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Arnold Grads Achieve Dream With Release of Album

Phil, Ty, and Mike Reunite to Create “I’m Your Rock Star”

By Janet Larreau

Three Arnold graduates have released a new album that is now available on all streaming and downloading platforms. Titled “Phil Koubek Project - I’m Your Rock Star,” the 12 track album is being played on 12 different radio and Internet radio programs in 140 countries around the globe. The release of the album is a dream come true for Phil Koubek, Ty Phillips, and Mike Purcell, who started their journey to eventually record this album decades ago.

Back in the 80s, there were several budding musicians in Arnold, forming bands and practicing in their parents’ basements and garages. Phil was one of them. He started at the young age of 8 by playing a tennis racket in front of the mirror at the rural farm home of his parents, Mary Jane and John Koubek.

Phil continued to find new guitar look-a-like items until fellow Arnold High students Scott Cool and Mike Davenport asked him to buy a guitar so the three of them could start a band. He was 14 or 15 at the time.

“We had always talked about starting our own rock band, and Scott and Mike both were playing drums and the bass in the high school band. So, I worked all summer long to save up enough money to buy me a guitar. However, Mike had bought a guitar and amp that was a little better than the one I had, so he let me play it until I got a decent guitar the following year,” said Phil.

The group started their band, XLR8, in 1986, practicing in Ron and Nancy Cool’s house in the basement. It was Scott on drums, Mike on bass, and Phil on the guitar and vocals. Scott and Phil wrote the songs. They ended up adding Alan Suhr (keyboards) and Brian Yarrington (lead vocals) to the band after a few months because Phil said he wasn’t very good at playing and singing at the same time – yet. They had five or six



Courtesy photo

(From left) Phil Koubek Project (PKP) band members Phil Koubek, Mike Purcell, and Ty Phillips, with producer Michael Beck, have released an album titled “I’m Your Rock Star” that is now playing and streaming around the world.

songs including “Faith In Dreams,” which they sang at their graduation in 1988.

They played one or two gigs with those members. When they graduated, everyone went off in different directions, but a couple years later, Scott, Mike and Phil got back together to jam and recorded a couple songs that they wrote together at Phil’s house.

“Every time Scott came back to visit me, he would bring his drums to set up and record music. The last song we did together was “Panic in Paradise.” I still have the 4 track recording we did of it,” said Phil.

In 1991 Phil and Ty Phillips started jamming together.

“I remember hearing that Ty was playing the trap set in the high school band and I needed someone to jam with, and since I always jammed with Scott, I wanted a drummer. So, I asked Ty if he would be interested in getting together to jam on some Kiss songs and that began our life-long friendship and partners in crime,” said Phil.

“I always wanted to be in a band, but no one my age played anything. But then towards the end of my senior year, Phil

moved back and asked if I’d like to get together and jam. He wrote songs, so I could just make up whatever I wanted to play! I always kind of took for granted that Phil was such a good songwriter and so creative,” said Ty.

That same year, Scott, Mike and Phil booked a gig at the old country club in Arnold under the band name Phil Koubek and the Duct Tape Band. Scott had to back out of the gig due to a ski trip, so Ty was asked to sit in on drums.

In 1993 Ty and Phil started jamming with Arnold teachers Mike McDaniel (guitar) and Jim Krohn (bass/vocals). This started the Silly Billy band. Ty and Phil practiced in Ty’s grandparent’s garage.

“Francis and Marion were so supportive of Ty, and by extension the rest of us,” said Phil. They ended up playing a gig out at the country club again as the Silly Billy band. This time it was McDaniel, Krohn, Ty, and Phil. That band would break up when Ty moved to Colorado.

In 1994 Phil started working on putting together a new band while living in Broken Bow at the request of a couple of his

friends, Bob Bowles and Dave Birnie, who asked him to play at the first Rock and Blues BBQ in Arnold, which became the Bluesfest a year later. The band was Sinister’s Grace. Phil auditioned a lot of people for that band. The drummer quit the band one month before the July 16, 1994, gig, but Ty came to the rescue. He moved back, rehearsed the songs and was show ready in just under a month. Arnold School Principal Mike Harvey let the band practice in his quonset the night before the show.

