

Bend's Brave New World drops debut album after life-altering accident

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY • The Bulletin

Early last year, Bend rock band Brave New World was in the studio laying down basic tracks for a cover of “Last Kiss” for its self-titled debut album. The song, originally recorded by Wayne Cochran in 1961 and later popularized by artists such as Frank Wilson and the Cavaliers and Pearl Jam, is about a teenage girl who dies in a car crash while on a date, sung from the perspective of her boyfriend.

A week later, husband-and-wife band-leaders and vocalists Andy Fecteau and Kathy O'Hara were driving from one of their kids' soccer games in Medford to Bend when a red pickup truck swerved into their lane.

“I saw him coming; I said, ‘Oh, Jesus,’” Fecteau said. “In the time I said, ‘Oh, Jesus,’ I started to steer to the right ditch and I looked up and he went to the same direction. I brought the car back to the middle; he came back to the middle.”

Right before impact, Fecteau steered hard left and the truck slammed into the front right side of the car, where O'Hara was sitting. The couple's sons, ages 16 and 18, had minor injuries; one broke his ankle.

“My wife was — after about, we don't know if it was 30 seconds or a minute, she started breathing again,” Fecteau said. “We were all huddled around her; we thought she had passed away. ... She was pinned into the car, and the other guy was upside-down 100 yards away, we think.”

Fecteau and O'Hara spent the next year in and out of hospitals for surgeries and infections, and are still undergoing physical therapy. To top everything off, COVID-19 hit Oregon two weeks after the accident, complicating the couple's ongoing, post-accident treatment.

But the music went on. A few months after the accident, O'Hara — her arm broken “in 200 pieces” — laid down lead vocals for “Last Kiss.”

“We were traumatized and shocked,” Fecteau said. “In a way though it was part of the healing process. We could sing. At times we couldn't walk, we couldn't do a lot of things; we couldn't take care of just the housework. But we could stand in front of a microphone and sing, so when we could do that, we did it.”

“A Brave New World,” released earlier this month, features 12 original songs and four covers, including “Last Kiss,” “Breathe (2 a.m.),” originally by Anna Nalick; Jason Isbell's “Speed Trap Town” and Bob Seger's “Fire Lake.”

The album was recorded at Central Oregon Recording with producer and en-



Submitted photos

The album cover of “A Brave New World” by Bend band Brave New World is shown.

gineer Matthew Fletcher, who is also the band's lead guitarist; the rest of the group features drummers/percussionists Lindsey Elias and Kyle Pickard, keyboardist Patrick Ondrozeck and bassist Mike Beaulieu. The band formed about eight years ago, but the current lineup solidified in the past three or four years, Fecteau said. Mark Ransom played guitar on two songs and also co-wrote “Mexico” with Fecteau.

Fecteau, founder of Redbird Physio physical therapy office and known for his work with Redbird the Band and the Church of Neil concerts, co-wrote the album's original songs with David Zandonatti. The sounds of those previous projects seep into “A Brave New World,” from the crunching guitars of “Man Gone Bad” and “Constantly Asking,” to blues rockers such as “Circle of Love,” and even some improvised punk (hidden track “Spayed Chihuahua”).

Many of those songs have taken on new meaning since the accident.

“Everyone writes with some self-reflection, but it kind of comes to you from the ethers,” Fecteau said. “The antenna's up and a song hits you. But then after (you go) through all that and you're singing it ... it's funny, you didn't even really know what you were singing about because now you're really there. Now you've arrived. You've



Andy Fecteau and Kathy O'Hara's car is shown after the accident. The couple underwent surgeries and physical therapy over the last year while completing the debut album of their band, Brave New World.

been put down. When you're singing that song, that blues song, ‘Circle of Love,’ that's a whole other place to sing it from when things are good than when you really need the blues.”

Coincidentally, Fecteau and O'Hara were both physical therapists before the accident, and have been undergoing therapy at Redbird Physio with Aaron Lenard and Chris Stanley, respectively. But neither will be able to practice again, they said.

“We've got permanent damage, permanent deficits,” Fecteau said. “But there's an upside to it where we both felt — after we went through the first heavy six months, something like that gives you another side of it where you feel very fortunate to be alive. And more so than anything, all we cared about was our children, and our children pretty much came through with scrapes compared to what happened.”

Along with shattering her right arm, O'Hara had a concussion and three fractured ribs. She underwent emergency surgery (she eventually underwent three surgeries in total) and now has four metal plates and 21 screws in her arm.

“I was sort of hopeful, like, ‘Oh, will I ever be pain-free, or am I going to always have pain?’” O'Hara said. “Part of me says, when your arm's been in 200 pieces, can you really expect to be pain-free? I don't think so. ... I'm probably about 60 to 70% what I was prior to the accident. I can run; I'm an avid runner, but I still have some pain when I'm running.”

Fecteau's thumb was shattered and he damaged his right ankle, knee and back. He had surgery on his thumb a couple of days after the accident, then had ankle and knee surgery a few months later, but developed a staph infection in his right knee.

“From my athletic stuff, I've had some other major surgeries in my history,” Fecteau said, “but this process has been a whole other level of submitting to the process with some humility and patience and acceptance of how things are every day.

“... We've treated patients for 30 years. We've seen people like us, but we never expected to be people like us. It gives you a whole other level of understanding of how fragile life can be.”

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