

Band of brothers: Four siblings rock together as STIFLE

Cathlene Buchholz, Special to the Times Published 9:00 p.m. CT Aug. 25, 2019
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The nine Kroska kids from Foley may be known for growing up on a century-old dairy farm, but four of the siblings are also known as members of the local band STIFLE: Band of Brothers.

Brothers Alex and Jay Kroska started the band in 1997 and practiced in the hayloft of a neighbor's barn.

"It was our early, young practice area. A super cool place. We played for a graduation party up there. It's still set up to this day," Alex said. "We nicknamed it 'Heart of Sid's Barn.' Older brothers Mike and Mark joined the band in 2002 and 2008, respectively.

Alex (stage name Axle), Jay (Pooch) and Mike (Chief) are self-taught musicians. Alex began to play guitar at 16 years old, Jay started drumming at 8, and Mike was 29 when he picked up the bass guitar.

Keyboardist Mark (Shark) studied piano from ages 8 to 13 and continued to hone his craft by playing for church functions and weddings. All four brothers played in school band and marching band from 5th through 12th grade — Mike, the trumpet, Mark, the French horn, Alex, the trombone, baritone and tuba ("All tuned to the key of B flat," he said.) and Jay, the percussion instruments.



Stifle: Band of Brothers (Photo: Cathlene Buchholz)

Alex also played the piano for school and said, “It was 88 keys of pure bliss.” Besides playing instruments at STIFLE gigs, all four brothers provide vocals.

Although their father (now deceased) wasn’t into their band scene, Mark said, “Mom loves the band. While we were growing up, she played the piano and was a strong influence on us.”

Despite the fact the other five Kroska kids aren’t in the band, they, too, are certainly musical. Their sister Angela (also known as Jello) plays trumpet and is the middle school band director for Sioux City Iowa School District.

Sister Jeanna (Buggy) also plays trumpet, and brother Jared (Toad) plays saxophone and previously worked as a DJ. Brother Brett (aka Bert) supports the band at venues and is known for his high energy and rowdiness on the dance floor.

According to Alex, “He likes to get a mosh pit going.” Brother Rudy (Rooster), who has Down syndrome, is enamored with his brothers and their band. Rudy sways to the music and lets go on the dance floor, especially when the band plays “Footloose” or “Creep.”

For almost 22 years now and still going strong, STIFLE has performed at weddings and anniversary parties, graduations, festivals and fairs, and bars across mostly Central Minnesota. STIFLE was invited to play at the Minnesota State Fair in 2005, courtesy of Foley Future

Farmers of America. “We performed on the Christensen Farm Stage near the Birthing Center from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.,” said Alex, “and got free food all day.”

The band performs a wide variety of country, rock and oldies music, ranging from the 1950s to the present.

“We know approximately 500 cover songs,” Mark said. They have shirts, hats and stickers for sale at venues and a CD of 12 cover songs and a CD of 5 original alternative rock songs.

STIFLE announced that after playing a couple gigs at Rollie’s Rednecks and Longnecks in Sauk Rapids, additional performances have been scheduled. Be sure to catch the band at Rollie’s on Sundays, Sept.8, Nov. 10 and Dec. 29 from 6-9 p.m. No cover charge required.

For more information, a calendar of events, or to listen to music samples go to www.stifleband.com or check out their Facebook page at facebook.com/stifleband.