

The Happy Schnapps Combo – A Biography

All biographies must start by looking back once to where it all began. So come with me, on a musical journey, as we take a look at The Happy Schnapps Combo – where they came from – where they have been – and where they are going – a behind the music look at the enigma known as the Happy Schnapps Combo.

In 1988, the late Jim “Bruiser” Krueger, known internationally for his masterpiece, “We Just Disagree”, had become fed up with the LA lifestyle. He decided to move back to his hometown, Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Jim soon realized that Manitowoc, with its Polish; Czech; German and Bohemian ancestry needed a sound all its own. Something that was unique to its people. Something that went great with beer! The answer? POLKA!... So it was... the Happy Schnapps Combo was born!

The original band was made up of Bruiser (Otto); Bill (Horst) Soucy; Steve (Wolfgang) Heise; Dave (Helmut) Heise; and Bruiser’s brother Rich (Wenzel) Krueger, who is still with the Schnapps today. The band cut two early albums, “100 Proof” and “Raise It”. Much of the music played by the Happy Schnapps Combo was written by Bruiser; however, both Horst and Guenter have also contributed to this madness!

Bruiser was the band’s leader until his unfortunate and untimely death in 1992. But everyone knew that the “show must go on”. And so it did...from the first recording, “100 Proof” to its current album “Polka Power”, the Happy Schnapps Combo has had its mettle tested – and it has survived... to become Wisconsin’s Premier Show Band!

Fast forward to today... Sure, the look of the band may have changed – the names of the musicians may have changed,...but the Happy Schnapps Combo has remained true to its mission. It is what Bruiser wanted it to be...FUN MUSIC - YOU CAN DRINK TO!

Da Combo is:

- Rich (Wenzel) Krueger – Drums; Gong; Vocals: Rich is the only original member of the Happy Schnapps Combo, as well as being the leader of the band. Rich owns a liquor store which makes him everyone’s best friend.
- Dave (Stosh Dombrowski) Dvorak – harmonica; accordion, trumpet and Front Man. Stosh says, “Fat, drunk and stupid is a great way to go through life!”
- Scotty (Sgt. Roxhoff) Meyer – Electrically Amplified Guitar: Plays loud, drinks, laughs and sings. Has been known to fall down, but doesn’t miss a note.....
- Eric (Klaus) Werner – Guitar: Klaus is the shortest member of the group but has a big heart. We like to think of Klaus as the band’s little Leprechaun...we have heard that the girls are always after his lucky charms.
- Chris (Otis Stuka) Okkerse – master of the 6 string tuba (bass guitar): Otis was born with a smile on his face and a polka in his heart and has been infectious with these conditions ever since with no cure in sight.
- Jerry (Romy The Bartender) Labinski: Percussion and libation. Romy keeps the band hydrated, enso. He’s there to remind people that everything goes better with alcohol....
- Ron (General Kaluga) Kalista – Manager, Agent, life long Friend. Himself a professional musician, Ron currently plays drums and sings with two other premier Wisconsin bands, Vic Ferrari and The Stringbenders.

As we close this biography, we can see that the Happy Schnapps Combo, armed with the talent of its musicians and manager, along with the great music of the late Jim “Bruiser” Krueger can be a great addition to any festival; fundraiser; picnic or corporate event.

Wisconsin’s favorite drinking band reminds you to “Binge Responsibly”.

RAISE IT!!!

General Mark, Friend, Songwriter and Accountant to the Combo

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