

## Queen/

**Answer:** I went to university in the fall of 1991 and I was in a hall of residence there and I got to know everyone in the band, and we all discovered we liked Queen. Freddie was still alive at the time and we didn't even know he was ill. When the news came that Freddie had died, it intensified our own Queen bonding process. We started teaching each other Queen songs more intensively. We had never seen Queen — and this was before tribute bands had taken off — so we wondered, what if we just played it ourselves? I was studying acting and had been in bands before. So I had a background in moving and dance and drama. And so we became the first Queen tribute band. There are quite a few now, performing all over the world.

**Q:** Have you met the surviving members? How do they feel about your act? No, but maybe hopefully one day. We take our cue from the audience's reaction. We really try to give them everything we've got.

**Q:** Freddie Mercury was a vocal powerhouse. How do you think your voice compares? Did you have to adapt to sound like him?

**A:** I was always able to mimic voices as a child — Paul McCartney, Lou Reed, John Lennon, Elvis Costello — and I did Freddie as well as a kid. But there's a big difference between mimicking them and singing like them. So I worked with vocal coaches to be able to sound like Queen now.

You have to do a lot of warm-ups and vocal exercises to get Freddie's range — it's a challenge; he was such a unique voice in rock history. His voice still stops



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Killer Queen will perform Queen classics that fans will all find familiar.

me in my tracks when I hear it. He had precision control of his instrument.

**Q:** Freddie was more than just the lead singer and pianist. He was a consummate showman, from his sometimes outrageous outfits to his command of the stage. How do you get into character?

**A:** It's basically, Freddie was like a lightning rod. He completely inhabited the music he was performing. You can see it in his performance at Live Aid. He's so electric as a performer. So that's what I try to do as well. Queen music is incredibly powerful and part of Freddie's power was the music. It was the living and breathing engine that you can work with.

**Q:** How do you replicate his distinctive overbite (Mercury was born with four extra incisors)? Is the mustache real?

I don't want to go into too many details about the smoke and mirrors, but we try to get the look as close as possible so the audience doesn't have that barrier. If you look at the stage, it looks

like Queen. If you close your eyes, it sounds like Queen. We want the audience to have that raw charge and energy that Queen had.

**Q:** Queen of course is much more than Freddie Mercury. It also had one of the world's great guitar players in Brian May, who achieved his distinctive sound with a guitar he customized himself. Who is your Brian May and how does he match up with the original.

**A:** Our Brian May is Simon Small and he plays with a Brian May replica guitar, and he even uses a sixpence for a guitar pick like Brian did. He sounds so like Brian when he plays. It's very difficult to have the same feel and touch. He's also got the hair, the facial shape.

**Q:** Queen's harmonies — not just on "Bohemian Rhapsody" but on "Someone to Love" and "Killer Queen" and "Don't Stop Me" — are legendary. How hard is it to get that sound right?

**A:** I absolutely think they had a very distinctive vocal blend — like the Beatles did. It's just as important to get that element right. To hear the Brian tones, and the (drummer Roger Taylor) tones. There's a lot of plates spinning, a lot of things you have to get right. Those unique voices together, they've got a very big signature sound. That's what's so great — they had such a wide frame of sound musically, they could try any genre or style and get it right.

**Q:** You've played several of the venues that Queen themselves played. What's it like standing on the same stages in persona?

**A:** We've played those venues a few times to sold-out crowds. It's incredibly invigorating but also surreal

to be in this position. It has grown to such an extent that we're in the same arenas and drawing the same crowds. It's been extraordinary. When I left for university I was looking for an adventure and this has been a massive adventure.

Do you spend time thinking about what the music world would be like today were Freddie still alive? Especially today, when LGBTQ folks are being attacked everywhere and he could have been a voice for that community?

**A:** I think he had so much music left to give. They were achieving amazing things in the studio in the years and months leading to his death. "Innuendo" was an extraordinary album. I often wonder what they would have come up with if — if Freddie even had lived another year or so, (to when AIDS treatments became available) how different the musical world would be. It's a sadness that someone so creative was taken away from us.

**Q:** Ok, so what should the crowd expect when you take the stage this summer?

**A:** We want everyone to have the best night of their lives — forget your worries and troubles and have the best concert experience possible. We want them to sing and dance and laugh and cry. We've got some of the best songs you can imagine that we can play for them. It's our job to give you everything we've got.

**Q:** Is that hard, performing the same music over and over and giving it everything, every time?

**A:** It's like delivering Christmas gifts. It never gets tired. The music contains so much energy, so much dynamic, it gives you the energy you need to perform.

## Hill Heads/

They have charted on Billboard and have been favorites on national radio shows like "Mountain Stage" and "A Prairie Home Companion."

