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How a Charlotte singer came to join Boston

By Michael J. Solender

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Singer Tommy DeCarlo's largest audience before 2007 was about 40 people at a bowling alley, where his backup music was provided by a karaoke machine.

He'll be met by a much larger crowd when he takes the stage Tuesday evening at the NC Music Factory's Uptown Amphitheatre, where he'll be fronting for the '70s mega-band Boston.

To say that DeCarlo was an unlikely candidate to join and tour with the band is an understatement.

"I grew up as a teen listening to Boston," said DeCarlo, 49, who was working as a credit manager at a local Home Depot when he joined the band in 2008 after its original lead singer, Brad Delp, took his own life.

"After his death, I learned that a benefit concert was planned where Boston would be playing. I covered a few songs and posted them to a Myspace account I had in tribute. A friend had a contact email for the band and encouraged me to send my recordings. I sent a cover of 'Don't Look Back,' and the next thing I knew I was on the phone with Tom Scholz (Boston founder) and then singing at the benefit."

DeCarlo, a Charlotte resident since 2005, sang in choirs growing up and rarely missed an opportunity at karaoke, though he never performed professionally and never had been in a band.

"When I began touring with the band in 2008, they set me up with a vocal coach, Mark Baxter, whose advice and training regimen I follow to the letter," DeCarlo said.

"Having the opportunity to tour with Boston in 2008 and again in 2012 was amazing," he said. "I learned that many people plan their vacations around tour dates and come from several states away. It is very important to the entire band that we put on the best possible show for our fans."

To that end, DeCarlo said he prepares diligently for the rigors of touring.

"I started singing the entire set list three months ago," DeCarlo said, adding that it is a mix of old favorites

● PREVIEW

Boston

WHERE: 8 p.m. Tuesday.

WHERE: Uptown Amphitheatre, 1000 NC Music Factory Blvd.

TICKETS: \$25-\$190.

DETAILS: 704-549-5555; www.livenation.com.

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and songs from the new album, as well as some surprises.

Charlotte is the fourth stop on the band's 66-city tour, which launched earlier this month. The band is promoting its newly released studio album, "Life, Love & Hope."

Many Charlotte fans are thrilled to know that when not on stage with Boston, DeCarlo can be seen locally with the melodic rock band DeCarlo. Established by son and lead guitarist Tommy Jr. and also featuring drummer Dan Hitz, DeCarlo plays at local venues such as the Bradshaw Social House in Ballantyne and Mac's Speed Shop at Lake Norman.

"Playing in Charlotte is extra-special for me," DeCarlo said. "I'm really happy to perform in front of the hometown crowd."



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