



Twisted Gypsy members admire lead vocalist Niki Bente giving her all during her high note in "Landslide". Photo credit: Winnie Hohan

ARTS & LIFE, EVENTS, MUSIC

Tribute bands to perform at 2nd & PCH outdoor concert series

by Winnie Hohan — on October 14, 2022



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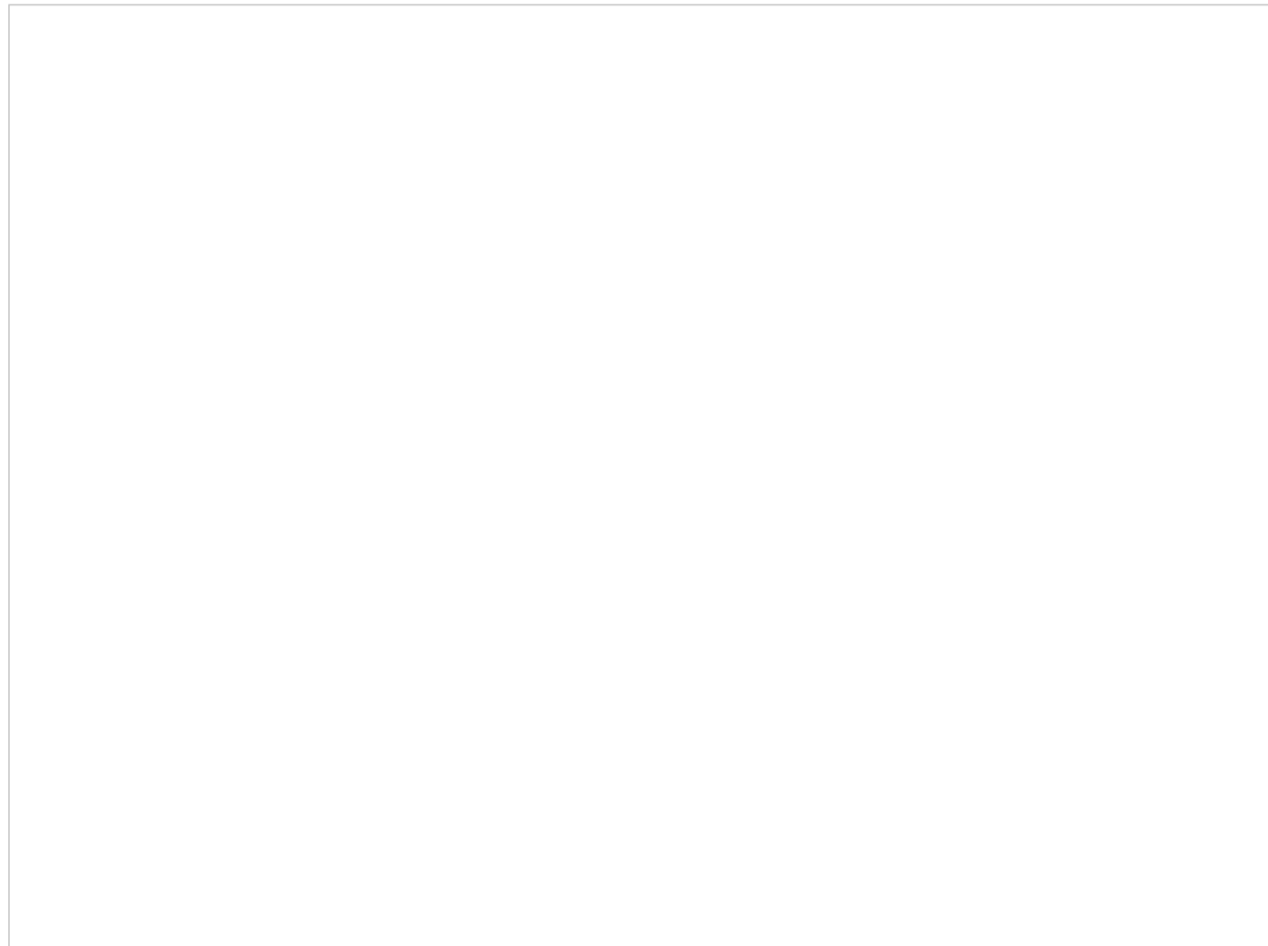
Rock 2nd & PCH is the limited three-part October concert series on Seaport Way that all live music lovers can enjoy. The event takes place on Thursdays from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. surrounded by a diverse number of shops, dining options, and a dance floor where tribute bands play for an excited crowd.



The large 2022 Rock 2nd & PCH stage attracts a large audience to the show. Photo credit: Winnie Hohan

During this series, 2nd & PCH general manager Samantha Lopez says that a Bruno Mars cover band will play on Oct. 13, followed by a Journey cover band on the Oct. 27. The first event on Oct. 6 featured the "Fleetwood Mac with a twist" group called Twisted Gypsy.

Beginning around 2016, the band's main manager and producer Billy Derian had the idea to create a Fleetwood Mac-inspired band. Many people have come and gone throughout the band's time together, but six members have stuck it out and created what they think is the "most potent lineup" of the band's history. Unfortunately, member Erik Szabo, AKA John Mcvie, was ill during the performance and couldn't participate. The bandmates, however, went on with the show.



