

Meet Craig Lutke of The Bilge Pumps in Grand Prairie



Today we'd like to introduce you to Craig Lutke.

The Bilge Pumps began in 1999 when a bunch of assorted participants of a local festival would walk around the lanes of a forest, singing what sea songs people knew off the top of their heads, simply to add some atmosphere to the festival and have some fun at the same time. Shortly before that festival ended its run, the Bilge Pumps' founder, Craig, had the idea to put together an actual stage group that could perform these kinds of songs in goofy pirate garb.

Stunningly, the first paying gig they managed to land was Mardi Gras Galveston in 2000 which pulled in over 200,000 people at the time and the band had to put together a two hour show when they barely had 90 minutes worth of material. They managed to get through the experience just fine and set the tone for what's been a lovely 18 year journey.

The Bilge Pumps have played everywhere from giant stages opening for the likes of the Temptations, 3 Dog Night, and Deep Purple to fun-filled festivals where the audiences get what a sea shanty band is about, to middle-of-the-night shows at nudist colonies in the hills outside of Los Angeles... long story.

The band has had many different members over the years, to the point where if there was a West Side Story style showdown between ex-members and current members, the current members would be wiped out in terms of sheer tonnage.

Their current lineup has been in place since 2014 and consists of:

Craig (Maroon the Shantyman) – Founder of the band and only member that has been with the band since its beginning. He does vocals, plays doumbek, tan tan, steel drum, didjeridu, bass, and emergency guitar.

David Ruffin (Harvey the Corpsman) – Member since 2001. He was only supposed to temporarily help the band out for one weekend's performance and he's been stuck with them ever since. He does vocals, tambourine, and doumbek.

Ted Dossey (John Crow the Cook) – Member since 2005. He's the consummate stage performer and loves being the physical comedy on stage and off. He does vocals and props.

Christopher Dallion (Sharkbait the Scapegoat) – Member since 2006. He's the grumpy guitar player that does his best to keep the rest of the group in line and on key. He does vocals, guitar, and doumbek.

Nathan Campbell (Splice the Rigger) – Member since 2009. He's the sweet, angelic voice needed to bring out the harmonies from the rough pirate vocals. He does vocals, doumbek, and tan tan.

Fred Flores (Jack the Rum Runner) – Member since 2014. He's the focused musician of the group, always trying to provide the backbone to keep the melodies flowing. He does vocals and plays guitar.

The band has released 7 albums over its 18 year history, 4 of which remain in print, including their latest album, "Bail Money", released on Sept 19, 2014.

Since 2012, the Bilge Pumps have put on yearly concerts at the Uptown Theater in Grand Prairie called "Pirates on the Prairie". 2018 will be the 7th time the band will put on the concert and it keeps getting larger and more fun each time it occurs as they choose a different opening band for each show that they feel the audience would appreciate. They also have lots of entertainment in the lobby before the show and during intermissions.

Overall, has it been relatively smooth? If not, what were some of the struggles along the way?

Like every traveling musician, the Bilge Pumps have seen some glorious highs at large music festivals and concerts to stunning lows at poorly attended events in areas no good pirate would be caught dead at. The hardest part of having a band is keeping a band and we've had many, many different lineups over the years. Even though our current list of band members is stable, the combination of which members will show up at which shows is still seemingly random and challenging.

Alright – so let's talk business. Tell us about The Bilge Pumps – what should we know?

The Bilge Pumps have been doing pirate music since long before pirate music was popular-ish. Though we're not the oldest pirate band in the country, we have seen dozens of other pirate bands arrive on the scene since we started and we differentiate ourselves from all the others with our humor.

We pride ourselves on the comedy in our shows and the improvisational and scripted humor in our performances makes us almost Vaudevillian in our makeup.

Any shoutouts? Who else deserves credit in this story – who has played a meaningful role?

The band's success, as always, is heavily predicated on our spouses, who have allowed us to continue to spend way too much spare time in the pursuit of cheap laughs and cheaper paychecks. They not only support our time, but will often come along and help out in many ways. They keep us smiling and we hope we do the same for them.

Contact Info:

- Website: <http://www.thebilgepumps.com>

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