



NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND  
by Tamela Meredith Partridge  
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In a music industry that is often ruled by trends and a constant state of change, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band -- Jeff Hanna (guitars/vocals), Jimmie Fadden (drums/harmonica/vocals), Bob Carpenter (keyboards/accordion/vocals), and John McEuen (banjo/fiddle/guitar/mandolin) -- have successfully maintained a legendary 41 year career with their signature brand of classic country rock.

"The work of keeping the individuals and band together --the communication it takes, the work of dealing with people just as people -- that part of the job has been as intense and as time consuming for us as the music" Carpenter said. "You have to empathize with each other. We've been very lucky to be able to work things out in whatever dysfunctional way we do --and, believe me, it can be totally dysfunctional -- but I think it's that way for every group."

The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band are scheduled to perform their diverse blend of vocal harmonies, pioneering instrumentals, and well-crafted melodies at The Rosebud Theatre on Friday, April 18, at 7:30 p.m.

The illustrious band, originally founded in Long Beach, California in 1966, have recorded more than twenty five albums and received three Grammys, two platinum albums, and a string of pop and country chart-topping hits including "Mr. Bojangles," "Make A Little Magic," "An American Dream," "Long Hard Road," "Fishin' In The Dark," and "Modern Day Romance."

"We've kept it alive, kept it a growing thing," McEuen said. "With the Dirt Band, you think of a certain integrity in the songs, not a single focus. What has connected our various work is the 'Americana' instrumentation and playing songs that are accessible to people. Our songs aren't just about one thing and neither are people's lives."

One of the most memorable moments for NGDB occurred in 1977, when they became the first American combo to be invited by the Soviet government to tour the U.S.S.R., playing to literally 140 million curious television viewers.

"Touring in Russia was the ultimate eastern European experience," Fadden said. "Back in '77 the Soviet Union was still very much a closed society. We were there for a month, played five different cities and did five live shows in each one. The audiences were just wonderful, they responded far more vigorously than the people who took us there had ever believed possible."

NGDB's most recent studio album, "Welcome To Woody Creek," showcases material penned by the band members with an emphasis on interaction, informality, spontaneity and maximum feeling. The project also contains an inspired treatment of the Beatles' "Get Back," re-imagined as a bluegrass stomp, and a graceful, evocative rendition of Gram Parsons' "She."

When it comes to music, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band are not concerned with deep pondering truths, paying homage to the current fads, nor cashing out intelligence for the sake of a musical hook. For them, music can make you smile, offer a glimmer of hope in a world that's so busy rushing that it misses the little things that make life sweet.

"There's this temptation to chase the trends," Hanna said, "because obviously it's easier to get on the radio. We did a lot of soul searching about what is important to us -- and at this stage of the game, we made a definite decision to be true to ourselves and our song sense."