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Peggy Davison



Peggy Davison

Our Girlfriend's Back

Actually, doo wop singer Peggy Davison hasn't left, she's just getting more involved. And she may even bring the Angels to Carroll County.

by DAVID P. GREISMAN photography by GREGORY W. BLANK

"My boyfriend's back and you're gonna be in trouble. Hey la, hey la, my boyfriend's back."

The song has transcended generations, beginning decades ago with the scratch of needle on vinyl and continuing through to the clear compression of digital downloads.

It is "My Boyfriend's Back" and the singers were a group called the Angels. And now they, too, are back, and they just might play Carroll. The county, after all, is home to one of their number: one of doo wop

music's noteworthy talents, Peggy Davison.

Davison went by another name when the spotlight first found her. Peggy Santiglia was a pop prodigy, first an elementary-school singer in a group known as The Delicates, later joining up with The Angels, who had already recorded hits "Till" and "Cry Baby Cry" and who would go on to put out the ever-famous "My Boyfriend's Back."

She also performed with other groups.

Davison has lived in Maryland since 1981. For several of those years she's been in Carroll County. And although she no longer tours as widely as in the past, she has kept active.

That means occasional shows with The Angels. It means a brand new album with both original tracks and updated versions of previous hits. It means getting back on the road to perform. Davison holds out hope that she could step out on stage in front of those in the Carroll community with whom she has cultivated close relationships over time.

"No matter where I do a concert, I want to please the audience, and I want it to be good," said Davison. "But I've made some really good friends since I've lived here. I support the arts in many different ways. I've given some talks at colleges. Wherever you live, you get involved with issues that you care about, people that you care about."

"It's much more nerve-racking to perform in front of people you know. I've sung in front of thousands of people, not counting television shows. But it is more meaningful, and it does really feel great. I would like local people I know to actually see what I do when I'm performing in different parts of the country."

As of this magazine's press time, an Angels' performance at the Carroll Arts Center has not been set in stone. But Sandy Oxx, executive director of the Carroll County Arts Council, said she would love to bring the group there.

"She is, without a doubt, Carroll County's most notable professional performer," Oxx said. "She made a national mark, and the song 'My Boyfriend's Back' is iconic. Younger generations know that song. I can sing every word. My parents in their seventies

know that song. How many songs in American music can attest to that? It would be fitting, since she lives in our community, to have her on our stage since she has had such an impact on American pop music."

The Angels have seen a recent resurgence in recognition. Once the backup singers to the Four Seasons, The Angels are portrayed in 'Jersey Boys,' the Broadway musical about Frankie Valli's group. They are to appear this November at an induction ceremony and concert at the Vocal Group Hall of Fame.

Add to that their new CD, which will see a return of The Angels lineup of Davison and sisters Barbara and "Jiggs" Allbut. Barbara had not performed live with the group in several years.

"We started one or two songs almost two years ago. After we did those, we were traveling more and so forth, and they're from California," Davison said. "It was a little tough to block out that much time. We started planning it last year. Last fall, they did a lot of the background work, and then I did most of my lead. I'm not singing lead on everything, but a good deal because I was the original lead. In February I added my background part, and then I went back in April; I mean, pretty much working all day, taking a break for dinner and then recording.

"We do have an '08 version of 'My Boyfriend's Back,' which we're including, but that's not what we're leading with. We are including a dance version of 'Till.' The CD is very much geared toward our fan base, which is somewhat older, or fans of early rock and roll. It's a nice mix, lots of originals. It was thrilling, because we were singing together again as we did on our hits. We're still very close friends even


though we didn't see each other much over the years. I've shared experiences with Barbara and Jiggs that I'll never share with anybody else in my life."

Davison will also be starting a three-year term in September on the board of the Carroll County Arts Council.

"As a working artist, Peggy is someone who made her living in the entertainment industry," Oxx said. "That perspective is something we don't have on the board. She's been very involved in fundraising within the community and other organizations. I think she has a good handle on that. She attends things that we do. That was very integral to the candidates we looked at. We're not just looking for the bank president or the head of the company. We're looking for people who've already exhibited a vested interest in what we do here."

Davison is looking forward to her time on the board.

"I care about the work that they do," Davison said. "Anything that especially encourages children to become involved in any of the arts, I think is important. When I look back, if I didn't have lots of encouragement from family and teachers at school, how would I ever have had the courage to write and sing starting at 11, 12 years old?"

"Carroll County is close enough to Washington and Baltimore to be involved in certain cultural things if you want to be," she said. "But on the other hand, we're far enough away that without the local support for the arts, it would be much more difficult for people, young and old, that were looking to be involved. It's a good bunch of people, and the Arts Council is an organization in which I feel I can be a good, contributing member." 



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