

Saturday Night Special



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On a cold December night, we had the pleasure of warming up to some amazing Southern Rock, thanks to the gang from Saturday Night Special. You haven't caught this amazing 8 piece act yet? What are you waiting for? Get off the couch and go check them out. The band boasts an amazing line up with a combined 150 years' experience playing the local circuit. Here is the lineup, which has seen some changes, but John says this one is a keeper.

John Maki

Saturday Night Special is John Maki's brainchild and he has spearheaded this from grassroots.

This Lynyrd Skynyrd tribute band is the product of this talented musician's love for southern rock and knowing how to put a great band together. With a long history of rock performing to his credit, this project is the one that pulls it all together.

'80's rock fans will remember his touring days and more recently, his hot guitar stage shows at events including corporate, community and festival gigs. Also an inspired song writer, his rock tune, "Hard Rock Miner", was featured on the 2011 CD Legend Aid.

Danny Macdonald's high energy lead vocals rock the Saturday Night Special stage, getting boots "shuffling" non-stop. As Front Man for Saturday Night Special, he brings a fantastic rock voice and a serious good time vibe to a hot southern rock show. Danny's renditions of "Travellin Man" and "That Smell" are just a taste of his talent for moving a crowd.

A notorious rocker from Ontario, Canada, Danny plays a variety of classic rock and top 40 hits of the '60's, '70's, '80's, and more for clubs and private events with his acoustic group. On arena sized stages, Danny has opened for greats such as Ted Nugent.

Rob Straughan is a gifted drummer, entertaining audiences across Ontario for many years. Driving the beat for Saturday Night Special, Rob brings his own freight train percussion style to the Skynyrd sound and gets them stoked for hot tunes like "I Ain't the One", "Give me Back my Bullets", "Double Trouble" and more. He has also performed studio work with great musicians and bands across Ontario.

Robin Desbiens is the Piano/Organ veteran with solid musical roots from the Desbiens clan going way back. Robin has played in country bands for most of his musical career and Saturday Night Special is stoked to have him on board! Southern Rock is a natural for Robin as he has been playing piano licks and hooks all along and he didn't even know it!

Chris Peplinski "Pepper" - Pepper plays bass. With a style deeply rooted in classic rock and R'n'B, Pepper lays down the foundation



Southern Rock Heats Up The North!

for Saturday Night Special. Pep's has played professionally for over 20 years, from musical theatre to session work and clubs. This "Old Soul" is very excited to be a part of the wagon train!

Tim Hietanen's stellar guitar playing brings a smoking hot vibe to the SNS sound. Be sure to catch him in rocking acts like Solomen Grace and Terra Cain. Tim is also one half of the acoustic duo, the "DT Collective". Tim and John played together almost 20 years ago so John is pretty stoked to have Tim on board with SNS.

Lise Violette brings a rockin' power vibrato to the backup vocals. She has performed on small and big stages for over twenty years. Her high energy performing style is well known in the Northern Ontario club and corporate gig scene, with her band, Euphoria. Guaranteed to blow your lid!

Gisele Guenard is half of the backup vocals team, along with Lise Violette. From weddings to studio work, including original and song demos in the pop/contemporary, lead vocals on CD and show/cabaret productions, Gisele has been performing since the '70's. Her personal repertoire is folk, R&B, country, gospel and classic rock. You will feel and see her soulful vibe in this show band. So now that the introductions have been made, let's talk about the band. As mentioned earlier, this is the brain child of John. It sort of started out as a Southern Rock Tribute that morphed into the current incarnation of a Lynyrd Skynyrd Tribute.

Q. John what made you return to the music scene after being away for a while?

A. The time was simply right and everything just kind of fell into place. I bought a new guitar, started playing and here I am.

Q. So what was the reason behind the band?

A. We all love Southern Rock, and wanted to pay homage to some of the great tunes we have all listened to and grown up with.

Q. So what role do you play in this ensemble?

A. Well I was the creator/brainchild of this act. I also do the marketing, promoting and booking. The rest of the workloads is shared between me and my wife Gisele.



Q. So what is in the future for you and the rest of the cast of Saturday Night Special?

A. We are headlining a show in New Liskeard. It is a big bike festival and one of the larger fundraiser's in the area for The Canadian Cancer Society.

Q. Any plans on doing some originals, perhaps an EP in the future?

A. We are always writing and trying new material. We actually have a recording studio at my place so on any given day anything is possible.

Q. Being such a large group, I would imagine that it is interesting trying to book shows with venues that can accommodate the show?

A. We are focusing on festivals, corporate events and clubs like the Night Club that we play once a year; but basically we love to play and will do the show wherever they will have us.

Q. Do you perform the entire Skynyrd catalogue?

A. We focus primarily on the "1976" live album and line up, the material they were doing before the band suffered the tragic loss.

Q. What was the album called?

A. "One More for the Road" which is, in our opinion, one of the band's best works.

Q. Is there anything different about the band that audiences might not know?

A. We show case each member in the band by rotating vocals and more. We fashion ourselves more of a "Show Band".

Q. So is there anything you would like to share with the Talent North readers?

A. Some of us have been around each other in various groups in the past. Tim and I have come full circle.

This band is like no other, having received testimonials from some of the original back up musicians that have played with Skynyrd themselves. Watch for them somewhere soon as they are aiming to be the ultimate "HIGH ENERGY" band that everyone will be talking about.

The future holds many journeys; the band is seeking to play higher end feature shows. Here are just a few more testimonials!

Dan Dubé - Continental Entertainment: "One of the better bands I've seen from Northern Ontario...Great front man, back up singers and musicians....what else can I say?"

Bill Davidson - Fan: "I have seen Lynyrd Skynyrd 6 times since 1991. Saturday Night Special host's a "rollicking" good time....the perfect blend of "in your face guitars and vocals' mixed with that sweet, Southern Rock boogie rhythm section. As close to the real thing as you will ever find!"

Need we say more my friends? Check them out soon. It will be a rockin' great night, to say the least.....

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