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And now for something entirely different...

By STACY NICK
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Roger Clyne learned just about everything he knows about stage presence, and a few things he'd like to forget, in high school.

"I was a super geek," said Clyne in a phone interview from his Arizona home. "I was the kid with a mohawk in the school musical. I was in 'Oklahoma' - one of the cowboys. We had to do a little dance with our hands in our belt buckles and click our heels in the air... I didn't think that would get the girls. It was the rock band that did that. My best friend got the lead role. Thank God I didn't get it.

"I was just trying to learn how to perform and how a show works," he said. "I saw the work that went into putting on a show - for every hour on the stage, you spend about 100 practicing. Paul Westerberg used to say rock n' roll looks a lot easier than it is. He was right."

But there are things that make it well worth it - a great audience, a fine tequila and Clyne's annual show in Puerto Peñasco, Mexico - Circus Mexicus.

The idea for the event came to Clyne while he was still in The Refreshments (known for hits like "Banditos").

"I always tried to convince them of the goodness of Mexico," he said. "I just wanted to play at a cantina. You know, let's walk our talk. When I gained the helm with the Peacemakers I found one and the owner said, 'Bring it on. Bring your crappy P.A. system.' And we played on the cantina's roof for 175 people."

"It's my favorite gig," he said. "I just love playing in Mexico and staying up late and shooting off our own firecrackers. Playing on the beach. All the pillars of my heaven are there."

This year's event, on May 20, will feature Clyne's longtime friends, Cracker's David Lowery and Johnny Hickman. Clyne and Hickman, who recently moved to Northern Colorado, just finished writing a song together.

And while the band is playing on St. Paddy's Day, there won't be a "Danny Boy" in earshot (although you'll probably hear the "King of the Hill" theme song, which Clyne wrote and performed for the show) and it won't be Guinness that's flowing.

A tequila connoisseur, Clyne makes his own private stash in a Mexican cantina. It takes two years to make and he has to make his last three bottles last another six months before the next batch is ready. Porfidio or Cabo Wabo will do in a pinch.

Knowing of his love for Mexican moonshine, fans frequently send up rounds of shots onstage for the band. At last year's show at the Aggie, Clyne joked about the Jose Cuervo they were drinking.

"Oh, good Lord yeah," remembered Clyne. "It's tequila-esque. It's actually cut with vodka, which should be a crime. But even the worst tequila is better than the best whiskey."