Storyhill continues to produce their annual Storyhill Fest and has released two new albums within a year — "Where to Begin" and their holiday album "Bethlehem."

Tickets for this concert are \$20 in advance; \$25 at the door; and \$5 for students 18 and under.

*Information provided by the Park Center.*

## Cable/

Town Chairman Malcolm Haag said that now that the building is demolished and the town owns the property, "We are in a fortunate spot. It's ours to decide, with the timeline that we need."

Popelka said a comprehensive survey of housing needs was conducted a couple years ago. It showed that, "the population in Bayfield County is aging. People who retire are looking to move into homes that are easier to take care of, which would open up homes for younger people."

"What would fit on that (old school) site would not meet our needs," Popelka said. "But any is better than nothing."

## Records/

Though that seems pretty clear, government officials sometimes still don't get it.

They deny open-records requests because it's easier than fulfilling them, or in hopes that if they throw up enough roadblocks, the requester will just go away. They don't understand the law and are reluctant to seek help. They fear the records could embarrass them or a pal.

The irony in this case is that had Grady simply given us the documents when we first asked for them, they would have warranted a brief on page 3, and that would have been the end of it. But because he wrongly denied access over and over and over, we wrote about it — which lands us

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**Town Board member David Popelka**

The board took a straw poll of meeting attendees, by a show of hands, as to what they favor doing with the old school property: housing, commercial; retain green space; or postpone action on the site with no improvements.

Haag said the board intends to have more meetings to solicit ideas and proposals for the old school property.

where we are now.

I sincerely hope that this offers the county and other government officials an opportunity to learn about the law and to embrace the notion that government records belong to the governed, not the government.

Because I assure you that we will continue vigorously fulfilling our constitutional role to hold those government officials accountable.

**Peter J. Wasson** is managing editor of the Ashland Daily Press.

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## Mellen/

Vander Puy told Mellen School Board members at their June 28 meeting that their response to the findings has been inadequate.

"This school board needs to acknowledge that there is a problem. I don't see that coming from any of you. You almost didn't have quorum tonight. It tells me how seriously you take this, which is not very serious," he said.

Superintendent Rhonda Elmhorst-Friemuth told board members Wednesday that the district has three options: It can do nothing and ignore the DPI; appeal to the state superintendent for a public hearing to contest DPI's findings; or work with DPI on developing a plan to address the district's deficiencies.

Elmhorst-Friemuth recommended working with the state, and the board agreed. If the district were to do nothing, the state could withhold aid money to the district, Elmhorst-Friemuth said.

Vander Puy filed the

complaint with DPI after talking with teachers about Act 31, which requires Wisconsin schools to teach about the 11 federally recognized Indian nations in the state. Teachers reportedly told him they have almost nothing — no teaching about Native Americans "other than a skit for Thanksgiving with some pilgrims eating turkey with some Wampanoags out East," he said.

Mellen provided examples of how it incorporated world cultures into its curriculum, but there was a lack of evidence on instruction on the cultural diversity and pluralistic nature of American society, the DPI said in its letter to the district.

In the school district's library, the DPI found that district didn't provide adequate services to its students, stating "library services has a much broader meaning than just curating a collection available for use by pupils."

DPI requires a library plan, a library media person, library facilities and a current balance of collected books.

Even after agreeing to work with DPI, the superintendent rejected some of the state's findings.

"We got tons of resources," Elmhorst-Friemuth said. "Our library has various materials on culture tribal sovereignty in Wisconsin and throughout the U.S. The DPI seemed to be concerned with the instruction a librarian might provide. A lot of small districts like Mellen don't have a full-time librarian. We contract with CESA 12 to meet state requirements. If they're expecting us to have a librarian that will provide lessons to students using library materials, I don't understand how that would be met."

Elmhorst-Friemuth went on to accuse the DPI for failing to communicate clearly with the district during the investigation.

"I provided three files of evidence. When I met with the DPI, (it) referenced things regarding high school requirements. The material was included in the packet sent. Their response was 'I must have overlooked that.'

That's concerning," she said.

There was more miscommunication, Elmhorst-Friemuth said. The district sent a list of what can be used as evidence to the DPI, but then the DPI didn't look at the entire textbooks. When the district would provide the table of contents as asked for, the district responded by saying they need actual lesson plans, Elmhorst-Friemuth said.

"The communication was a little confusing. They're interpretation of the statutes might be different that local school district's understanding. The requirement to provide adequate instructional services, isn't that a local school district decision?" she said.

To resolve the issue, Elmhorst-Friemuth said the district would provide detailed documents of what's going on at the district so the DPI, "will be fully informed of the work, instruction and curriculum materials we currently use to meet the requirements of Act 31."

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