

Great White set to play Speaking Rock's Hair Fest

Dave Acosta, El Paso Times 5:40 p.m. MDT April 21, 2016



(Photo: Courtesy)

When you are doing what you love, 30 years can come and go in the blink of an eye.

For Great White's Michael Lardie, nothing could be more true.

Lardie joined Great White in 1985. He says he remembers everything like it happened yesterday.

"Obviously, one of the things that comes to mind is having a (recording) deal, losing a deal and going back into the clubs, then getting re-signed in 1986," Lardie said in a phone interview from his home in Northern California. "Within a year-and-a-half later, "Once Bitten" went platinum. The night we were given our platinum plaques, we were playing to a sold-out show in Los Angeles."

The Grammy Award-nominated Great White is still going strong, making its way to Speaking Rock Entertainment Center on Saturday. The group will perform during the two-day event, Hair Fest, which features other bands from the 1980s "hair metal" era, including Ratt, Dokken, Warrant and others.

"I'm so thankful to have been (playing music) for 30-something years and people still want to come see us play," Lardie said. "How amazing is that? Talk about being blessed."

Lardie believes that Great White has had continued success because, once fans come out to hear the band's hits, which include "Rock Me" and "Once Bitten, Twice Shy," they return because Great White is a formidable blues-based rock band with tremendous chops.

"We have had a strength and conviction in what we do," Lardie said. "We still think our music is valid and it should be heard and there's enough people that think that's the case, no matter what adversity we faced."

That adversity includes the band splitting into two camps – Great White and Jack Russell's Great White. Russell is Great White's founding vocalist, who was granted permission to perform under the name when the band split up in the early-2000s. In 2006, Lardie, founding guitarist Mark Kendall and longtime drummer Audie Desbrow reunited, first with Russell, then with late Warrant frontman Jani Lane, and now with current vocalist Terry Illous.

It was Jack Russell's Great White, which was performing in 2003 at The Station nightclub in Rhode Island when a fire, caused by the band's onstage pyrotechnics, broke out. One hundred people, including the band's guitarist Ty Longley, were killed in the fire. Kendall was performing in Russell's version of the group at the time.

"(The tragedy is) something that affects us all, to some degree, and that is because of Mark's connection to it," Lardie said. "I give him absolute props for not running away from it and doing what he can do to give some energy and love back to the fans."

Lardie said that throughout Great White's existence, the band has loved visiting El Paso, due in no small part to its fans from across the border.

"The fans that come up from Mexico are so into it," Lardie said. "We are excited about playing (Speaking Rock) because we know there's a connection with fans from Mexico, and there's an energy there that really is incomparable."

Dave Acosta may be reached at 546-6138; dacosta@elpasotimes.com; [@AcostaDavidA](https://twitter.com/AcostaDavidA) on Twitter.

Make plans

What: Hair Fest.

When: 8:30 p.m. Friday, featuring Firehouse, Dokken and Ratt; 8:15 p.m. Saturday, featuring Steelheart, Great White and Warrant.

Where: Speaking Rock Entertainment Center, 122 S. Old Pueblo Road.

Tickets: Free; must be age 18 and over to enter.

Information: 860-7777; speakingrockentertainment.com (<http://speakingrockentertainment.com>).

Read or Share this story: <http://www.elpasotimes.com/story/entertainment/events/2016/04/21/great-white-set-play-speaking-rocks-hair-fest/83256036/>



The banner is a horizontal rectangular graphic with a teal background. On the left, there is a logo for LCHBA (Lubbock County Home Builders Association) featuring a stylized sun and the text 'LCHBA'. To its right, the words 'SHOWCASE of HOMES' are written in a serif font, with a blue butterfly icon above the word 'of'. In the center, the dates 'April 22nd, 23rd, & 24th', 'April 29th, 30th', and 'May 1st' are listed in a white serif font. On the right side, there is a logo for Red Hawk Golf Club featuring a red hawk silhouette and the text 'Red Hawk GOLF CLUB'. Next to it is a circular logo with a green landscape and the text 'Green & Healthy'. At the bottom right, there is a brown button with the text 'learn more' in white.