

Britt Landrum, III and The Rowdies

## The Pride of the Panhandle Meets NAPEO

Chris Chaney

The Florida Panhandle—what locals affectionately term the “Redneck Riviera” or “Florabama”—is a sought-after destination for many vacationers. The seemingly endless miles of pristine white sand and emerald waters offer visitors and locals alike plenty of opportunities for family fun. On any given summer night, you will find throngs of spectators singing along and dancing to live music at local establishments. One of the Panhandle’s hottest and most popular bands is a classic rock band called The Rowdies. During the peak season, band members will play up to five nights per week.

Normally, if you wanted to rock out to your favorite hits with The Rowdies, you’d have to plan a visit to the Panhandle, but attendees of NAPEO’s 2018 Annual Conference & Marketplace will have a chance to see The Rowdies live in concert. The Rowdies are set to headline this year’s annual evening event on September 7 in Orlando, Florida.

It’s a bit unusual for The Rowdies to travel this far from home to play for a private industry event. Usually, the band can be found playing local restaurants, venues, and festivals on the Panhandle. Luckily for NAPEO members, there’s a family connection. Britt Landrum, III—NAPEO board member and president of longtime NAPEO member LandrumHR—is a member of The Rowdies.

“My family vacations in Destin every summer, and we never miss the chance to hear the Rowdies live,” said NAPEO Senior Vice President and COO Melissa Viscovich. “Their high-energy performance and broad set list appeal to everyone, from the biker crowd to families.



Britt Landrum, III

NAPEO’s members are in for a great night when the Rowdies take the stage in Orlando!”

### Meet The Rowdies

Playing alongside Britt (vocals, electric guitar) are Jeff Ivanoff (vocals, acoustic guitar), Dana Chillcut (vocals), Jeff Chillcut (drums, vocals), and Dane Warren (bass), who make up The Rowdies. The group formed in the mid-2000s following Hurricane Ivan. At the time, Britt was playing in a country band, but after the devastating storm hit, sending the community through a time of rebuilding and revival, a lot changed—including Britt’s music career. Britt’s country band disbanded and The Rowdies formed soon thereafter.

“Jeff Ivanoff and I played at our church together for many years, where I also ran sound,” said Britt. “It really was a natural extension for us to start performing outside of church.”

Asked about how the name “Rowdies” was chosen, Britt said, “We wanted something that depicted our

sound, style, and the Redneck Riviera—where we live.”

The other band members met Jeff and Britt through church as well. The Chillcuts are the band’s newest members, which has allowed the band to expand its set list. Now a classic rock cover band, The Rowdies used to play southern rock, but Britt says they have since added more ‘80s and ‘90s music with Dana in the group.

### A Passion for Music

While The Rowdies is strictly a cover band playing well-known hits and crowd favorites, all of the members have written or still write original songs. Music is a passion they all share, and at least for Britt, one he’s had since childhood.

“I first got paid to perform starting at age 15 during the ‘80s in a local group called Velvet Melon,” Britt said. “We had a house gig at a local teen dance club, and we did really well keeping the place filled three nights a week for about a year. I had the Rick Springfield mullet, wore tank tops and Don Johnson jackets, etc. We



Jeff Ivanoff, Britt

were very popular locally. That's when I first caught the bug."

Since then he's played in nearly 15 different bands. He studied music and toured around the Southeast in college. He also played guitar in his high school jazz band because football kept him out of the marching band. Britt played the trumpet in his middle school band, and was inspired to pick up the instrument when the band needed a part for the "Rocky" theme song they were playing. Music has been as much a part of Britt's life as payroll, benefits, and compliance.

"It's really the yin and the yang for me," said Britt. "They [PEO business and my band] are so diametrically opposed to each other, that it does keep me balanced. There is a great book out by one of my guitar heroes, Jeff Carlisi of 38 Special, called 'Jam,' which uses band analogies to teach work concepts. It is the perfect intersection of my worlds and how one side teaches the other side. I have learned much from each that I use to apply to the other. You simply cannot have a business without creativity, and you can't have much success in music without a business side. It's a crazy, busy life, but it works for me!"

Britt hopes to begin writing original music again and says it's on his to-do list. He hopes to get back to writing music within the next year or so, but notes that running a business and raising a family take a lot of his attention. He also knows it wouldn't be possible without their support.

"First and foremost, I have to give credit to my wife and boys for allowing me to have such a crazy schedule," Britt said.

### On Tour, Locally

While the band is willing to travel anywhere and accept any challenge to get a crowd moving, The Rowdies typically stays local. Britt really enjoys playing for vacationers, especially at festivals.

"Bands on the Beach is a festival we play every year," Britt said. "Last year, we had about 3,500 people attend. Outdoor festivals are where it's at for us!"

The Rowdies were set to perform at this year's Bands on the Beach, too, but



Britt, Jeff Ivanoff, Dane Warren



Britt, Dane Warren, Jeff Ivanoff, Dana Chillcut

their performance was cancelled due to weather. As it turns out, the local weatherman had attended a Rowdies show and counts himself a fan. He used his local celebrity power to generate a grassroots campaign to ensure The Rowdies got a raincheck date. It worked. When you live in the path of hurricanes, the local weatherman can be a powerful ally.

For Britt and the band members, music is all about connecting with the audience. Performing is about using their passion for music to lead the audience on an emotional journey. It's all about connecting with and feeding off the audience's energy and guiding them along. Even though they generally play the same set of songs, no performance is ever the same as the last.

"There's something special about the energy exchange between performers and an audience," said Britt. "I feel much more comfortable singing than I do, say giving our staff a talk on why we need to get rid of paper. Also, I really enjoy motivating people towards positive change. In this case, the goal is to have fun!"

When asked what big milestone the band is working towards, Britt just sort of laughs. For him and his bandmates, it's not about making money or recording the next hit, it's about sharing their passion with others: "It just feels natural to me—like I belong up there." ●

*Chris Chaney is member communications manager for NAPEO, Alexandria, Virginia.*



### Rock with The Rowdies

Come see The Rowdies live on Thursday, September 7, from 8:00 to 11:00 pm at the beautiful JW Marriott Orlando Grande Lakes while at NAPEO's 2017 Annual Conference & Marketplace. Register for the conference today at [www.napeo.org/annualconference](http://www.napeo.org/annualconference).