

CONCERT SERIES: Rusted Root opens this year's concert series

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Rusted Root isn't exactly unfamiliar with playing in front of Western New York crowds. The Pittsburgh-based jam band has played in Buffalo, Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda in recent years. Friday, the group finds its way to Lockport to kick-start this year's Molson Canal Concert Series. According to Michael Glabicki, the lead singer, guitarist and founder of Rusted Root, the crowds in the area are always ready to rock. "We love (Western New York), because it kind of feels like a second home to us," Glabicki said. "Just the energy of the audience feels old school to us."

Rusted Root's sound is heavily influenced by world music — some of the group's rhythms wouldn't be out of place in African or Latin music. The group's songs also allow for plenty of interpretation. According to Glabicki, a Rusted Root concert is going to be something different each time. "Each night we bring something different to it," Glabicki said. "We can interpret it differently each night."

Rusted Root's first album, "Cruel Sun," was released in 1992. The band's breakthrough came with the release of its major-label debut, 1994's "When I Woke." "When I Woke" gave Rusted Root its two biggest hits: "Ecstasy" and "Send Me on My Way," which hit the Billboard Hot 100 in 1995. "Send Me on My Way" has also been used in various movies, such as "Ice Age" and "Matilda."

The group continued to release new albums through the 1990s and into this decade before taking a long break — seven years between studio albums. The group's most recent release is this year's "Stereo Rodeo." While the band continued to tour periodically during its studio hiatus, taking a break from recording new material allowed the band to regroup and refocus, Glabicki said. "I think it was entirely necessary," he said. "We've been together 20 years. We didn't decide, we didn't talk about it — it just sort of happened." Glabicki and other band members took the time to create solo work before returning to the studio with a new purpose for "Stereo Rodeo." "I think everybody came with a lot of new energy," Glabicki

said. The new album features more intimate moments and quieter dynamics than the older Rusted Root albums, which is by design, Glabicki said. "(We) decided to bring that music to Rusted Root," he said. "... Everybody kind of learned how to pull back." The new album features a cover of "Suspicious Minds," most notably performed by Elvis Presley. Rusted Root arranged the cover before a live show and played it on the same night. "The response was so fantastic," Glabicki said. "(We said) we kind of have to put it on the record." "Studio Rodeo" and the group's 2004 live album, "Rusted Root Live," were both released on the band's independent label Touchy Pegg. "It's great," Glabicki said of going independent. "I wish we would have done it sooner. The way the band functions, we really don't need any outside input." The band's free-flowing live show features a mix of both older and newer material, Glabicki said. As for the future of the band, Glabicki expects it to be long-lasting. "I think music is the way we stay present in the world, I think for all of us," he said. "I think it's almost like a spiritual practice for us. Rusted Root is a great ritual for us." The band is already working on a new album, which should be released sometime next year. "Our juices are flowing," Glabicki said. "We're set up for another 10 to 15 years."

For more information on Rusted Root, check out www.rustedroot.com.