

# Local country-rock band helps out the Conversation Station over the weekend

BY DAVE ARCARO

*Gazette Newspapers*

ORWELL - Five talented musicians got together for a good cause over the weekend. Hillbillies in Denial, a local country-rock ensemble from various parts of northeastern Ohio, took three hours out of their busy schedule on Saturday to perform at the Conversation Station for their annual 36-Hour Telethon.

The band is made up of Tammy Kuhn on vocals, Jason Kuhn on guitar, Don Harrison on drums, Marty Kavick on guitar and Ed Kuhar on the bass.

"We all came from different backgrounds," said guitar player and spokesman Jason Kuhn from Painesville, "and we're not from a country music background. At one time, I was in a heavy metal band and had to drive over to the west side of Cleveland to find work. Eventually, that band fell apart."

"One time, my wife and I were out and about and watching a country band play," Kuhn continued. "And my buddy was putting another band together and at the (same) time. I said, 'You know, country music has really come a long way recently. It's not the same music from 20 years ago.'"

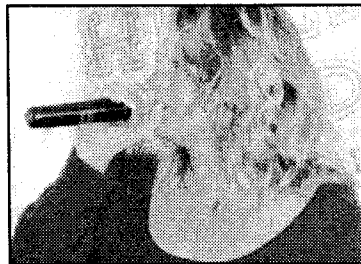
Kuhn provided a little background as to how the Hillbillies in Denial got together.

"Well, I decided to give country music a try," Kuhn said. "It gave us the opportunity to stay upbeat all the time and maybe even throw in a little classic rock. So that was the idea. I ran into Ed on a business trip to Califor-

nia. I talked him into coming over and trying out. He didn't even own a base anymore. But he came over and we had a good time. Don (Harrison) had answered an ad for a drummer in another band. Well, he came over, we drank a pot of coffee and he decided. So we started off as a three-piece band."

"We kept trying to bug Tammy (Kuhn, lead singer) to get up and sing a few tunes with us. She finally did. And a week later, after she had a pedicure done, she ran into Marty. She always says that she picked up Marty (guitar player Martin Savick) in a bar. We then gave him a list of songs that he had to know by the weekend."

The band's website advertises them as the most screwed up band in Lake County. Not only do they play typical country classics from Keith Urban, Toby Keith and Kenny Chesney, they also sprinkle in a few tunes from Led Zeppelin, Motley Crue and Alice in Chains. The band formed in 2006 and consider themselves newer modern country band made up of a bunch of



Tammy Kuhn belts out the tunes. She's the lead singer for Hillbillies in Denial, a country rock band from Painesville.



PHOTOS BY DAVE ARCARO

Jason Kuhn warming up for their Saturday afternoon gig at the CS.

old rock & rollers. But diversity is the way to go if a band wants to keep playing every weekend.

Most of the time, Hillbillies in Denial entertain around the Painesville, Mentor and east Cleveland music scene.

"It was kind of funny, but because no one had ever played in a country rock band, no one had ever heard these songs before," said Kuhn. "We just kind of threw them together. But we've got a no sad songs guarantee. If you come and see us, we will not play any sad songs. Nobody will be crying in their beer."

Kuhn also said that his parents' country music influence played some part into what genre he finally fell into.

"Some of the older songs that we play are songs that my parents used to play when I was a

kid," Kuhn said. "Like (Nancy Sinatra's) Boots are Made for Walkin', and some Jeanie C. Riley. They were the country masters and that's why I rebelled into rock-and-roll. I heard (country music) all the time (when I was young). But country music eventually caught up to me. I'd have to say that we bring the energy of a rock and roll concert with songs people are somewhat familiar with."

"The rock-and-roll influence seeps into country music a lot," Kuhn said. "Depending on where we're playing, if we're out at a beer-and-a-shot bar, by the fourth set were playing Van Halen and AC/DC songs. I think that it's the musical influences and the diversified backgrounds everybody brings that allows us to do that."