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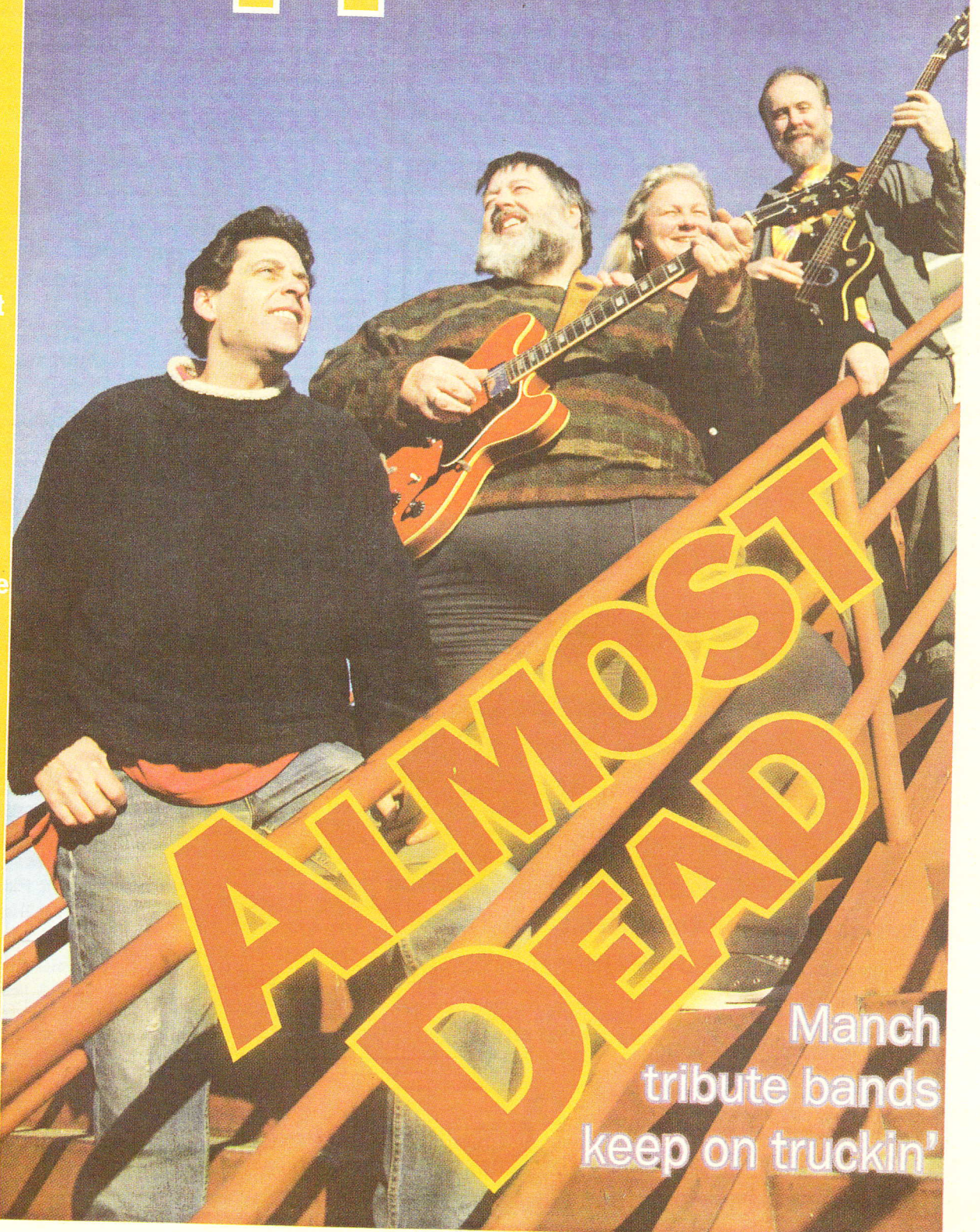
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MANCHESTER'S CITY PAPER

the Hippo



ALMOST DEAD

Manch
tribute bands
keep on truckin'

ALMOST DEAD

Lichen, other
local bands,
pay tribute
to the
big names

Story by Robert Greene
rgreene@hippopress.com

Photos by Allegra Boverman



The cast and crew of Lichen, clockwise from top, drummer Bill McLaughlin, keyboardist Diane Zevos, bassist Charlie Windhausen and guitarist John Zevos. Photos by Allegra Boverman

John Zevos and Charlie Windhausen met in junior high and the rest is a couple of dozen years of history.

