



## *Music to M'Ears*

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It's notable that in the Ships Articles handed down back in 1721 by arguably the most "successful" Captain of the Golden Age... "Black Bart" Bartholomew Roberts to the men who sailed among the pirate crews who together captured more than 400 ships in a 30 month period of time was an interesting clause.

These articles spoke of the equal division of fresh plunder, voting privileges, punishment for thieves, cause for marooning or execution, penalty for desertion or mutiny, pensions for injured according to the severity of wounds, the crewe member's share of the booty, the fate of someone who were to smuggle a woman aboard...and the last item in the articles was...

Article XI - "The musicians to have rest on the Sabbath Day, only by night, but the other six days and nights, not without special favour."

...in other words, Musicians must be available to play when required! A Seven day a week, Six night a week gig.

Clearly MUSIC was crucially important to Pirates, so much so that it was drawn into the very document that governed their behavior

while part of their employ as a member of that crew. Not only did music set or alter the mood, but was a key driver of productivity. In the days when human muscles were the only power source aboard ship, sea shanties served a practical purpose: the rhythm of the song served to synchronize the movements of the shipworkers while they toiled at repetitive tasks. They also served a social purpose. Singing and listening to song is pleasant! It alleviates boredom and lightens the burden of hard work, of which there was no shortage of on long voyages. In the Modern Age of Pirate Faires and Festivals, music also plays a crucial role. It serves as a clear signal that it is time for FUN, that entertainment is fully engaged and that song and dance are warranted.

Festival level bands are a special breed. The interaction with the crowd is different...it's not only about the music, it's about relating to the lifestyle and CONNECTING with the crowd. Those that do this well develop quite a loyal following...which in turn makes that band even more attractive to festival promoters who know they can count on that draw.

We would like this section of Pirate Nation Magazine to become a directory of Festival Level Bands with links directly to their MUSIC...so that YOU can hear bands you have not heard before, or so you can share songs from your festival favorites with friends. We also want to list a link to the booking information of the bands who are interested in playing more festivals. Together we can bring the bands to the fans and the fans to the bands.

In this month's article we explore the path of four VERY talented bands. All of whom have performed well and worked their way into bigger and bigger bookings for well-known events. Their musical styles are as unique as THEY are. Each has an interesting story of how they came into being.

## **The Bilge Pumps**

The Bilge Pumps came together back in late 1999 from the remnants of a Scottish Highland Games troupe... and although

they have gone through a number of different lineups since then, this 5 piece band has been pretty steady since 2008. Looking back with lead singer Craig Lutke brought back some fond memories for him.

"I remember our first real gig together...we were booked to play the Mardi Gras in Galveston, TX for a 2 hour show and to be honest we really only had about an hour and a half of songs in our set list." Galveston is a town that is really proud of it's Pirate ROOTS with the first permanent European settlements on the island constructed around 1816 by the pirate Louis-Michel Aury as a base of operations to support Mexico's rebellion against Spain. In 1817, Aury returned from an unsuccessful raid against Spain to find the island occupied by the pirate Jean Lafitte, who took up residence there after having been driven from his stronghold in Baratavia Bay off the coast of New Orleans, Louisiana. Lafitte organized the island's settlement into a pirate "kingdom" he called "Campeche", anointing himself the "head of government."



The Pirate Prince Lafitte remained at Campeche until 1821 when he and his raiders were given an ultimatum by the United States Navy: leave or be destroyed. Lafitte burned his settlement to the ground and sailed under cover of night for parts unknown. So needless to say the Blige Pumps Pirate Band had support from the crowd...of approximately 200,000...who were gathered to hear all the bands that night including THE TEMPTATIONS. Quite a start.



The band leans on comedy more than most. Half Vaudeville and Half Songs with a lot of sight gags happening within the songs themselves to enhance the LIVE performance viewing experience. They add a lot of surprise bonus tracks to their albums, particularly "Filk's" which are like cover songs but with the lyrics changed to be Pirate suitable...like Hotel California becomes Hotel Caledonia...Ballroom Blitz becomes Barroom Blitz...Suffrette City becomes Buccaneer City. You get the idea.

The Bilge Pumps are now promoting their 7th Album available on Amazon and I-Tunes and DIRECTLY on their website. They are most likely to be seen in Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana but have also toured California and Florida festivals of all sizes. They have opened for the likes of the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Los Lobos and Deep Purple...although Craig Lutke said that perhaps his most surreal moment was at the end of a festival he was led with other band leaders to get PAID for the night, and he was escorted by security into the back door of a BANK (while fully dressed out as a PIRATE with cutlass and flints) while he then waited in line while Kool & the Gang was paid out in CASH all in stacks of \$20 bills...what a Kodak Moment that would have made.