



BACKSTAGE BUZZ

RICK DERRINGER BORN TO ROCK AND ROLL

By Robert Hooper

Some people are born to rock and roll – Rick Derringer is one of those people.

For over 40 years, Derringer has been entertaining his fans with a powerful combination of pulsing chord progressions and tantalizing lead riffs. One of the finest players ever to strap on a guitar, Derringer continues to entertain audiences of all ages and walks of life.

“Music is a language... but a different kind of language. It’s a more honest form of communication. When speaking, it’s easy to hide behind words. With music, you speak directly from the heart.” And that’s what Rick Derringer has been doing for a long, long time.

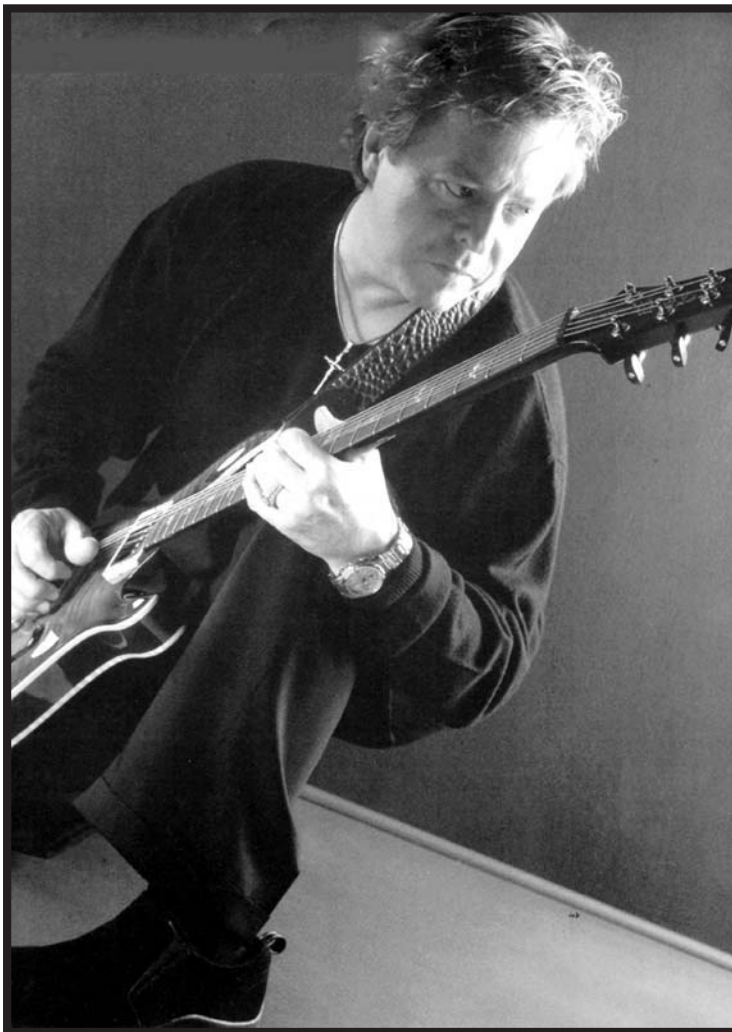
Born Rick Zehringer on August 5, 1947 in Fort Recovery, Ohio, the future guitar legend literally grew up in the Age of Rock.

“My uncle played guitar and he exposed me to the power of live music,” recalled Derringer. “I was fascinated by the instrument and knew early on that was what I wanted to do in my life. Thanks to him, I got my first guitar...a no-name single-pickup... when I was 9. Of course, that was a big year for rock and roll (1956)...it was known as the Year of Elvis.”

Playing the guitar quickly turned into an obsession for the young Derringer, who began performing just a few short years later. What was especially interesting about those days was that music was evolving rapidly, and so was the electric guitar.

“The modern, solid-body electric guitar was still in its infancy, and no one dreamed back then the incredible potential of the instrument.” Derringer is one of those who helped to bring about the six-string revolution.

