

ENTERTAINMENT

Bay-area Sorentino, band brings blues to city

By Dorothy Corkery
Emerald Contributor

In 1987, Danny Sorentino and the Sinners was named one of the top 15 unsigned bands from over 2,000 entries at the New Music Seminar in New York City.

Three years later, this Bay-area band will appear at Eugene's Good Times Cafe and Bar, 375 E. 7th, on Thursday, Dec. 13.

In 1989 the band released a debut album on an independent label, but has yet to sign with a major record company. After 12 years of playing music in bars and clubs, Danny Sorentino said he believes that a record contract "could be just a phone call away."

It sounds like a lot of optimism for a songwriter who writes so convincingly about the dark side of human nature. Sin, guilt and relationships gone bad are some of the main themes in Sorentino's songs.

He describes himself as an Italian, raised as a Southern Baptist. Growing up he remembers wanting to be a Catholic, like many of his friends.

"Catholics only went to

church for 45 minutes every Sunday," he said. "I had to go from 10 in the morning until 4 or 5 in the afternoon."

Sorentino's songwriting talents were first tapped when Billy C. Farlow, former front man for Commander Cody, hired him to write songs and play in his band.

During this time, Farlow and company were asked to be the pit band for the musical story of Buddy Holly's life, which was being produced in Dallas, Texas. The show was backed by Dallas business people and by Holly's widow, Maria Elena.

After the show closed, Elena invited Farlow and Sorentino to her home to see some of Buddy Holly's memorabilia.

"I went through all of Buddy's 45s," Sorentino says. "These were the records he listened to when he was growing up. He had Ray Charles, Jimmy Reed and lots of Bo Diddley."

During the final show, Holly's brother brought on stage the electric Stratocaster that survived the plane crash that killed Holly. The guitar was undamaged from the crash except for a small gash on its back. Sorentino played that

guitar too.

Danny Sorentino and the Sinners' music is a synthesis of guitar-based rock with blues and country roots. There's a definite '60s influence from artists like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan.

Sorentino attributes the country influence in his music to his grandmother, a displaced Texan who "played a mean banjo."

Growing up, Sorentino listened to the Grand Ole Opry radio show every Saturday night with his grandmother. He heard bands such as Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys and songwriters such as Hank Williams.

Other band members are bass player Rob Ruiz, Cedric Wilmott on drums, and New England's Berkeley School of Music graduate Gary Reynolds on lead guitar.

Sorentino and the Sinners will appear at Key Largo in Portland on Wednesday, Dec. 12 before heading down to Eugene for their Good Times performance. They will then head north to open for Curtis Salgado and the Stilettoes in Seattle on Friday, Dec. 14.

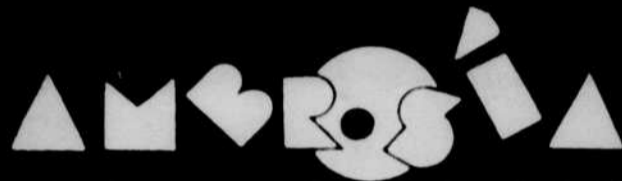


Courtesy photo
Danny Sorentino and the Sinners brings a synthesis of guitar-based rock with blues and country roots to Eugene on Dec. 13.

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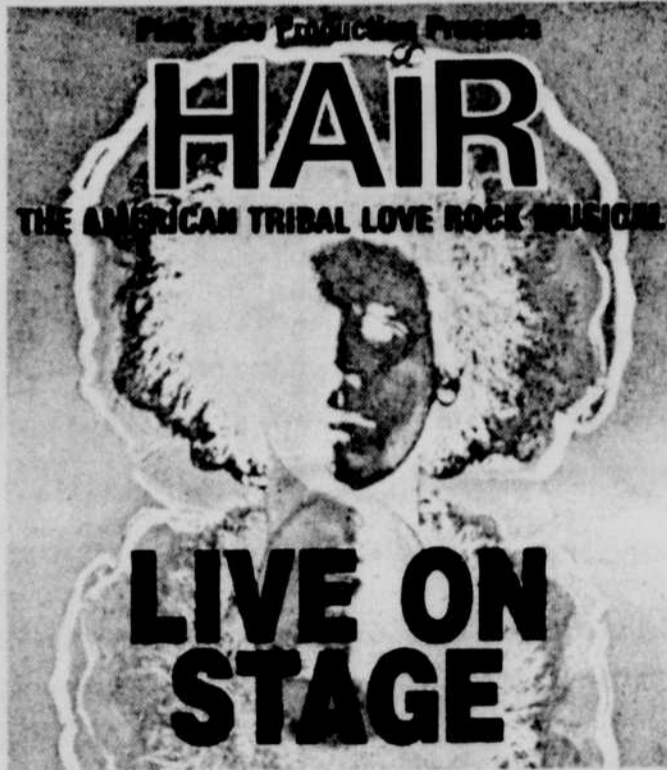


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