

Musical jack-of-all-trades to release album

Teacher, guitarist, songwriter, music store owner, Bill Hoffman to premiere solo debut

By Matt Mattei

mmattei@timesleader.com

Bill Hoffman is a Wilkes-Barre native who has made a career in different aspects of the music industry for 25 years. Hoffman has taught guitar and bass lessons, played in groups who generated original music and has been a guitar player for hire in cover bands and orchestra pits. He has also owned a music store since 2000 and knows the finer points of production.

On Friday, Oct. 9, the 44-year-old guitarist, singer and songwriter will host an album release event at 279 Bar & Grill in Wilkes-Barre to premier his debut solo record "Love Becomes Madness." The event will start at 9 p.m. and go until midnight with Hoffman playing selections from his new release.

While Hoffman's recording is a product of his original styles in songwriting and guitar playing, his influences come from several decades and forms of rock with bands like Led Zeppelin, King Crimson and Soundgarden.

Hoffman said he appreciated the virtuosity of '80s rock but wasn't impressed by the cheesiness of much of the lyricism, whereas in the '90s he found a profound group of writers in the grunge movement who weren't as focused on instrumentation.

"I've always tried to



Submitted photo

Bill Hoffman will release his solo debut, "Love Becomes Madness," at 279 Bar & Grill on Oct. 9.

IF YOU GO

What: Bill Hoffman releases his debut solo album "Love Becomes Madness"

When: Friday, Oct. 9 from 9 p.m. to midnight

Where: 279 Bar & Grille, 279 South Main St., Wilkes-Barre

Additional Information: No cover charge

take the best of each time period and chip away the falseness of it," Hoffman said.

According to Hoffman, his style has evolved throughout his years of

diverse musical experience.

Hoffman didn't start playing until he was 16 years old, but once he started, he never stopped.

"I wouldn't go to sleep unless I had four hours logged in every night," Hoffman said. "I kept a journal."

By 18, Hoffman was teaching and had formed his first original band, Dirty Rhythm, which he looks back on as a musical right of passage and his first attempt at developing a sound.

In the early '90s, right around age 21, Hoffman was considering moving to New York City to

pursue career opportunities, but his first child was born and he stayed in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Musically, he tried to soak in everything he could.

"I focused on playing on all kinds of music I hated so I could learn," Hoffman said. "I played in a country band for a year. I played in a disco, jazz, R&B group, pop music for several years, doing the Pocono circuit, so (I was) playing a lot of stuff un-rock-related just so I could sink my teeth into it."

Throughout the '90s, Hoffman said he took on

about 70 students a week. "I was still growing, but I put my own writing on the side," Hoffman said.

He also played guitar for productions of "Jesus Christ Superstar," "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," "Tommy," and "Schoolhouse Rock" at the Little Theater in Wilkes-Barre.

Hoffman wrote the first half of "Love Becomes Madness" between 1997 and 2000. Around that time, he and a few friends put out a CD that he said never got off the ground, because they had no sense of self-promotion.

See DEBUT | 25