



# MUSIC OF THE 50'S KEEPS ROCKIN'

By Bob Wood

Music's history has often traveled through Fort Dodge in various forms. One of the most popular genres has been music of the 50's. Buddy Holly's performance here just days before his death ranks as one of the most memorable. Well, Buddy Holly lives! He is coming back to Fort Dodge in the persona of Richie Lee and the Fabulous 50's, but it will look and feel like the real Buddy Holly. This show will be Friday night, November 21, at the Downtown Ballroom. To add to the 50's flavor a 50's dress contest and trivia contest will be part of the evening's fun. Show time, which is being billed as a dance, is from 7-11 pm. Doors open at 6 pm.

Richie Lee became interested in his alter ego at the age of six listening to Buddy Holly CD's, then at the age of eight he won a Buddy Holly look-alike lip sync contest in Des Moines. Since then he began taking guitar and drum lessons eventually performing on stage with professional musicians from the Buddy Holly era. Richie has performed on stage with Winter Dance Party, Drummer Carl Bunch, Holly Backup singers the Roses, The Tolletts, Larry Welborn, and friend, the Legendary Peggy Sue Geron as well as the Cricket's lead guitarist Tommy Allsup.

I asked Richie about having to wear the glasses like Buddy Holly and he said he wore glasses at the age of 2 or 3 and they were heavy thick framed glasses. Richie said it was one of the experiences that got him into playing the Buddy Holly role. That and the fact the 50's and 60's music were all his mom and dad listened to at home and in the car. Eventually Richie's eyes grew out of the stigmatism and he no longer has to wear glasses, except when he is on stage.

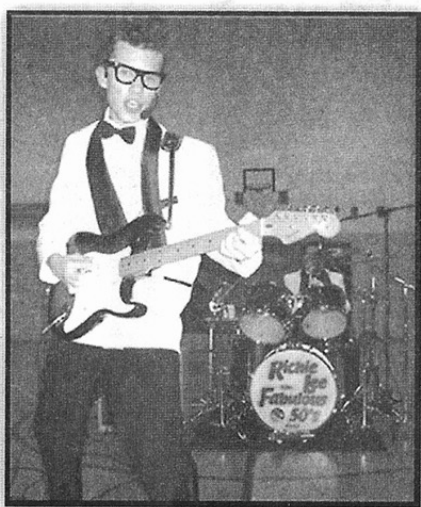
Richie Lee has worked hard to remain true to the original Buddy Holly music. He plays a 1955 Fender Stratocaster just like his hero, Buddy Holly. Richie plays mostly 50's dances at 50's style clubs. By the age of 16 he had played over 14 ballrooms and also a couple of gigs with the Drifters in Boston. Last summer he went to Memphis to play in an Elvis tribute. In the summer of 2007, at age 17, Richie performed for 14 members of the Ritchie Valens family. Playing with IRRMA All Star Band for the induction of Ritchie Valens into the Iowa Rock N' Roll Music Association Hall of Fame. Richie Lee was 17 then, the same age Ritchie Valens was when he died in the plane crash. Richie sang "Come on Let's Go", "Donna" and "La Bamba" and Mario Ramirez, Ritchie Valens brother, joined him.

Quoting Richie Lee from his website he is adamant Holly's music "won't fade away." Referring to Holly, Lee says, "I really like his music. And it's fun to play too." Lee goes on to say, "I want to bring back this sound for kids so it is not forgotten. I want them to hear what real rock music sounds like." Judging by Richie Lee's guitar, hairstyle, and clothing, you will also see what real rock looked like in the 50's. Richie says, "I like everything perfect."

The crowd at the Downtown Ballroom should be perfect for Richie. His dad, Richard Luckenbill is originally from Fort Dodge and Richie has three uncles, Chuck, Bill, and Bobby who live here. Richie has played Fort Dodge before and beyond November 21 he has another date hopefully. In 2009 Richie will be a part of the 1959 Winter Dance Club tour that will make the rounds replicating the original tour featuring Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper. Dates and venues are not all set and Richie is hopeful Fort Dodge will be on the tour since it was on the original.

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This writer first remembers seeing Richie in a TV commercial with Tom Coates of Consumer Credit of Des Moines. Richie explained that a Des Moines paper did a story about him and Tom Coates saw it. Tom and his partner, who write all the scripts for the Consumer Credit television commercials thought Richie would be perfect for their next ad which would be airing in January and February. The ad involved the whole family as Richie's mom and dad, plus family and friends played audience member parts in the commercial. Richie said he was thankful for the great exposure the ad gave him.



I asked Richie if he had a full time job to help pay the bills. "Gee, I wouldn't know what that is like!" He exclaimed. Richie said he is too busy playing over 100 gigs a year around the Midwest with two or three scheduled every weekend. He does have college in his future though. He wants to go to business school to learn the ropes of running his own company so he can handle the business side of leading a band. He also has and is currently taking college level music theory classes. In the future Richie says, "I'll take whatever comes first. Hopefully expanding my music and traveling more to play gigs to a wider audience."

Here again are the vital statistics for the November 21 show at the Downtown Ballroom featuring Richie Lee and the Fabulous 50's:

Tickets are \$6 per person and \$10 per couple in advance. At the door tickets will be \$8 per person and \$15 per couple. The doors open at 6 pm and the dance starts at 7 pm with the band playing until 11 pm. The show will be on the second floor of the Downtown Ballroom and dancers will enjoy the hardwood floor. An added plus will be the 50's dress and 50's trivia contests.

Richie Lee and the Fabulous 50's include Richie Lee on guitar, Dale Rupp on Drums, with Bryne Ohme on bass. Richie's specialty is Buddy Holly, but music of the 50's will rock the night including selected rock and roll by Ritchie Valens, Eddie Cochran, Conway Twitty, Del Shannon, Elvis, and more. Come dance the night away with Richie Lee and the Fabulous 50's!