

# INTERVIEW WITH The Bilge Pumps

The Bilge Pumps began in 1999 when a bunch of assorted participants of a local faire 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 it's run, the Bilge Pumps' founder, Craig Lutke, 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 15 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.

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 2009 and is the longest running lineup they have had. It consists of:

Craig Lutke (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.

The band has released 7 albums over it's 15 year history, 5 of which remain in print, including their latest album, "Bail Money", released on Sept 19, 2014.



Q: The music you play is a familiar piratical melody, combined with some good ol' fashioned creativeness. Have you always been an artist when it comes to music?

A: I started like most people do when it comes to music: you learn the songs that other people do until you get good enough at them to feel comfortable making changes. We made some mistakes early on doing arrangements we thought were traditional but were other groups' arrangements, but once we discovered what was happening, we corrected that and starting making our own versions of songs. Once that ball got rolling, it was impossible to stop. Now, we put our own stamp on all of the songs we perform, whether they are in the public domain or something more modern (but sounds old).

Q: The city you live in, of Grand Prairie Texas, has a lot of soul to the earth music, how much of this do you bring into your current songs and styles?

A: There are a lot of musical genres playing around Grand Prairie, but we're the only pirate band navigating these waters. Dallas/Fort Worth has a large Celtic community, but since we're such a sub-genre



of Celtic, which is a sub-genre of Folk, we're pretty much the niche-iest of niche music. That means we have to work even harder to get gigs.

Q: Its always a pleasure to see groups of pirates who really enjoy putting on a great show, than just another gig. Whats your groups motivation?

A: We're all performance junkies and applause whores. I, personally, like putting on a good show more so that just cranking out gigs. Sometimes that means less gigging during the year, but what you end up doing is more worth the time and effort. It probably just means we're getting old and cranky.

Q: In your Christmas music-video outsiders get a real look into how you and your mates interact. The video was a pleasure and to me it looks like you all were having a great time and came up with a fun pirate song. That it was not about just making a quick CD. How much of this is true to real life?

A: It was definitely not about making a quick CD. Our "A Pirate's Christmas Wish" album was 5 years in the making starting from it's concept. When we got our own studio, we decided to put forth the time to get it done, finally. We've been having fun making new music videos each year to the songs from the album. It's always fun con-





vincing people to be a part of the insanity that comes from these videos as well.

Q: What be on the horizon for your fun loving group the bilge pumps?

A: We have a new album we're in the long process of writing, rehearsing for, and recording. We're also trying to get our Pirates on the Prairie concert series the grow and become something huge. Then, we'll be continuing to do these fun shows that give us an excuse to travel, meeting new and old friends, and keep getting on stage for more laughter and applause. That's pirate fuel right there.

*Thank you very much, now where can we find your awesome work sir?*

**THE BASIC LINK FOR THE BAND IS:**

[WWW.THEBILGEPUMPS.COM](http://WWW.THEBILGEPUMPS.COM)

**THE LINK FOR OUR TREASURE ISLAND PAGE WHERE WE SELL MERCHANDISE LIKE CDs IS:**

[WWW.THEBILGEPUMPS.COM/TREASURE.CGI](http://WWW.THEBILGEPUMPS.COM/TREASURE.CGI)

**THE LINK FOR OUR PIRATE MUSIC BOX WHERE WE SELL OUR DIGITAL ALBUMS AND SONGS IS:**

[WWW.THEBILGEPUMPS.COM/MUSIC.CGI](http://WWW.THEBILGEPUMPS.COM/MUSIC.CGI)

...Craig

