

The Brill Babies

“Spreading the Gospel of Good Song”

Ever wonder what might have happened if Tom Jones had fronted the Clash? As odd a question as that may be, the answer could begin to be found by catching a live performance by one of Chicagoland's most unique and exciting acts, the **Brill Babies**. Conceived in the summer of 2003, the **Brill Babies** is powered by the formidable talents of three local music scene veterans: Frank Gradishar, Gerry O'Keefe and Scott Proce. After performing together throughout the '80s and '90s in popular combos like the Hideouts, Thrift Store Halo and the Hacks, the three born entertainers finally came to embrace their lifelong, borderline unhealthy obsession with the “perfect” pop song. Going so far as to cheekily name this new alliance after the Brill Building (the legendary hit factory in New York that employed songwriting giants like Burt Bacharach, Neil Diamond and Carole King), the focus, this time, would be on presenting their audience with the best songs known to man; from the '50s thru the '80s. Call it music for music lovers.

Possibly *the* most delightfully schizophrenic band around, one major ingredient of the **Brill Babies'** success is their innate ability to bounce from genre to genre and decade to decade. Like the classic AM radio stations of yesteryear (stations that might follow the latest single by easy listening chanteuse Dionne Warwick with a spin of the Yardbirds' raucous new record), Frank, Gerry, and Scott are as much in their element offering up a Sinatra standard or a '70s one-hit wonder as they are a retro '80s chestnut by artists like the Police, New Order and Wham! The recent crop of soulless radio stations that make empty promises of “we play anything” could get a much needed lesson in what variety *really* means by scanning a typical **Brill Babies** set list. They're a little bit pop, a little bit rock, a little bit rockabilly, a little bit soul, a little bit swing, a little bit lounge....and, yes, they're even a little bit country. That's just in the first twenty minutes! But it isn't only variety that makes this act so different and refreshing; it's also the **Brill Babies** fierce commitment to offering their listeners music of only the highest caliber. Anyone hoping to hear obvious, overplayed covers and current top 40 music that has an average shelf life of six months should look elsewhere. Those seeking a dizzying, surprise-filled array of can't-get-it-out-of-your-head melodies that have already proven to be timeless and universally adored need look no further.

Comprised of vocals, a scaled-down drum kit, bass and acoustic guitar, plus the available addition of a brass section, the **Brill Babies** sound makes a loving nod to the cool jazz and lounge combos of the 1950s and 1960s while maintaining the vitality and simplicity of early rock 'n' roll. In any live setting, from the grittiest bars the city of Chicago has to offer to the swankiest supper clubs and wedding reception halls, the sharply attired **Brill Babies** ensure each infectious tune they share with their audience sounds as exciting as it did the day it first began to scale the charts; miraculously preserving the integrity of the original while somehow making it their own. Even if you never gave a ditty like 1970's “Brandy” by Looking Glass a second listen, you'll find yourself chiming in on every last “Such a Fine Girl!” when these musical crusaders shed a brand new light on it. Bolstered by a remarkable enthusiasm, an almost Vegas-like showmanship, and an uncontrollable desire to make their audience as much a part of the show as they are (which often entails inviting braver crowd members to join them on tambourine), their energetic performances have been described by people of all kinds and ages as “startlingly entertaining” and “contagious in the best sense of the word”. These men may not know how to repair a roof, but they sure know how to work a room.

If it all sounds a bit abstract, the advice might be to not take anyone's word for it and experience the magic of the **Brill Babies** for yourself. “Difficult to categorize and even more difficult to resist” is how one awe-struck witness recently summed it up. They're square, but one of the hippest acts you may ever encounter. They're retro, but quite possibly light years ahead of their time. Some have even described Frank, Gerry and Scott as three lounge singers possessed by the spirit of rock 'n' roll. But you will, undoubtedly, have a completely different and equally positive reaction. The only thing that may be for certain is these keepers of the pop flame are exactly like nothing else you've seen, heard or felt before. Listen and enjoy.