

# Mid-Life Crisis Band to play Mardi Gras



Port Arthur News Staff Photo by Mike Tobias  
**Drummer Frank Oberle keeps the beat going for the Mid-Life Crisis Band as the group performs Wilson Pickett's "The Midnight Hour" during a recent practice.**

By **MARILYN TENNISSEN**

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Something happens to a man when he has reached that age between 40 and 60.

He looks in the mirror and sees a few more wrinkles and a little less hair. He notices a spare tire slowly inflating around his middle.

He wonders how the last 20 years flew by so fast while careers and families were being built.

He longs for the days when all he had to worry about was cruising with his girlfriend and buying the latest hit on 45 rpm.

Some men enter the full blown adult world kicking and screaming, clinging desperately to their youth.

Some buy a sports car. A few start chasing their secretary.

Frank Oberle just started a rock and roll band. The Mid-Life Crisis Band started as a way for Oberle, 47, and his friends to let off some steam.

But the band took off, and now the members are getting ready to play their biggest gig yet — Saturday night, Feb. 21 during Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas, kicking off at 9 p.m. on the Miller Lite Stage.

"Sticks" Oberle, a Port Arthur native and grad-  
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# BAND

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uate of Bishop Byrne High School, has been playing drums since he was 10 years old.

"I wanted to be Ringo Starr," Oberle said. "Or Keith Moon."

But it wasn't meant to be.

Oberle, whose family owned Grammier-Oberle Funeral Home in Port Arthur for 85 years, became a certified public accountant, married and raised two children.

The drum sets came and went several times during those years.

"When we first got married we lived in a tiny apartment and he had those drums," Frank's wife, Donna Oberle, said. "When I got pregnant he had to get rid of the drums to make room for the bassinet."

Then a few years ago, the Oberles were at a party at friend Mickey Shuffield's house. Shuffield, a district judge in the 136th district, has been playing musical instruments for years.

"My son was in a garage band and his drum set was there and a couple of my guitars, and Frank sat down and wanted to play," Shuffield said. "So we started jamming in front of all these people. The next day Frank called me and said he really had fun and had talked to David Perkins, a guitar player, and Freddie Schwartz, a singer, and they were thinking about starting a band. I almost said 'no' and went to play golf, but I said 'okay.' The next thing we knew we were practicing and adding members and then we were performing. Our first public performance was in October 2002."

Since then, the band has been playing a mix of classic rock and roll, 60s hits and dance music at local clubs and private parties all over the area.

Donna Oberle remembers the



Port Arthur News Staff Photo by Mike Tobias

**From left, lead singer Jennifer Parker pipes her melodic vocals into the mic while Freddy Schwartz waits for his cue during a recent rehearsal.**

guys getting together at the beginning.

"I just shook my head and said they should call themselves 'Mid-Life Crisis' and we laughed about it. But the name stuck," she said. "They had no idea it was going to turn into this big of a deal. We are all having so much fun. We are all friends and our kids are friends too. We are just having a great time together."

The band has grown to eight members and a full-time sound man.

Most of the members have never played professionally before and none of them plan to give up their day jobs.

Antoine "Keys" LeBlanc is 51 and plays keyboards. By day he works at Ram Threading, but he had a band in high school, The Kidds.

"We are all looking so forward to playing at Mardi Gras," LeBlanc said. "It is going to be a blast."

On lead guitar is David "Slowhand" Perkins, 43, president of Perkins Roofing.

"I've been playing guitar since I was about 13, but I never played in a band before," Perkins said. "We are having the time of our lives."

Outside the courtroom, Shuffield, 50, is known as "Tamboourine Man," and plays guitar and percussion.

He recruited his buddy, Brett "Bass Master" Vickers, 51, from their days in a junior high garage band.

On lead vocals is "Downtown" Freddie Schwartz, a salesman for GM Classic Acura.

Schwartz, 52, has a boyish charm like Michael J. Fox, but when the band cranks up Rolling Stones tunes, his inner Mick Jagger comes out.

"This has been so much fun I quit playing golf," Schwartz said. "I have always played music and sang, but I was into folk like Peter, Paul and Mary. So singing this rock and roll is new for me."

Veteran musician, Johnny "the Sax Machine" Lindow, 58, is a barber by day and a wailing sax player by night.

"I have been playing sax for

about 45 years, all over Port Arthur, Beaumont and Southwest Louisiana," Lindow said. "This is the most fun I ever had and the best band I ever played with."

Last spring, the guys added a young female vocalist to round out their sound.

"I think I am their mid-life crisis!" Jennifer Parker "The Generator" Parker, 28, said.

The Nederland High School graduate said she has always been a singer, but mainly stuck to country tunes.

"This classic rock is all new to me. I didn't know this 60s music at all," Parker said. "But I have been having a blast. These are a bunch of great guys and we are having a great time. The longer we are together the tighter the band gets. We are ecstatic about Mardi Gras. It is going to be a blast."

Recently Mid-Life Crisis picked up Joe "Feedback" Clark, 43, owner of Beaumont Occupational.

Clark has been spinning tunes as a DJ for years on the side, and he brings to the band his encyclopedic knowledge of classic records — and a place for the band to rehearse.

"They really just needed me to help keep the girls away from the band," Clark said.

Oberle said there is a great chemistry with all the members of the band.

"We spend holidays and birthdays together and it has just grown," Oberle said. "We are all kind of in the same stage in life — we have raised our kids and we all have a love of music."

"I plan to keep my day job, but we want to keep on playing. There is nothing more fun than playing for a live audience and having everyone singing along and dancing."