The two chums started playing music together and, on Sept. 2, 1979, they went to their first Grateful Dead show and the local music scene was changed forever.

"I saw the Dead about 40 times, myself," Zevos said last week. "Charlie about the same."

The duo's music took on a Dead-like spirit that not even a two-year relocation to California and Zevos' marriage could change.

"We just played stuff we liked," Zevos said. "It was the early '80s, a

good time for the Dead and a good time for me. I didn't have any kids and could do pretty much whatever I wanted to do."

In 1981, the first components of the band Lichen — Zevos, wife Diane Zevos and Windhausen — began to play together. They came back to Manchester that summer and formed Lichen, naming the band in honor of the organism that forms from a symbiotic relationship between algae and a certain fungus.

"Every time I saw something that worked well together, I'd say it was like lichen," Zevos said. "The name stuck."

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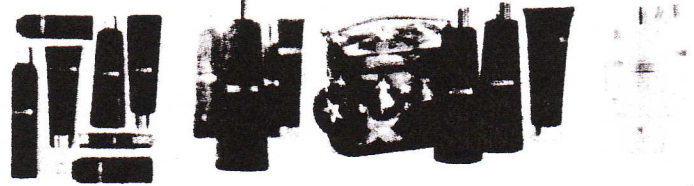
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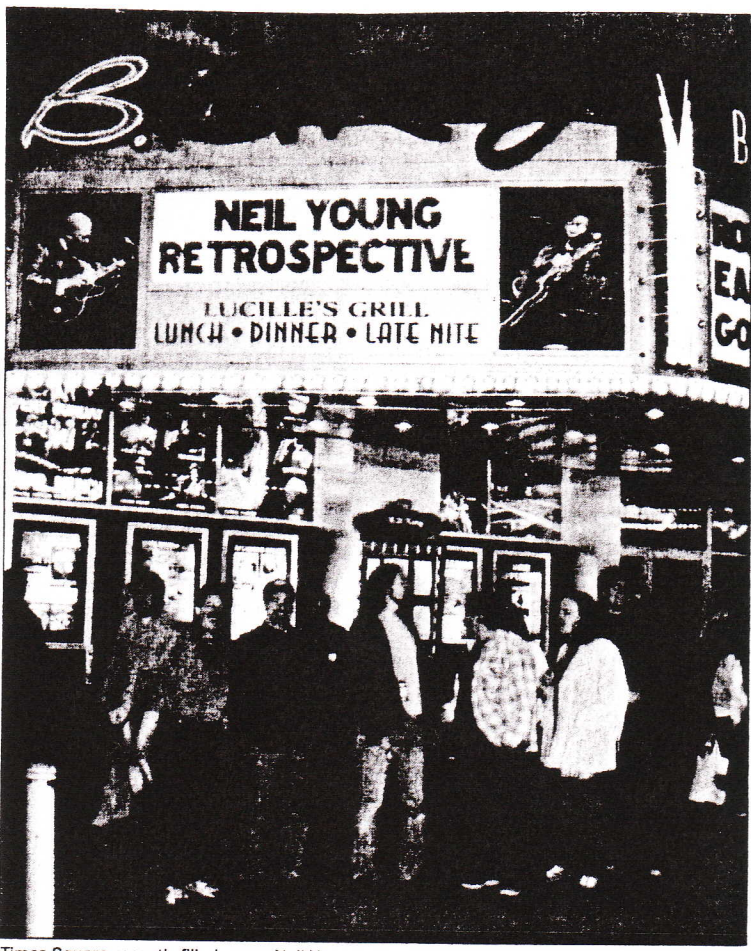
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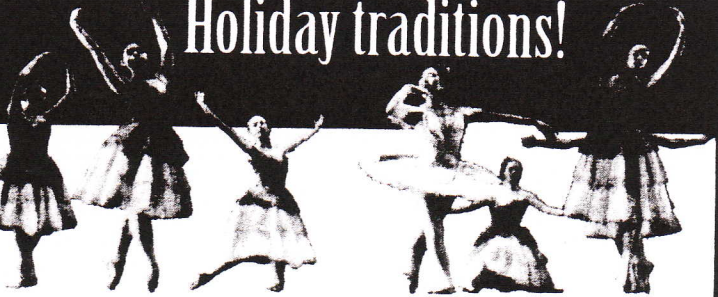
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Times Square recently filled up on Neil Young, courtesy of tribute band Rust Never Sleeps. Courtesy photo.

Holiday traditions!




