

Bad Penny-- Rock and Roll That's All in The Family

By Scott Laird

Bad Penny is the name, and 80's Rock and Roll is the game. But screaming guitars, stage explosions and really tight pants are not part of the mix for this local Vernonia power rock trio. In fact, this is just a family that plays music together because they truly enjoy working and being together. And they love eighties-style rock!

I recently got together with the members of Bad Penny: father, Craig Headley, 52; son, Aaron Headley, 27; and daughter, Heather Graham, 25. After receiving an email that briefly detailed their story, I took a listen to the MP3 file they had attached. These guys are really talented musicians! And they have a very interesting story to tell as well.

Let's start at the beginning. Craig and his wife, Karen, moved with their two teenagers from the suburbs of California to eight acres out on Pebble Creek Road in Vernonia in 1997, one year after a devastating flood hit this community. The kids initially hated the move to rural Oregon, but quickly learned to love it. "A little piece of heaven," is how Heather describes it now. Both Heather and Aaron graduated from Vernonia High School, and continue to make their homes here in town.

Music has always been in the family-- Craig majored in music at the University of Oregon and played bass guitar in a successful rock band during the 1980's called Z Boy. They came just inches away from making the big time, and Craig reminisces fondly about his years in the band. Aaron is an accomplished guitar player in his own right, having started when he was twelve; and Heather is a talented percussionist, also plays keyboards, and recently figured out she's quite a vocalist.

The family has played together for fun off and on over the years. But the flood of December, 2007, and personal disaster forced the family to pull together and find that music can be more than just a fun hobby. Heather, girls aged six, three, and one-and-home was flooded on December the date of their second wedding just recently purchased the home flood. But out of that disaster "That was a pretty grey time Craig. He and his wife moved into Heather's family to move into their placed. "I was sitting in the fifth-do something different, something said Craig. "And music being what we love, I thought, let's see what we can do here."

The family set up a pseudo-recording studio, literally stacking equipment, instruments, computer hard drives and gear into the tightly packed trailer. "It ended up just being a good time for the family to be together working on something," said Craig. They played music and recorded together as a way to cope with the stress and frustration of loss. "And when we were finished with it, we thought, 'Hey, this is pretty good-- what should we do with it?'" said Craig.

The family was very aware that a lot of good things had come out the flood-- people helping each other, all the volunteers that showed up to work on Heather's house, the community pulling together. They decided to market a four-song CD, called Flood, and donate the proceeds to Columbia County Community Action Team, as a way to give back for all the help they received. The CD is now available at some local merchants around town. "People seem to like what they're hearing," says Craig.

So, about their material and song choices, this eighties rock thing. "We all just love eighties rock," said Aaron. "Dad was in a big eighties rock band, a big-hair band-- really monster hair, lots of Aqua-net," laughs Heather. They cover Journey, Pink Floyd, and a band called Kingdom Come, along with a Headley original on the CD. They have performed live for friends and hope to play some gigs this summer in Vernonia. Included in their set list are covers of Stevie Ray Vaughn, Led Zeppelin, Joe Satriani, Janet Jackson and Michael Jackson.

The name Bad Penny goes way back. Aaron tells the story of how years ago Craig was in a band looking for a name and turned Aaron and Heather loose with a competition for their schoolmates to come up with a name. "It was maybe my third or fourth grade class," said Aaron. "And somebody coined that name, and we didn't use it then, but throughout the years of us playing together, whenever we toy with a name, we would toss that one out there. This time around we plugged it in."

It's a bit unusual to find a family that seems to enjoy being together as much as the Headleys. But after sitting and talking with them, you can tell there's a really strong bond between them. And music seems to be a big part of that. "Out here in Vernonia, there's not a lot of musicians to play with and we just started jamming together more as a family, than anything else," said Aaron. "We just have a natural feel together," said Heather.

Aaron will be leaving this fall to join the US Navy. Heather, besides being a full-time mom, is going to school to complete a master's degree in Fine Arts, and works part time. She and her family are back in their house, and are waiting to raise it. Heather made sure to mention the support the band has received from their biggest fan, mom and wife, Karen. "She'll watch all three of my children after a full day's work, so we can rehearse for a couple of hours. She'll tolerate ridiculous practice volumes and vibrations that carry throughout the whole house. She'll pay down credit cards after we jack them up from buying music gear. And she loves and supports everything we try to do. She is an amazing person and we owe everything we've been able to accomplish thus far, to her."

