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'Doo-Wop 'n Rock' tour brings back memories for Tillotson

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David Burke | Posted: Thursday, September 23, 2010 2:00 am | No Comments Posted

If you go

What: Doo-Wop 'n Rock: a concert to benefit Bethany For Children and Families

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 25

Where: Adler Theatre, Davenport

How much: \$67, \$40 and \$27

Information: (563) 326-8555 or www.AdlerTheatre.com

On the web: www.JohnnyTillotson.com; www.bethany-qc.org

For singer Johnny Tillotson, a bill like the one Saturday night in the "Doo-Wop 'n Rock" show at the Adler Theatre in Davenport harkens back to the days of the "American Bandstand" tours in the 1960s.

"We did so many Dick Clark package shows back in the day," Tillotson recalled from his home in Los Angeles. "Back then, some people only had one or two hits at the time, so there were huge production shows. We all became friends during that, riding on the bus and hanging out with Dick Clark. It was a wonderful time."

At Saturday's concert, Tillotson will be joined on the bill by Jay and the Americans ("This Magic Moment," "Come a Little Closer") and Shirley Alston Reeves of The Shirelles ("Will You Still Love Me

Tomorrow," "Mama Said").

"You have the chance to work with the people you kind of grew up in the business with," Tillotson said. "It's always fun to work with them."

All of them will be backed by the Killer Vees, a group that includes two sons of another nostalgic icon, Bobby Vee.

"It makes for a great show because everybody knows the material cold," Tillotson said.

The Florida native, now 71, said his big break was being signed to Cadence Records by its owner, Archie Bleyer, alongside others on the roster, including the Everly Brothers and Andy Williams.

"If you had a hit song you got to go into the studio," he recalled. "If you didn't, you had to keep looking till you found one."

His first hit was "Dreamy Eyes," was a success in only certain regions of the country in the pre-MTV and network radio days of the 1960s. Other hits followed, including "Poetry in Motion" and "It Keeps Right on a-Hurtin'."

"It was just the best. Couldn't have been any better," he said of his heyday. "To record songs and go from town to town and hear them on the radio, it's just the best."

One of his favorites was "Poetry in Motion."

"It's very descriptive of the way that ladies smile and move and all the magic that they do," Tillotson said. "I figured if that was a hit in the states it would be a hit all over the world, and it was."

Tillotson is still recording, including a song called "Not Enough," a tribute to heroes including police, firefighters and soldiers.

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"It just seems like it was something that needed to be said," Tillotson said. "You just need to go up and thank them."

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