

Weekender

Musical maturity: Great White appreciates previous successes and moves forward



15 HOURS AGO • [BY CHRISTOPHER BRAUNSCHWEIG](#)

Great White guitarist and keyboardist Michael Lardie admitted some members of the classic rock band went “a little nuts” during their ‘80s heyday.

But no matter how crazy it got, the end goal has always been for the band to thrive and survive. Today, Lardie said, the band is firing on all cylinders.

“Every day is on a complete, focused, sober viewpoint in life,” he said during a phone interview.

“It changes the level of consistency and the quality of the show; whereas back in the day it was harder to achieve given that kind of behavior.”

Thirty years ago, Great White was playing with Whitesnake in arenas filled with 16,000 or 17,000 people. It was an exciting time for the band and the classic rock genre. The band has since changed its venues to festivals, casinos, bike rallies and the like.

The new shows are still big, but in a different way.

“The different way being is we have something different to look forward to every day,” said Lardie. “A typical weekend might be a casino for 1,500 people and then a festival for 25,000 and a theater for 800.

“It’s kind of all over the place and that’s what keeps it interesting and exciting for us is touring the way we do it now.”

The guys in Great White spend most of their weekends on tour, leaving on Thursday and playing Friday-Saturday-Sunday in three different cities. On Mondays the band returns to their normal lives and much-needed rest.

Lardie said the band has been fortunate enough to work shows every month in the last year.

“We do about 70 shows a year and still do as well as we did when we went out with a bus for 200 shows,” he said. “Obviously we don’t get a lot of sleep when we’re out on a weekend, but it’s worth it for everybody having a chance to be home with their families.”

In some regards, touring is easier now than it was 30 years ago, Lardie said. No longer does Great White have to suffer seven or eight months away from home.

“There are so many upsides to the way we do it now,” he said. “It’s been this way for about five years.”

Though the band’s venues and tour schedules have changed, the fun hasn’t. The appeal of classic rock is multi-generational and it shows during Great White concerts. Parents and even grandparents are introducing their kids to the genre. Lardie remembered seeing a boy on his father’s shoulders singing, not only the chorus, but even the verses to “Rock Me.”

“That, to me, is the ultimate compliment because the music is being passed down to another generation,” he said.

Great White’s bluesy rock ‘n’ roll sound hasn’t changed much either; however, Lardie said the band has tried to become better songwriters over the years.

“When this group of people gets together, it doesn’t matter if we’re playing kazoos, I think we are pretty much going to sound like Great White,” said Lardie. “It’s a particular type of music that has stood the test of time throughout many, many years.”

The infusion of new material drives Great White to continue performing shows. A couple years down the road, Lardie expects the band to proceed in writing new songs and releasing record after record.

Lardie added that he doesn’t see Great White becoming a “greatest hits” band, performing the same set for 15 more years. As the band matured, Lardie says the musicians gained an appreciation for the successes they’ve achieved in their more than 30-year career.

“That’s one thing we always to try to talk about among ourselves is that appreciation,” he said. “As you age and continue to make a living in this business, you look at each other onstage and realize how amazing it is to still be able to be doing this.”

The details

WHAT: Great White and Slaughter

WHEN: 8 p.m. Saturday (March 14)

WHERE: Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, 111 Third St.