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Al Millan & the Robots Return

By Sandra Marshall

For 'PEOPLE FIRST' BENEFIT in SLO

Former local band to converge on Central Coast with passion for rock 'n' roll and community involvement.

On Saturday July 18th, at the Odd Fellows Hall in San Luis Obispo, Central Coast residents will once again get a chance to dance, stomp and work themselves into a frenzy to the music of Al Millan and the Robots, a band that developed in the thriving music scene of SLOtown's legendary Dark Room in the 1980s. This will be the band's first local appearance in four years. Al, along with original members Gary Steinmann on bass and Kirk Handley on keyboards, will be performing with Bay Area drummers Mark Schiltz and Bobby Flamingo, as well as locally ubiquitous sax man Scott Wright and guitarist Jack Collins of Big Daddy's Blues Band.

Throughout Al's long musical career, he has always had a strong commitment to helping local organizations that are dedicated to improving people's lives. This show is one of those opportunities. Part of the proceeds will go to People First of San Luis Obispo, a self-advocacy organization for people with developmental disabilities. People First began at Achievement House in the 1980s; today its goal is to speak out for its member's rights and educate the public about the abilities and needs of people with developmental disabilities. If you want to get a feel for what they do, go to YouTube and type in "A Credo for Support (People 1st version)". It's a very moving video clip.

Millan, who currently lives near Sacramento, is the director of another organization that advocates for developmentally disabled individuals and assists parents who are looking for help with their disabled children. Al became one of those parents eighteen years ago, and the difficulties he encountered finding support services for his daughter led him to his calling. So this is a cause that's very personal for him and the band.

The show is being billed as the second "Robot Birthday Bash" (the first was at the Pozo Saloon in 2005). July is Al's sixtieth birthday, and several other band members along with a strangely disproportionate number of fans also celebrate birthdays in July.

Although the band only performs a few shows each year, they still rock, and rock hard, every time they get together. Al and Kirk both play music in northern California, Kirk in particular works with several groups around the Mendocino area. Steinman currently plays bass in several Central Coast bands including Rancho Deluxe, who recently returned from a two week European tour and opened this year's Live Oak on the Main Stage. He also performs with local songwriter Richard Green's band.

The show begins at 7 p.m. on Saturday, July 18th at the Odd Fellows Hall, 520 Dana Street in San Luis Obispo (off Nipomo Street, behind the Creamery). Libations will be available, and tickets can be purchased at Boo Boo Records, 978 Monterey St. in SLO. Ticket info: 541-0657. For information regarding Al Millan and the Robots, including samples of The Robots' music, go to; <http://www.myspace.com/almillanandtherobots>.