

Tom Stahl and the Dangerfields Rock Memorial Park

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The clouds had cleared by the time Tom Stahl and the Dangerfields took the stage in Memorial Park in Hamburg on Wednesday night, and the wind had picked up in an effort to help Tom and his band blow the crowd away. As it turns out, these legendary Buffalo originals hardly needed the assistance.

"They've been together over ten years, and have eight CDs and counting," said Mary Lou Stahl, Tom's wife and former manager. "They love doing events like this: outside with all of our friends, fans, and plenty of room to dance." Lou and her friends, a generous contingent of whom came out to enjoy the unexpected good weather and even better music, were already scoping out makeshift dance floors as the band took the stage early in the evening.

Tom's son Sam, 16, joined his dad and the band onstage for several songs, including their newest headliner, "King of the World." With his wailing solos, driving beats, and "characteristic hair flip," Sam seemed poised to enter the rock and roll world his father seems to have embraced wholeheartedly.



As for the sizable crowd gathered on lawn chairs and blankets, many of them toting coolers and two or three toddlers, the friendly, often-sarcastic banter of Tom Stahl and the energetic, rockabilly sound was a welcome change from the traditional big brass band at this classic outdoor concert hood.

"I remember coming here as a kid," laughed Jake Brady, 18. "I used to come and see the Hamburg town band, and I'd bring books and toys because I'd get so bored. It's a great atmosphere here. Not boring anymore," he added with a grin.

Both avid fans of the band and veteran Hamburg concertgoers seemed to enjoy the show and the sunshine, soaking up the weather and the sounds of summer as they clapped and sung along, danced along the winding sidewalk, and responded with cheers and jeers to Tom Stahl's almost constant between-songs bantering.

Sr. Jean Cherry, a teacher at Hamburg's Immaculata Academy, is one such follower who has followed the Dangerfield's throughout Western New York. "We're all over," she said with a smile, fresh off the makeshift dance floor. "We were just at their show in West Seneca a week or so ago, but this one is a lot bigger. You get a real sense of the village here, how tight-knit the community is. People really get involved," she added.

Tom Stahl and the Dangerfields are no strangers to the obvious pleasure of their fans, new and old. Stahl was voted Best Individual Vocalist and Best Acoustic Act in Artvoice's Best of Buffalo 2007 and Best Entertainer in the 2006 awards. Today the band consists of Tom Stahl on lead vocals, his younger brother Mark Stahl on keyboards, their childhood friend Gary Kowalski on drums, Dave Courtemanche on bass, and their newest member, Todd Fierstein who joined in 2008.

"These guys are all over the map," said Tim Toepfer, the band's manager. "They play everything from Nietzsche's and Our Bar to graduation parties, town concerts like this one, and benefits for charities. Everything that accepts original music, you can bet Tom will be there."

The Summer Concert in the Park melded the best of both worlds on Wednesday night: an award-winning entertainer and a small-town community tradition of music and togetherness. As the sun blazed over the trees and the sounds of traffic going by took a back seat to the playful licks, sarcastic jabs, and soulful songs of Tom Stahl and the Dangerfields, a nearby patron seemed to sum it all up, "This is what summer nights should be like."