

# 5Q Five questions with ... Danny Dine

Guitarist, harmony vocalist, local music staple

By JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO  
HP Features Writer

ST. JOSEPH — If you're a fan of local music, chances are you know Danny Dine.

Dine, a St. Joseph native who has been performing publicly for the past 30 years, currently is the guitarist in both The Sypian Family Band and Venitia Sekema & The Luna Madre Band. He also collaborates with pianist Sarah Carlson and fellow guitarist Phil Anderson, with whom he'll play a duo show Saturday at the Box Factory for the Arts.

His roster of previous bands reads like a who's who of the local music scene, including The Danny Dine Band, Proud Ape, Red Deluxe, The Steve Grigsby Band, Visions of Lucy, and Johnny Ray and The Southern Comfort Band.

Dine started playing music in the fourth grade when he discovered his mother's ukulele. He moved on to his brother's Univox, and in high school started playing his own 1972 Fender Telecaster Thinline. He's since added piano and bass to his arsenal and is working on the drums, but it's as an acoustic guitarist that Dine is best known.

In addition to Saturday's show at the Box Factory, Dine, along with Nathan & Leslie Sypian, opens the new Showroom Showcase Series on Friday at 3 Pillars Music. But, as he shared with us, that's just a few of the places you may catch his act.

**Q On Saturday, you're playing with Phil Anderson. How did the two of you get together, and what can we expect to hear at that show?**

**A** I met Phil at the old Livery open mic that Venitia Sekema used to host. I ended up singing with him somehow, and we discovered our voices blended together really well. It just went from there. A lot of it is me harmonizing with Phil, and blending our two voices together. We do some of the soft side of acoustic music, and harmony music in general. We will be doing some original stuff, but some of the songs people might know are James Taylor's "Shower The People," Crosby, Stills and Nash's "Teach Your Children," and that kind of early '70s folk-rock stuff.

**Q You grew up in St. Joseph. So how did you get interested in playing music?**

**A** Yeah, I grew up here and never really left for more than a month. I played ukulele first. My mom and dad both had ukuleles. That was the only string instrument in the house so I kind of took to that. My mom showed me a songbook and a few chords and within a month I already learned all the songs that she knew and wanted to learn more so she just kind of let me go at it. She basically gave me her ukulele at that point. I played that in grade school, and then I got into the guitar because of my good friend Dan Pavlides. He taught me the basics. Dan and The Willey family — Andy Willey, Rick Willey — Mark Albers, Dan Geib, all of my friends played acoustic music. I never was a good bluegrass player, but my album collection grew from the stuff I heard them playing. Today, I still teach some of the same things that Dan Pavlides taught me.

**Q You teach guitar at The Citadel Dance & Music Center in Benton Harbor. What's the best thing about teaching?**

**A** I know I'm biased, but I think it's the best music school in the



Don Campbell / HP staff

St. Joseph native and local music staple Danny Dine performs Friday along with Nathan & Leslie Sypian as part of the new Showroom Showcase Series at 3 Pillars Music in Benton Harbor. Then, on Saturday, Dine joins Phil Anderson for a duo show Saturday at the Box Factory for the Arts.

## IF YOU GO

**Who:** Danny Dine and Phil Anderson

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Saturday

**Where:** Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph

**How much:** \$10, \$8 for students and seniors, free for children 12 and younger

**Contact:** 983-3688 or [www.boxfactoryforthearts.org](http://www.boxfactoryforthearts.org)

**Artist info:** [dannydine.wordpress.com](http://dannydine.wordpress.com)

Dine also performs at 7:30 p.m. Friday along with Nathan & Leslie Sypian as part of the new Showroom Showcase Series at 3 Pillars Music, 198 Water St., Benton Harbor. Admission is free. For more information, call 925-5814 or visit [www.3pillarsmusic.com](http://www.3pillarsmusic.com).

world. I have 22 students. One thing that's nice is giving them a shortcut so they don't have to go through all the mistakes I made, and had to correct myself. It took me a long time to correct bad habits. I try to give my students a really big chord knowledge. I have it down in a book for them, and it's something they can take and keep for life. It's all about chords, as far as playing songs is concerned. It's neat to see them go from open chords to bar chords to additional chords and put some songs together. I'm really blessed to be teaching there.

**Q You've played in a lot of bands over the years. How has the local music scene changed?**

**A** Nowadays, if you try hard enough you can break out and do music that's more original, or at

least music that you really like. Back in the '80s when I was in my first band, you were pretty much strapped to the radio musically. There was no Czar's, there was no Livery. There weren't any of these places that had more original music. There are places that have opened up to music that isn't commercial. That's the big thing I've seen change for the better. On the other side of that is that there aren't as many places that a band can play because many bars use DJs or karaoke instead, which makes it harder on musicians locally.

**Q In addition to Phil, and your solo shows, you also play with Venitia Sekema in her Luna Madre Band, and in The Sypian Family Band. Where else can people find you?**

**A** I've been playing nursing homes. I go about twice a month, and I'll probably do more in the future. It's nice to play for people who really need entertainment. And I don't have to play a song past 1960. It's all swing standards and 1950s country and rock 'n' roll. I love that stuff so it's a win-win.

I noticed how great Nate Sypian was on guitar during an open mic, and got up there and played with him. I love playing in the Sypians, and with Venitia. I met her at the open mic she hosted, and the next thing I know she wanted me to be the guitar player in her band. That was great. When she calls I go work with her. All these great guitar players for one reason or another like to play music with me. It's a big thrill. I don't think I'm that good, but all these people I think are brilliant want to play music with me. It blows me away. I'm really blessed.

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