



POSITIVELY DIVISION STREET

By Rich Larson

Ok, let's play a game. This'll be fun.

Close your eyes and think Christmas music. Then open them back up and keep reading.

What did you think of? Some people probably thought about sitting in church on Christmas Eve singing "Silent Night." I'm sure more than one of you reading this thought about singing in the St. Olaf Christmas Festival. Maybe some of you thought about that really cheesy muzak they play at the mall while you're out buying presents. I'm a child of the 80s, so usually the first thing that pops into my head is either the Band Aid video for "Do They Know It's Christmas?" or the kid singing Christmas carols wearing the bunny suit in "A Christmas Story."

TRAILER TRASH

But, I'll bet there isn't a single one of you that thought of the "Ugly Christmas Sweater Polka."

"I just wrote it," Nate Dungan, the frontman of **Trailer Trash**, tells me. "This is going to be great. There are all these ugly Christmas sweater contests now. It's like ugly is the new black."

By now, most of you know who Trailer Trash is. They are one of Minnesota's most celebrated honky-tonk bands. Twenty years ago, these six guys, already veterans of the Twin Cities music scene, came together because they just wanted to play great music for people, without all the BS that goes along with trying to become rock stars. "We don't care about the music business," says Dungan. "We just want to have fun." So, they found themselves a residency at the legendary Lee's Liquor Lounge, and have been doing just that pretty much ever since. "They are honky-tonk legends," says KYMN Radio host **Jessica Paxton**. "Definitely one of my very favorite bands, hands down."

Along the way, they have created a legion of fans, many of whom are right here in the Greater Cannon River Valley. Heck, one of the guys in the band, **Randy Broughten**, even lives in Northfield. "I went to Carleton for a while," says Dungan, "so I know how great it is down there. Northfield is a really fun place to play. There are so many music fans down there that are hungry for some top quality



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entertainment.” And that is why, with Paxton’s help for the second year in a row, they will be at the **Grand** this month to present their annual holiday extravaganza, “**The Trashy Little Christmas Show.**”

The show is equal parts holiday excess, honky-tonk schtick and tongue-in-cheek satire. “It just developed from the shows we were playing at Lee’s,” he says. A few years into their residency, Dungan and his cohorts started thinking about reworking some old Christmas songs, and putting their own spin on them. Soon, instead of the Golden Earring classic “Radar Love,” they were playing “Reindeer Love.” Someone else realized that you could take the old classic “Do You Hear What I Hear?” and set that to the Kinks’ “You Really Got Me.” From there, the show has evolved into a major holiday event. This year, they’ll present the show at Lee’s a half dozen times. They’ve also already sold out the Rochester Civic Arena for the second year in a row. “People really love the show,” says Dungan. “It’s an irreverent, fun and rockin’ take on Christmas.”

Irreverent is a great word for it. Spectacle is another. This is a show guaranteed to make even the most stoic Norwegian Lutheran Minnesotans lose their inhibitions. It’s like going to one of those old-fashioned holiday office parties, without the danger of drunkenly hugging your boss or accidentally making out with a co-worker. Last year’s show at the Grand featured – among other things – the longest conga line I’ve seen outside of Las Vegas. One upstanding local gentleman (and you know who you are) wound up wearing a kind of holiday bedecked sombrero thing that may as well have been a lampshade. And then there’s the Jingle Stick, a magnificent, yuletide thyrus covered in holiday cheer and jingle bells. Audience

members are invited to jump onstage and bang on the thing if they feel so moved. “Yeah, the Jingle Stick is the world’s greatest interactive party toy,” Dungan tells me. “It can be a lot of fun. It can also be a disaster.” It’s not really a show for the kids. This is mommy and daddy’s time to go visit Santa Claus.

(It should be noted here that the band also does an annual family friendly matinee show at the Cedar Cultural Center in Minneapolis. This year, that show is set for Dec. 9.)

“These guys are musical maestros and a ton-o-fun,” says Paxton. “They consistently put on a fantastic show. I guarantee you’ll be tapping your toes and shaking your hips all night long. Combine great musicianship, a whole bunch of razzle dazzle, and a super fun twist on the holidays, and you’ve got the perfect recipe for celebrating the season.”

Don’t tell me you aren’t going because you don’t like country music. This show transcends taste, believe me. Go, and let it be a respite from all the stress that can build up during the holidays. Let the guys in Trailer Trash remind you that this is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, in their own sassy and cheeky way. So, go get your tickets, and don’t forget to wear your ugly Christmas sweater.

The Trashy Little Christmas Show is Friday, Dec. 14, at the Grand Theater and Event Center in Northfield. Doors open at 7pm, music starts at 8pm with an opening set by the Rice County All-Stars. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. More info and advance tickets available at KYMN Radio (kymnradio.net) and online at thegrandnorthfield.com.

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