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Drummer Bill McLaughlin — forevermore known as “the new guy” — joined the band in 1988, and Lichen became known among local Deadheads as *the Grateful Dead* tribute band. Seventeen years of playing weekly at O'Donnell's Tavern cemented the band's place in local music history, a rep not likely to be besmirched by Lichen's recent, possibly temporary move, to the Stage Door Café on Hanover Street. The band is playing at the Stage Door around 9:30 p.m. every Thursday, at least through December. There's no cover charge. Club phone is 625-0810.

Lichen is not a tribute or cover band in the way that other New England acts — such as Fat Angus (AC/DC), Rust Never Sleeps (Neil Young), Jovi (Bon Jovi), Red Hot (Mottley Crue) or Rick Larimore, the Ultimate Rod Stewart Tribute — are. Lichen is just as likely to play something from The Band or Van Morrison, as it is to borrow from Jerry Garcia's repertoire. However, nearly everything the band does sounds like something the Dead would have done, had they decided to cover it. Lichen pays tribute to the improvisational Dead's spirit, as much as to the band's music.

have wanted to, had his backup band, The Tennessee Two, known more than four chords and boom-chicka-boom.)

Lichen is a very tight band, as it should be after nearly two decades of playing together. Like a happily married couple, band members finish each others' sentences and riffs, bouncing into new ideas and segues.

“The missing piece of the puzzle just turned up,” John Zevos said about midway through the first half of the set.

Lichen keyboardist Diane Zevos had just pulled up outside, having been held up at their son's jazz recital. A few minutes later, her hands comfortable on the keys, the band launched into a Diane Zevos-channeling-Janis Joplin version of Kris Kristofferson's “Me and Bobby McGee.”

Once you can play a few songs on the guitar, you start to realize how hard the rest of it is and observing “Big” John Zevos' fast hands would give any novice player reason to doubt. However, watching Zevos play Dead tunes, makes you wonder how the hell Jerry Garcia did it with only four fingers on his picking hand.

Last Thursday, Lichen's playlist ranged from the Dead, to Janis Joplin to Johnny Cash's first hit, 1957's “Cry, Cry, Cry.” (Performed as Cash would

Bassist Windhausen, Diane Zevos on keyboard and drummer McLaughlin are equally enjoyable to watch and hear on their respective instruments. Zevos also teaches music at Timberlane Regional

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"We all get along really well and have a lot of common interests," Zevos said.

"I speak for myself but, after 17 years, I really still enjoy playing with them."

"I remember seeing The Beatles on the *Ed Sullivan Show* when I was 5," Zevos added. "I remember thinking 'this is a really cool thing to do.'"

Lichen makes it a policy to never play the same song two gigs in a row. That's easy, Zevos said, when you have an active repertoire of about 400 songs.

Zevos is also reputed to be a mean hand on the mandolin, and he may bring out the instrument for the Dec. 9 show.

Rust to rust

Ken Gibson, of the Neil Young tribute band Rust Never Sleeps, says he never wanted to form a tribute band.

"I hate the term 'tribute,'" he said. "It feels like something you do for a dead person. Or a dead career. I suppose we're more of a Neil Young jam band because we put a lot of our own creative energy into playing those songs — without losing the original spirit of them."

After dropping out of the music scene for almost 10 years, Gibson rounded up a couple of old friends to put together a "Live Neil Young Retrospective" to showcase 40 years' worth of Young's music. Their first gig was at the Elks Lodge in Fitchburg, Mass., opening for two other bands — a Beach Boys tribute

www.rustneversleeps.net.

Dirty deeds

Or maybe, because of a minor feud among New England's AC/DC tribute bands, we should call this part "Back Black."

Russell Davenport of Fat Angus, a AC/DC would-be band that will next appear at The Zone in Hudson Dec. 1 said relations are mostly cordial among emulators of Australia's greatest rock band.

"We get on real well with Back in Black," Davenport said. "Our guitarist Dave [McCarron] plays with them sometimes."

The Dirty Deeds feud was one of those problems. Fat Angus splintered and the rebel contingent went off to form a new band. Or something like that.

Davenport says Fat Angus has been around since 1991. There have been a few changes here and there, and two members of Fat Angus also play for a Santana tribute band, but mostly it's about the music of AC/DC.

But not all of AC/DC.

"We don't play anything from [2000's] *Stiff Upperlip*," Davenport said.

Davenport said Fat Angus was born because its members were having a hard time building a fan base with original music.

"We started thinking 'What's a good tribute,'" he said. "Van Halen, Metallic