LIVERPOOL GOES LOCAL

THE FINE ART OF THE FAB 5

Tributes are all the rage. Particularly when it comes to the kings of the British Invasion: The Beatles. One Houston-area band has kept their fan flame burning brightly for years, with little sign of slowing down. Meet these Beatles, and feel the passion that's driven their success for two decades.

By Dave Muscari

On any given night in in Houston performance halls, you can likely catch a band paying homage to their rock heroes.

One of the best known tribute-groups is The Fab 5. The Texas-based Beatles band has played the mop tops' timeless pop music for years, faithfully recreating their songs down to the very last chord.

Five talented players sport authentic Carnaby Street fashion and vintage Hofner, Rickenbacker, Gretsch and Ludwig instruments, VOX amplifiers and all the trappings that separated the band of from the rest of the day's British musical invasion.

Joe Baiardi sings and plays bass and guitar in the group. The native New Yorker knows the territory well: He played in high school bands before forming a Beatles tribute band, Rubber Soul, back in 1979.

He moved to Houston in 1988. In 1999, [illegible] time, especially in Texas."

Ironically, the Houston group has lasted longer than the Fab Four's career ever did.

So is there a secret to playing music together so successfully for so long?

Baiardi puts it like this: "You must have the spirit to play this music, and not just play the music."

"It takes a lot of discipline, work and drive to be accurate in recreating the music, and we were lucky to have players who excelled at this."

For some fans, it seems like they think the guys *are* The Beatles.

"Sometimes, they do," says Baiardi. "We constantly get comments from fans telling us that we sound just like the recordings. After all," he adds, "that is the highest compliment in being in a tribute band. With us it is also a treat as we perform songs that The Beatles [illegible]

For the guys in The Fab 5, seeing the real band members perform is always a pleasure. Baiardi says he's seen Paul McCartney three times and Ringo once.

He also met John Lennon in 1977 on a New York street.

"I attended a McCartney sound check on November 14, 2012," he recalls.

"When Paul asked over the microphone, 'How did it sound?' I shouted, 'It sounds great,' to which Paul replied, 'I wasn't talking to you, I was talking to the sound man.'"

Nevertheless, he was happy all the same. "Hey, a Beatle spoke to me," he laughs.

On July 21, The Fab 5 is set to play the House of Blues, a special "anthology" show, and again on August 12 with the Texas Medical Orchestra Center at the Miller Outdoor Theatre.