Twisted Gypsy, left to right: Melia Scaletty, Milo Todesco, Niki Bente, Aaron Kusterer & Tim Gilmer add their own unique touches to their character's style, which ultimately allows their individual artistry to shine through. Photo credit: Winnie Hohan

Niki Bente portrayed Stevie Nicks, who she described as her, "All-time favorite person."

She has over ten years of cover band experience as Stevie Nicks and jumped at the opportunity to be Twisted Gypsy's lead voice. She said that marketing the band as a twist is extremely beneficial. She gets to add in her own personality to the traditional songs that fans know and love.

Melia Scaletty is the Christine Mcvie of Twisted Gypsy. Born in Kansas City, MO, she began experimenting with music at the age of six. She is inspired by Lady Gaga and Elton John, among other artists who can "shred keys." Her background is in the jazz genre. She studied at Berklee College of Music and the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in Los Angeles and New York, all while she taught children's piano and voice.

Tim Gilmer has had multiple roles in the band. When he first joined in 2018, he was John Mcvie; however, he's now the band's Lindsey Buckingham. The most-experienced performer, Gilmer performed on Sunset Strip in the '80s and '90s in multiple bands such as Steel Wolf and Burning Bridges. Despite his previous involvement with music, he says that he was "panicked" when actually playing as Buckingham. Gilmer has a before-stage ritual of anxiously pacing throughout a room before a show begins. He jokingly added that "getting together with Stevie" makes it all alright.

Aaron Kusterer is the band's lead guitarist, music director, and tour manager. He is a Long Beach local, previously in the Air Force for 15 years. Afterwards, he had the desire to expand his audience to the civilian world.

Kusterer said, "Seeing the audience reaction is a lot of fun. Outside of working with the band, the crowd reaction is my favorite thing."

Milo Todesco is Twisted Gypsy's longest-standing member as Mick Fleetwood, the drummer. From Simi Valley, CA, Todesco said that he was interested in music since childhood. He often faced parental pressure to do something in the sports realm; however, music wouldn't stop calling his name. He has worked with musicians like Slash, Morrissey, Blink 182, and Foo Fighters. Todesco said being in Twisted Gypsy was something he dreamed of doing.

"People know the music and come to see us. I know we're doing characters and emulating their music, but this is a wonderful, joyful band to be in," Todesco said.

Together, the band traveled across America to perform on different stages as well as shows like Good Morning San Diego. Bente said that each concert is so unique and special with different crowds. The performances that stood out to them were both the Orange County Fair and Pala Casino, where Stevie Nicks has also played. Fleetwood Mac created an unbreakable bond between the six.

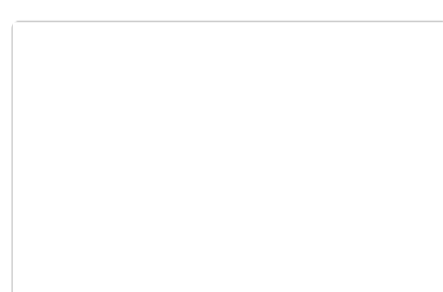
Scaletty said that no matter how many fights they got in, if they hated each other, they still came together for the music and celebrated with their audience.

"That's what we want to do," Kusterer added.

Fleetwood Mac's influence has spread throughout multiple generations. The band became important to fans of all ages who came to hear songs that are special to them in individual ways.

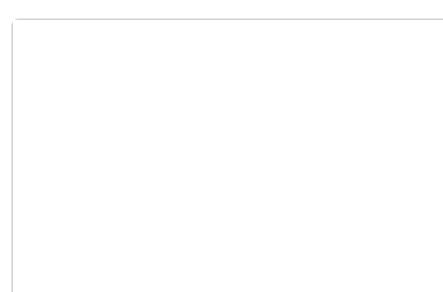
Twisted Gypsy hopes that the effect that Fleetwood Mac had on them can also inspire students to go after their own dreams of being a musician. People will often try to claim that someone can't succeed in a path like theirs. But they prove them wrong by staying organized, practicing, learning, and staying versatile.

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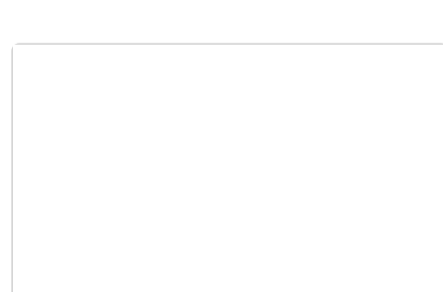
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Families close during emotional performance of "Landslide". Photo credit: Winnie Hohan

"Find artists you think are better than you, they will be the ones who push you," Bente said.

Todesco said that he still records the band's concerts so they can review and alter what needs to be fixed, acknowledging that there is always room for growth.

Scaletty and Kusterer both teach music and encourage their own students to mess up. Gilmer's own experience with stage fright has helped him realize that even when afraid, you keep going. The band believes expecting instant gratification isn't realistic; you have to be ready to figure out what makes you an individual artist.

TAGS: 2nd & PCH, Bruno Mars, concerts, cover band, events in Long Beach, fleetwood mac, journey, live music, Long Beach, music, rock concert, rock music, seaport way, tribute band

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