



Watertown Daily Times, August 6, 2011

Substitute: Tales From The Who will be performing at Riverfest on Aug. 14 from noon to 1:30 p.m. Band members, pictured from left, are Andy Pagel, drums; Tom Branigan, bass and backup vocals; Dave Stevens, lead vocals; and Andy Potocic, guitar and backup vocals.

## The sounds of The Who to be featured at Riverfest celebration

**By Adam Tobias  
of the Daily Times staff**

Tom Branigan grew up listening to The Who, and in 2005, one of his childhood dreams became a reality.

It was that year Branigan was the catalyst behind forming Substitute: Tales From The Who, which will be performing at Riverfest on Aug. 14 from noon to 1:30 p.m.

"The Who has always been my favorite band," Branigan said. "I heard a song called 'The Kids Are Alright,' I was 13 years old, and that Rickenbacker D-chord just kind of rung out and I was just hooked. My whole life, every single band I was in, I tried to get a couple Who songs covered."

But in 2005, after receiving some advice from his wife, Branigan decided enough was enough — he was going to start his own The Who tribute band.

"I remember it very well," Branigan said. "It was about five years ago right before Mother's Day and I hadn't been playing in a band for like a year. I'm sitting there having breakfast with my wife, and she told me that I always talked about putting together a Who band and I should do it now."

Branigan then put an advertisement in the newspaper, and a short while later, Substitute: Tales From The Who was born. Branigan, who provides backup

vocals and plays the bass, is joined by drummer Andy Pagel, lead vocalist Dave Stevens and guitar player and backup vocalist Andy Potocic.

"All the guys in the band, we all love The Who and we are very cognizant of the fact that The Who is such a well-known band and so many of those songs have become part of popular culture that you can't half-heart it," Branigan said. "Nobody is going to be those guys ever again. It was like this dream team lineup, but you have to be able to pull off sounding like them and really communicating their energy across to people. And I like to think we've done that."

"Promoters in this town and region have kind of said, 'Hey, those guys really do them justice,' which is all you can really ask," he added. "The biggest compliment the band has ever received is from a gentleman who comes out to see us who's seen The Who themselves live many times. One day he said, 'When I close my eyes, it's like I'm there at a Who concert.' And that's high praise to us."

Branigan also said it's an honor and a privilege to get the opportunity to play the same music in front of crowds that made such an impact on his life.

"It's such a rush of energy and emotion," Branigan said. "I mean, a lot of those songs that Pete Townshend wrote spoke to

a lot of the things emotionally that teens and young adults worked through. A lot of those songs, like the entire 'Quadrophenia' album, is about a guy who's trying to find his place in the world and that stuff resonates and is one of the reasons The Who is still relevant to every new generation coming up. There's a lot of emotional connection there in those lyrics and in those songs. So, playing them on stage and seeing a whole group of people singing along with the words and stuff, it really does give you chills."

Substitute: Tales From The Who, performs between 10 to 15 shows per year and will be playing at the Wisconsin State Fair the day before they go on stage at Riverfest, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Branigan called Riverfest a prestigious event and said it has been on his band's wish list ever since they came together in 2005.

"Riverfest is such a top-notch festival," Branigan said. "This is a tremendous honor for us to play there. It's great sound and it's great people. And to be playing at Riverfest for the 25th anniversary, that's part of the privilege."

"All you can do as a band is get to the point where somebody gives you a shot and bend over backwards to prove yourselves," Branigan said. "You just have to."