In the summer of 1965, when Derringer was still just 17, he recorded his first big hit, “Hang on Sloopy,” with The McCoys. The song eventually



made it to Number One on the charts after knocking the Beatles classic “Yesterday” out of the top spot. For the next four years, Derringer toured successfully with the McCoys. But in early 1969, he hooked up with another future Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, Johnny Winter, to form Johnny Winter And – the “And” being the former members of the now defunct McCoys. The union was a match made in rock and roll heaven.

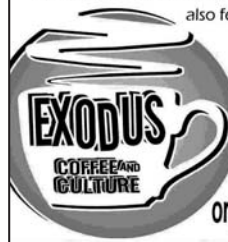
Two years later (1971), Derringer was featured on three albums with the other famous Winter brothers: Johnny Winter And, Johnny Winter And-Live, and Edgar Winter’s White Trash. The Johnny Winter And release included

what has become Derringer’s signature single: “Rock and Roll Hoochie Koo.” The song was released in 1974 and lasted six weeks on the pop charts. The high-energy tune was later featured in the 1993 film Dazed and Confused and in the Xbox 360 version of Guitar Hero II, released in 2006. Derringer also appeared in a television advertisement for Fidelity Investments with guitar in hand, playing the upbeat song while standing alone in an office.

In 1973, Derringer joined Edgar Winter’s White Trash as a full-time member and produced the gold LP, Roadwork. That same year, while still with White Trash, Derringer produced his first solo album, All American Boy,

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which also included "Rock and Roll Hoochie Koo." Later that year, Rick was writer/producer of Johnny Winter's classic Still Alive and Well album, as well as player/producer of Edgar Winter's hit album, They Only Come Out At Night. Considered by most critics to be Edgar Winter's finest album, They Only Come Out At Night featured two blockbuster hits: "Free Ride" and the Number One, Grammy-nominated monster hit, "Frankenstein." Somehow Derringer also found his way onto another commercially successful album released in '73, Countdown to Ecstasy, by Steely Dan. To this day, an urban legend exists that the 1974 Steely Dan song, "Rikki Don't Lose That Number," is based upon a conversation with Derringer.

Since those days of great fame and notoriety for the veteran rock and roller, Derringer has continued to pump out a number of albums and CDs, releasing over two dozen titles as a solo artist alone. A universally-accepted guitar virtuoso, Derringer is known for his distinctly bluesy style and for his fast, yet clear, technique. A true connoisseur of the six-string world, Derringer loves to discuss his "Ferrari of electric guitars" – the Rick Derringer Signature Model by Warrior.

"The RD Warrior is the finest guitar I've ever played and technologically the most modern guitar ever made. It combines the best qualities of all the great guitars I've played over the years. Some consider it a kind of lightweight Les Paul, but that guitar was never this cool! The RD has contoured edges like a Strat and a heel which gives easy access to the topmost frets, even better than a handmade, vintage, neck-through-the-body BC Rich. It has a Fender scale length and standard stainless steel frets...My Warrior plays like a heavenly dream-come true,

laughed Derringer, who continued on for several minutes to extol the technological superiority of his beloved instrument.

The guitar has paid dividends for Derringer, who credits the Warrior with helping to give him a distinct sound of his own. "For a long time, I never felt that I had that signature sound like so many of the great rock guitarists. I think I have been able to develop that now," said Derringer, who unlike many notable players clearly enjoys talking more about music, electric guitars, and amps than himself.

In recent years, Derringer has continued to broaden his horizons, both spiritually and musically. In 2002, he began delving into the worlds of Smooth Jazz and Christian Rock. In 2004, he and his wife Brenda Jean released Aiming for Heaven, a collection of songs which echo the couple's profound devotion and faith. Derringer readily credits their children, Lory and Martin, for helping him to put his spiritual side into his music.

After 40 years, it's safe to say that this rock and roll legend is still going strong...and in more ways than one. A dedicated musician and committed husband and father, Rick Derringer displayed a deep sense of genuine humility when asked about where he sees himself these days.

"I'm still learning about the guitar... and about life."

Don't miss out on a rare opportunity to hear one of the greats of rock music live and in person, Saturday, June 2, at 8pm at the Jupiter/Maltz Theatre, located at 1001 East Indiantown Road in Jupiter. For tickets or more information, call 561-575-2223 or visit www.jupitertheatre.org.

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