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February 24, 2011

Millstone youth to play benefit concert with The B Street Band

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MILLSTONE — Aspiring musician Kevin Basko will open a benefit concert for a former roadie of The B Street Band who has complications from a rare disease.

Basko, an 18-year-old singer/songwriter from Millstone Township, Monmouth County, is one of two opening acts for the Feb. 26 show at the Stone Pony in Asbury Park. He will perform songs from his soon-to-be-released album “The Atmosphere.”

Basko met Glenn Stuart, lead singer of The B Street Band, in July 2009 while playing lead guitar in the band Finale Hill. Finale Hill opened for the Bruce Springsteen cover band at Summerfest in Brick

Township.

“Glenn is helping me produce my new CD,” Basko said. “Glenn has been performing professionally for years all around the country and has a number of connections in the music business.”

Basko sent Stuart a copy of a CD he had been working on to get some professional feedback on the project.

“He liked the CD and later offered to help me produce a version for marketing,” Basko said. “I recorded the vocals and guitar. We added some instrumentals from guys in the B Street Band — Steve Meyers on saxophone, Steve Lopresto on bass, and Glenn on drums and percussion. A friend of ours, Charlie Ernst, a great jazz pianist, recorded the piano and organ.”

As Basko worked on the album’s finishing touches, Stuart suggested he play the benefit concert for John “J.C.” Colyer, who was The B Street Band’s longtime technician and roadie.

“John had to retire early due to a rare disease that affects his muscles,” Basko said.

Colyer, who worked with The B Street Band for 16 years, has been living with lupus for more than 46 years.

A chronic inflammatory condition caused by an autoimmune disease, lupus can cause disease of the skin, heart, lungs, kidneys, joints and nervous system, because lupus patients have unusual antibodies in the blood that target their own body tissues, according to the Lupus Foundation of America in Washington, D.C. The disease has affected Colyer’s balance and muscles.

The doors to the Feb. 26 benefit concert will open at 7:30 p.m. and Basko will perform from 9 to 9:30 p.m., followed by Colyer’s former band, the Kilby Taylor Reunion Band, and then the headliner, The B Street Band.

“They put on a great show and really get the crowd going,” Basko said. “It will be a fun night, and all the profits are going to a great cause.”

The show is open to all ages. Concert attendees must be 21 and older to drink. Tickets are \$20 at the door or in advance at stoneponyonline.com.

A free extended-play demo of Basko’s “The Atmosphere” will be available at the show.

“The photo on my CD cover shows my guitar on the bench in the hall at Allentown High School,” Basko said. “This is where I would sit and write a lot of my songs.”

Basko’s solo career started in January 2010 when his senior practicum adviser at Allentown High School allowed him to work a couple days a week with the school’s music program, and another few days a week on creating an acoustic CD.

“At that time, I was writing a fair amount of instrumental blues originals, so initially I thought the CD would be totally instrumental,” Basko said.

His guitar teacher, Ed Cedar, had long been trying to convince him to sing, Basko said.

“The last time I really sang was when I was about 6 years old,” Basko said. “But then I began to explore different styles of music like John Mayer or Dave Matthews-type tunes. I expanded upon those influences and decided to start singing and make my own sound.”

The songs on the album have nature and weather themes that tie into life situations.

“Not to say this is my main message, but it is definitely a noticeable theme throughout the record,” Basko said.

His interest in music started at Millstone Township Middle School, where teacher Gwen Parker taught him to play saxophone.

“In fifth grade, Mrs. Beth Topinka’s husband, Jerry (a jazz guitarist), came into our science class to teach us about guitars, and I was drawn to its sound and look,” he said.

Basko played saxophone, guitar and drums in the Allentown High School jazz, symphonic and marching bands. In 2008 he and a group of friends formed Finale Hill to compete in the school’s Battle of the Bands.

“Until recently, I played lead guitar for this hard rock band,” he said.

This year, Basko is completing his basic liberal arts requirements at Brookdale Community College before leaving to attend Berklee College of Music in Boston.

“During that time, I hope to continue to play in local venues in New England, as well as in this area when I’m home on semester breaks,” he said, adding that his dream is to be a professional singer/songwriter.

“Which is almost like saying that I want to be an NBA basketball star,” Basko said. “It’s an incredibly competitive business, and this world is full of great musicians who are struggling to survive. While my parents support me 100 percent, they have tried at times to convince me to do something else. But it’s important enough where I push through it and try to make something of myself.”

Details: www.kbasmusic.com.