

Good Times

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Our Night on the Town

Staind's Aaron Lewis is right at home in the Sun

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He seems to be there all the time, armed with only his distinctive voice and acoustic guitar.

So, it only seems fitting that Staind frontman Aaron Lewis is going to be enshrined on to the Mohegan Sun Walk of Fame when he arrives Friday, Feb. 5 for a solo acoustic performance that night in the Mohegan Sun Arena.

"It's cool," said Aaron in a phone interview when asked how it felt to get that kind of accolade from the Connecticut casino. "I haven't gotten noticed much over the course of my career," said the lead singer of the Springfield, Mass.-based Staind.

But Aaron said the honor makes sense. "I have a pretty long, yearly arrangement with the Mohegan," said Aaron, who has been performing his solo acoustic shows for about six years now.

Throughout the years Lewis has undertaken this busman's holiday from his regular gig, as noted, Aaron has been repeat visitor to the casino in Uncasville. Asked what he likes about the venue, "Both rooms (the arena and the Cabaret) are nice rooms," said Aaron. "They've always taken good care of me. There's never been a reason not to go back."

Although Aaron is best known as the lead singer of Staind, he explained he has actually gone back "full circle" by taking on the solo shows.

"Before I met the guys in the band, I was doing what I was doing now," said Aaron. "I was by myself with my guitar, sitting in the corner, (being the) human jukebox (in a bar)."

Reminiscing about his early days, Aaron said he started off life as a musician playing the bass, not the guitar. "My dad, in his musical endeavors, always found it difficult to find a good bass player," said Aaron. So when Aaron was 5, he said his dad started to teach him the bass. He told Aaron that as a bass player, he'd find it easier to get a gig than if he played guitar.

But when he was 7, Aaron said, "I decided singing along with the bass wasn't the same." He asked his dad about changing his

instrument of choice.

Aaron said his father bought a new guitar for himself and gave his old one to his son.

"My guitar lessons so to speak were sitting down with my dad for 10 to 15 minutes and him showing me two to three chords," said Aaron. Aaron immediately would head into his room after and begin practicing those chords over and over, backwards and forwards, even playing in the dark to see if he could grab them without seeing the guitar. His father would show him another couple of chords the next day and Aaron would do it all again.

Aaron likes the way playing solo acoustic gigs strips songs down to their basics, just as they were originally intended. He said a lot of producers will ask a band to break a song down to an acoustic version to see if it will stand on its own, away from studio trickery. "That's the raw natural state of the song," he said.

As for his set list for the acoustic shows, except for the songs he feels he has to perform (such as "It's Been a While" and "Outside"), Aaron said he tries to stay away from songs he would play with Staind. So the shows will include songs that never made it on to the albums for one reason or another. There will be B-sides from Staind. There will be tracks that were included as bonus songs on international versions of the band's albums.

After six years of doing solo performances, Aaron said fans will soon have some solo product. He intends to release a live CD, with three or four new tracks, which may also include a DVD of his solo gigs. Furthermore, he said there is a plan to produce a documentary about his solo shows.

When the current solo tour is done, Aaron said the first priority is to regroup with the guys from Staind to start the follow-up to the band's last album, "The Illusion of Progress." Aaron said the band will head to "my barn (in Massachusetts)," where they will record, and begin the new album by late fall.

For more information, go to Staind.com or MoheganSun.com



Aaron Lewis, lead singer of Staind, performs solo at the Mohegan Sun Friday night.