

Blues veteran releases debut album at age of 68

DAVID MORRISON FOR THE STAR

It is not every day that a 68-year-old musician releases their first CD, but that is what Nanaimo's irrepressible Sherry Smith has just done with her group, Band from Glad.

Featuring contributions from local blues star David Gogo, Smith's debut, entitled *Gardener of My Mind*, will be officially unveiled with a special show at Vancouver Island University's Malaspina Theatre on April 16.

Smith began singing in the early seventies, fronting the rock band Rose after it relocated to Nanaimo from Missoula, Mont. After Rose broke up, Smith performed in a succession of bands, once opening for the Winnipeg outfit Brave Belt, which evolved into Bachman-Turner Overdrive.

But life on the road playing scores of bar shows took its toll. Enduring a challenging personal time, Smith withdrew from performing to take a different path, eventually spending over two decades in the automotive industry.

Fast forward to 2014 and an older, wiser Smith has finally fulfilled a dream by releasing her debut CD.

The title *Gardener of My Mind* is in honour of Smith's grandfather.

"He was a coalminer in the Cassidy mines," said Smith. "He was also an incredible gardener and taught me so much that I like to say that he 'gardened my mind.'"

Very much a personal project, Smith's CD also salutes her hometown by featuring archive images of the Bastion and Nanaimo's mining history in the artwork.

"I love Nanaimo and am proud to come from here, so it's my tribute to the people who started this town," said Smith.

The catalyst for the project was Smith's son, Buckin' Billy Ray Smith, who is also the band's drummer.



Singer/guitarist Sherry Smith, second from left, is joined by son Buckin' Billy Ray, bassist Wayne Veillet and guitarist Daryl Marklinger on her album.

"I had songs dating back to the seventies and Billy Ray told me he wanted to record them for my grandkids and all the people that have supported me down the years," said Smith.

"He said I needed to put myself on Nanaimo's musical map."

Gardener of My Mind has been a long time coming, with many obstacles suspending production along the way.

"This is just a garage band who met once a week, for two hours, for seven years — and this is the result," said Smith.

Singer/guitarist Smith, Buckin' Billy Ray, bassist Wayne Veillet

and guitarist Daryl Marklinger already have a sophomore CD in the works, but in the meantime are excited for the launch party for the debut.

"It'll be good vibrations, high energy, happy, uplifting and inspiring," said Smith.

Band from Glad and opening act Flipside Cinema appear at Malaspina Theatre, 900 Fifth St. on April 16. Doors open at 6 p.m., showtime is at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20, available from Fascinating Rhythm (51 Commercial St.), from Sherry Smith or Billy Ray Smith via the Band from Glad Facebook page, or at the door.