By MARCY MISNER

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SAULT STE. MARIE – Fans of Night Ranger and John Waite can expect an outstanding concert when the guys perform here Sunday at Kewadin Casinos DreamMakers Theater.

Ahead of his concert, I called and spoke with John Waite, who’ll be playing here with Night Ranger.

It’s raw, it’s to the point, it’s in tune, it’s inspired. It’s got 40 years of songs to pick from,” Waite said.

“I don’t think anybody would possibly come away disappointed, it’s such a high energy show and it’s such a lot of fun. It’s the most fun I’ve had for a very long time,” Waite said.

“We have a new guitar player, Keri Kelli, he’s straight from Slash - Snakepit and he came from Alice Cooper, so he’s like a real hotshot guitar player, which has really kicked the band in the ass. It’s a 3-piece band. It’s like The Babys would have been had we stayed in the original lineup, Waite said.

John Waite knows he’s got a great crowd waiting for Sunday’s concert. Waite has played all over Michigan and he said Northern Michigan looks a lot to him like the north of England in the Lake District, “all green and really beautiful with a lot of water.”

John Waite is opening here Sunday for Night Ranger.

With over 30 years in the business, and more than 17 million albums sold worldwide, Night Ranger has proven they can still “Rock in America”!  Like no other rock band, Night Ranger both epitomized and transcended the sound and style of the 80s.  In 1983, Night Ranger earned widespread acclaim with their multi-platinum album “Midnight Madness,” which included their smash hits "Sister Christian," "When You Close Your Eyes" and the anthemic "(You Can Still) Rock In America.”

John Waite started his career with The Babys in the late 70s.  The band had hits with “Isn’t it Time” and “Everytime I Think of You.”   In 1988, John got back together with a few members of The Babys to form Bad English. The group had a huge hit with “When I See You Smile” featuring his classic vocals and became his second #1.

In 2011, John Waite released his last studio album Rough & Tumble and featured the song “If You Ever Get Lonely.”  It’s a classic John Waite ballad and was co-written by Matchbox 20′s Kyle Cook.

On June 11th, 2013 John released “LIVE ALL ACCESS” as an iTunes exclusive . This includes a live version of “If You Ever Get Lonely,” which currently is rising up the Country Music Charts as LOVE AND THEFT is covering the song.   The LOVE AND THEFT video for If You Ever Get Lonely just entered the GAC TV Top 20.

John Waite’s first solo “Missing You” went #1 in 1984, and in 2006 he did a duet with Alison Krauss who covered the song for the country audience.

His collaboration with Alison Krauss isn’t surprising, given his storyteller roots. Though he’s a Brit, Waite’s got some country and soulful elements to his music.

His collaboration with Krauss began when he was mixing one of his solo albums after leaving Bad English. He noticed her on a country music TV channel while the sound engineers were working on tracks.

“She would come on and I would turn the sound up a bit more,” he recalls.

“When I was doing one of my albums I was looking to do a duet on “Missing You,” so I called her up,” he recalls.

“And it became quite a friendship, really. I have no idea what to say next, but it was really great. And I love that version of “Missing You” and I got to play the Opry with Alison and Vince Gill and it was great,” he says with a smile.

Of what fans can expect of him, he says this:

“The songwriting’s still the same; it’s just more mature. And it’s more detailed, because there’s more life lived. I’ve written a song a few years ago called “Bluebird Café,” which is about a small club in Nashville where young hopeful people come to break a song and hopefully get a break in show business. When I wrote it back in ‘95 I was more focused on trying to describe roots music and becoming a lot more lyrical and taking it a lot more like I was an equal to other writers.

“And I’ve stayed with that. I think I’ve become more lyrical as I got older. It shouldn’t sound pretentious…I take it very seriously. I think I’ve grown up as an artist and I reflect that I think, in the show. I don’t think it’s just like trying to pretend it’s 30 years ago,” he said.

Waite opened up about his other works from his latest album, Rough & Tumble, released in 2011.

“Stuff like “Hanging Tree” and “Peace of Mind,” they’re are completely absolutely different but they hang together so well with something like “If You Ever Get Lonely” and “Rough & Tumble,” he said.

“Rough & Tumble” was the number one single at Classic Rock Radio. We didn’t know, didn’t in our wildest dreams, or my wildest dreams, think that would be number one.

“That was about as far out as I’ve gone being stripped down. There seems to be, I think, a vacuum and arena rock sounds like arena rock, and then there’s music. And then there’s country, and then there’s music again, and then there’s product and there’s what people expect. And then there’s music. And they’re two entirely different things. So I’m trying to fill up the hole in the middle.

Waite, who lives in Santa Monica, spends time in Nashville performing and recording.

“In my heart of hearts I would like to go back to the album that I made in ’96 which is “When You Were Mine.” I’d like to do Volume 2 of that because that was really I think the best album I’ve made. It was a dark album. “The Suicide Life” on there and like I said, “Bluebird Café,” and “Imaginary Girl.” There’s all these great songs which are sort of like English version of storytelling, really,” Waite said.

“So I think at this point we are going to rock as hard as absolutely possible. Until the wheels fall off and then I’m going to go and make an acoustic album I think is in the back of my head. But I have no idea - if you ask me tomorrow, I might just stand there and rock till I drop, you know? I do everything on the spur of the moment,” he states.

It’s working for you, I tell him.

“Thank you,” he says.

I ask him a truly cliché question, but I have to do it: Where does he find his inspiration? We all look for inspiration in our lives. His career, which spans some 40 years, depends upon his finding new reasons to write songs. He stops me from finishing the question.

“I have no idea how I do what I do. It might come off sounding naïve, it might seem coy - but I’m neither.

“I think I’ve learned how to live my life in a way that I can get through it, but I have no idea. I have no map. I’m not - and couldn’t be - insincere. I think that’s probably been my biggest downfall and the biggest plus. I think people recognize me struggling to tell the truth in whatever medium I’m working in. And walking away from the spotlight when it doesn’t please me.

“I’ve never done it for the money and I’ve had a very exciting life. And even when the lights went out and I had no money and no record deal, I still had music,” he said.

It sounds entirely like music is Waite’s first love. It’s his medium to tell stories. And when he’s not writing them down, he spends his time reading.

“I tend to go off. I read the papers and I watch the news. The world has never been as messed up as it is right now. If you’re looking for inspiration – I mean, the inspiration is that in the middle of all that you can fall in love with somebody and you have a microcosm of the universe and a family, but the world (outside) is coming apart.”

And so we’ll be there, in our own microcosm, Sunday night with John Waite and Night Ranger.

The show starts at 7 p.m. Tickets are $48.50 & $38.50.

For more information, see

<http://www.kewadin.com/events-&-promotions/p/item/462/time/2989>