with a local charity when they can • By Wendy Peters**

For a rock band to survive decades and still attract fans to their shows, it needs camaraderie, a continuing vision, energy, good luck – and it really, really helps to have had at least one monster hit.

That's the way it is with the Kings, based in the Toronto area, still going strong in 2010 after 30-plus years, and at every performance, fans can be sure of hearing *This Beat Goes On/Switchin' to Glide*, the singalong 1980 hit that vaulted up the charts both in Canada and the United States.

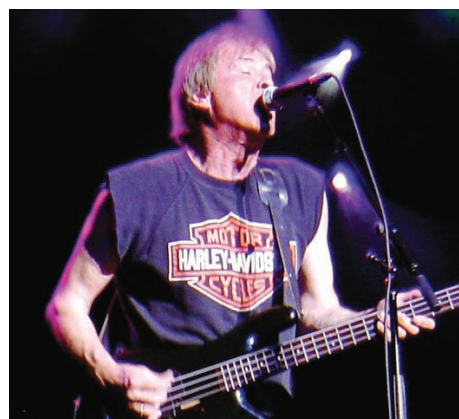
The Kings have ardent fans right across the country and in the United States. Over the years they have performed in every province and more than 35 states.

"Most of our fan mail comes from the States, notes John Picard, aka Mister Zero. "Every

week someone wants to tell us how they love our music and what it meant to them. That's one of the main reasons we keep going. Playing original music is tough but the feedback from the audience and fans is a major factor why we continue to do this."

Picard is the lead guitarist of the band and was born and raised in Oakville, Ont. along with two other original band members: David Diamond (bass, lead vocals) and Max Styles (drums). Picard met the fourth band member, Sonny Keyes (keyboard, vocals), in Vancouver and the two of them travelled back to Oakville "to put the band together." Diamond and Picard became the band's main songwriters, and since the beginning they have only performed their own original music. Today only Picard and Diamond remain from the original lineup, with Tod Reynolds and Peter Nunn now rounding out the group.

It was 30 years ago that the Kings had their greatest hit, the two-song-in-one medley *This Beat Goes On/Switchin' to Glide*. It earned them an appearance on *Dick Clark's American Bandstand*.



**Original Kings vocalist Dave Diamond has stayed with the band for 30 years.** (Kings photo)

"We were signed with a major U.S. label and that's the kind of promotion you get with the big boys," says Picard. He says performing on *Bandstand* was really "a logical extension of another trip to L.A."

Other lesser hits would follow, among them, *If We Don't Belong Together*, *Unstoppable* and *Should Have Been Me*. Many of their recordings can now be found on iTunes.

While Picard still calls the Kings a rock band, he says their music has evolved over the years. "We have lots of songs that are different stylistically as part of our growth as songwriters. Some

are country-tinged, ballads, easy-listening and even jazzy. You can't do the same things over and over. Our goal as writers is to try and shake it up a bit."

One part of their evolution is to support charitable causes. Diamond and Picard have waived their personal fees for the Kings' performance on Nov. 6 at Oakville's *Largest Rock 'n Roll Party* in support of the Children's Dream Centre and Food Bank, part of Kerr Street Ministries.

Event director Sandy Smeenck hopes that the *Rock 'n Roll Party*, now in its seventh year, will one day become a coast-to-coast party that might generate the feelings of national pride that Canadians felt during the recent Winter Olympics. She envisions connecting communities across Canada on a single night and simulcasting the event via giant TV screens, benefiting community charities.

In the meantime, Smeenck has landed a band with a history to entertain the local community on Nov. 6. Says Picard of the gig, "It seems like a good event and they have a great turnout, and something we enjoy doing is a well-organized event that people will go to. It makes it worthwhile for us."

*Oakville's Largest Rock 'n Roll Party takes place on Saturday, Nov. 6 at the OE Banquet Hall, 2245 Speers Road in Oakville (oebanquet.com).*

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