

Rockers haven't gotten over the 'The Hump'

'60s band formed at RIT is on the road again in a big Caddy hearse

At a time when retirement has claimed many of their classmates, four RIT graduates known as The Invictas are reliving the rock 'n' roll glory of their youth.

The reconstituted group – Herb Gross '65, '67 (business administration, graphic arts and photography), Jim Kohler '63 (printing) and brothers Dave Hickey '72 (printing) and Bruce Hickey '70 (printing) – is getting noticed. The Invictas launched their Skip 'n' Go Naked Tour in May, playing gigs all over western New York. The Associated Press picked up the story, and a feature on the band ran in newspapers around the country.

In August, 4,500 rock fans danced and screamed when The Invictas opened for another group of aging rockers, the Beach Boys, at the Constellation Brands-Marvin Sands Performing Arts Center in Canandaigua, N.Y. In September, the band was featured on NBC's *Today* show. Then came *Banned in Boston*, their first new album in four decades, released on CD and DVD.

Is this too much excitement for 60-ish businessmen?

"When the band is in front of an audience, we have the time of our lives," says Gross, lead singer and chief architect of the reunion. "It's the fountain of youth."

A major force in Rochester's music scene in the mid-1960s, the original group included Charlie Bisuito '65 (business administration), now an accountant in Rochester.

The Invictas gained national attention with their 1965 hit, *The Hump*. The tune reached No. 1 in Miami, made *Billboard's* top 100, and enjoyed the distinction of being banned in Boston. The band released its only album, *The Invictas a Go-Go*, on Sahara Records in 1965. In 1968, the group disbanded.

Gross went on to found Herb Gross and Co. Inc., an advertising and promotion company that he continues to operate in Charlotte, N.C. Dave Hickey is a partner in a printing and packaging company, 1 Source Partners Inc., in Rochester. Bruce Hickey is a salesperson for Canfield and Tack, a Rochester printing company. Kohler is an ink and printing specialist for International Paper and lives in Erie, Pa.



From left are Dave Hickey '72, Bruce Hickey '70, Jim Kohler '63, Herb Gross '65 and a new member, lead guitarist Dave Profeta. Their 1984 Cadillac hearse is memorialized in their song *Big Caddy Hearse*.

Photo by Jeffrey J. Chafitz

The band got together briefly in 1980 for a reunion gig. Nothing more was heard until fall 2004, when Gross and Dave Hickey were catching the show at Rochester's popular blues-and-barbecue joint, the Dinosaur. Singer Mary Heitz invited them to join her on stage. Hickey declined, but Gross launched into *Long Tall Shorty*, the flip-side of *The Hump* single.

The roar of the crowd awakened something. Next thing, he's calling members of the band, and Gross is an extremely persuasive guy. After practicing through the winter, The Invictas went back onstage in spring of 2005. "By the end of that summer," says Gross, "everybody said 'let's go.'"

So far, so good. What's next?

"I have high hopes that we'll play all over the country," says Gross. He acknowledges that the off-stage work – lining up gigs, promoting the band, figuring the finances, dealing with the inevitable politics – can



Back in the day, the Invictas traveled in a 1955 Cadillac hearse. From left are '60s members Jim Kohler '63, Mark Blumenfeld '65, Herb Gross '65 and Dave Hickey '72

be a drag. While no one in the group is expecting super stardom, they would like to make enough money to cover expenses and validate their effort.

No matter what happens, it's been a good ride. The mere fact that they're able to get onstage, rock hard and draw a wild, spontaneous response from audiences of all ages is a pretty fair compensation.

"That's the biggest payoff," says Gross. "Entertaining people."

Kathy Lindsley