Phil continued playing in the 90’s, and in 2001 the band Quasi Mojo was put together, reuniting Phil and Ty. This is where Mike Purcell, another A.H.S. graduate who had played in a band with Phil’s cousins, Steve and Jim Koubek, entered the picture.

“Patty (Mike’s sister) told us Mike was back in town. Ty and I went up to see if Mike would join our band as the other guitar player, but Mike said he would join but wanted to play bass and he didn’t want to sing. He ended up singing two-thirds of the set because he was so good,” said Phil.

A few of these songs are older than my kids. I’ve always been on Phil to get them recorded and he finally did. I’m very happy to be a part of it.

- Ty Phillips, PKP Drummer
A.H.S. Class of 1992

“Since Mike and Phil are older than me, I grew up always thinking those guys were pretty cool – especially Mike because I knew he had gone to Chicago and was playing in bands out there. I would see him around town when I was a kid and I’d think to myself, ‘That guy’s a real rock star!’ I made Phil call him because I was too scared to call because he was so cool. I didn’t want him to think I was a dork!” said Ty. “I always really looked up to Scott Cool as well. He was such a great drummer and when he was in wrestling he’d let me look through his cassette tapes so I could find out what music I should be listening to.”

Quasi Mojo was a good cover band, but would break up a couple years later. Mike, Ty, John (another band member), and Phil became very close friends from then forth.

Starting in 2003, Phil took a break from playing in bands for six years, but continued to write music.

“I decided to focus on my career and raising my kids,” said Phil. “In 2009 I was asked to join the worship team at our church, Bethel in North Platte. It was a great honor to lead worship and to use the talents the Lord had given me. I played on the worship team for 3-plus years before deciding I wanted to start playing in bands again.”

Phil played with several bands in the years that followed, but his dream became making his own solo album. By this time, Phil was in North Platte, Ty was in Kearney, and Mike was in Omaha, building their careers. With a little persuasion, Ty agreed to work on the album, and with a lot of persuasion, Mike also agreed.

“I asked Ty first, because I knew it would be easier to get Mike to agree if Ty was doing it. Ty hadn’t been playing for a few years. He didn’t think he would be able to get his chops back in three months. Mike

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Caro Lehmkuhler Retires After 27 Years at Bank

Pinnacle Bank, community, gives her a big send-off

By Janet Larreau

Just starting her 28th year at the Arnold bank, Caro Lehmkuhler jokes that she has worn out four bosses and now the fifth one is getting her out the door before she wears him out. Caro, along with the community, celebrated her retirement at an open house held Friday, December 31. She has been a familiar face at the bank since she started in September 1994, always welcoming customers with a smile and a “May I help you?”

Caro joined the staff at Farmers State Bank - then owned by Roy Dinsdale and family - as a teller bookkeeper, working with full-time employees Barb Peterson, Bev Engleman, and Nancy Hansen, and part-timer Diane Conner.

Now, her title is retail banking assistant.

“My job as an RBA involves a lot of different tasks throughout the bank. In a larger bank, it is a lot more departmentalized. I like being able to be able to help the customer with their needs as they come to your window. I feel customer service is the most important job at the bank. I will sure miss the customers a lot,” she said.

The biggest changes she has seen since starting would be technology and more paper-work.

“We used to all work out of one cash drawer and only had one computer for all of us to share. Now, we have eight computers between all of us. It used to take about ten minutes to open an account. Now if you start from scratch, it takes about 45 minutes to an hour to open an account,” she said.

Caro said she loved having a job that not only her co-workers, but also her customers, feel like family.

“The great thing about working at Arnold at Pinnacle Bank is that I will still get to see them, just not as often,” she said.

She now plans to spend more time with her and husband Dwaine’s families and getting to spend more time helping with their great-grandson Xander. She also plans to see how many “honey do” projects Dwaine can do.

“It’s easier leaving a job when you know it is in great hands. The staff is the best and customer service is always great. Thanks to Pinnacle Bank, my co-workers and customers. You are all the best!” she said.



Courtesy photo

Caro Lehmkuhler’s brother Dan made the trip to Arnold to help his sister and the community celebrate her retirement from Pinnacle Bank.