Heather also mentioned her daughters, who she says support her like no one else can. "When we go for drives, I sing my eighties heart out, and they smile at me from the back seat and sing along. I honestly think I sound better when I have a baby on my hip, at least I'm more used to singing like that. My oldest (Melody, age 6) says to me, 'Mommy, you're the most beautiful singer in the whole world.' She's my biggest fan and obviously the most favorable critic I could ever ask for."

The family has found strength in making music together, and a community that they feel connected to. "Whenever we face difficult times, music is a huge part of what helps us heal-- being able to create together," says Craig. "It's good to be part of a community like this, where we want to give back. It's been a great experience for us."



The members of Bad Penny, Craig Headley, Aaron Headley, and Heather Graham, all from Vernonia

"Dad was in a big eighties rock band, a big-hair band-- really monster hair, lots of Aqua-net."

a mother of three young a-half, and her husband's 3, which also happened to be anniversary. They had only about six months before the some great music was born. for everybody," remembers a fifth-wheel trailer, allowing home while they were dis-wheel thinking, 'We've got to kind of rally a little bit,'"

Senior Center Activities For May 2009

Five Area Luncheon: Held in Vernonia this month on May 26. Join seniors from throughout Columbia County for this monthly gathering hosted by a different community Senior Center each month.

AARP Safe Driving Class: Anyone interested call Karen Miller, Senior Services at the Vernonia Senior Center 603-429-9112.

Connie's Fabulous Breakfasts: Fabulous breakfasts are available to the public on Fridays for a cost of only \$3. The event happens at the Senior Center (446 Bridge Street) from 7:00 to 9:00 AM each Friday. Meal price includes a beverage, too. Enter through the side, parking lot door. What a deal!

Week Day Lunches: The Vernonia Senior Center offers nutritious and tasty lunches each weekday for only \$3. These are available to the public, not just Senior Citizens. (Meal-time is noon; late arrivals may not be served.) You can reserve your lunch by calling by 11:15 AM, or further in advance if possible, to assist the cooks as they prepare the day's meals.

Maple Bars available locally!: Connie King, the cook at the Senior Center, is making maple bars each day. The maple bars are available to the public, too, and only cost \$1 each. Availability is subject to quantity on hand. You can assure yourself of a good supply by pre-ordering them directly from Connie by calling the Senior Center (503-429-3912) any week day, from 7:00 AM-3:00 PM. Please allow one day lead time for larger orders. The Center's front door opens at 9:00, but the side parking lot door opens at 7:00. Ah, sweet treats!

Thrift Store: Bargain prices can be found in Vernonia's Senior Center in their Thrift Store. The retail store is open Monday through Friday, from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM. It is also open most Saturdays mornings from 9:00 to noon. The Thrift Store provides funds for the Senior Center's facility and its many activities. Donations can also be dropped off during those same hours, and donated clothes need to be clean and in good condition so they are "sales ready". Buy locally and support your local Senior Center.

Membership Dues: Another way to support Vernonia's Senior Center is to pay the \$10 annual membership dues. Checks may be mailed or dropped off at the Senior Center.

A Vernonia Fish Story

By Gordon Compton

I called in sick on Thursday and took the grandkids to Vernonia pond. We (me and a ten, eight and six year old) fished from the bank with no luck. One of the floating fishing platforms opened up and we moved over to greener waters.

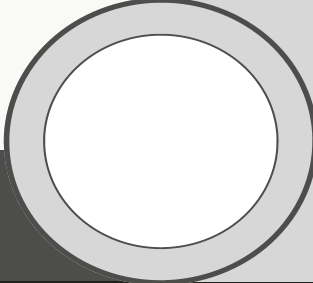
Still no luck. Kids getting bored, and my granddaughter, Kyla Jepson, wasn't watching her pink Barbie pole. Splash... all I see is the faint color of the pink pole going to the bottom.

I grab grandson's camo GI Joe pole, put on a Nordic jig with treble hook and start to dredge the bottom. Fifteen or so minutes later, I snag the line and get that Barbie pole to shore.

Granddaughter starts reeling in the line. "Papa there's a fish on my line." Five minutes later, here's what she caught!



Kyla Jepson shows off the fish she caught at Vernonia Lake



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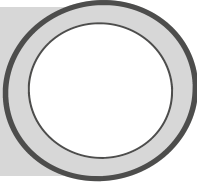
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