

SUPER DIAMOND

The Neil Diamond Experience

"I've met them and I have been to their shows, they're wonderful!"

Neil Diamond to Katie Couric on the Today Show, November 9, 2005

"Q. Super Diamond honors him..."

"A. Who is Neil Diamond?"

Question on Jeopardy, May 20th, 2005

San Francisco's Super Diamond has become one of the most popular live shows at major nightclubs, theaters, ballrooms and public events throughout the United States. For over a decade the band has consistently performed sell-out shows at venues such as Irving Plaza in New York, 930 Club in Washington D.C., Bimbo's in San Francisco, and House of Blues venues in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, Cleveland and Dallas to name but a few.

At these venues Super Diamond has generated an exuberant audience response previously unheard of for a tribute band. Many would say that Super Diamond has transcended the label of "tribute band" by passionately immersing themselves in Neil Diamond's huge repertoire and delivering a high-octane show of unforgettable classics such as *Cracklin' Rosie*, *Sweet Caroline*, *Forever in Blue Jeans* and many others.

Super Diamond has also performed at landmark venues and events such as Hollywood Bowl, Taste of Chicago, Fenway Park in Boston, Coors Field in Denver and numerous fairs, festivals and corporate celebrations across the country and overseas.

Super Diamond front man *The Surreal Neil*, Randy Cordeiro, astonishes audiences with his live interpretation of the "real Neil." Randy created the charismatic character when he discovered he had the uncanny ability to capture not only Neil Diamond's voice, but also his mannerisms and performance style. Randy formed Super Diamond with founding members Matt Tidmarsh (bass guitar), Rama Kolesnikow (keyboards), and his childhood friend James Terris (keyboards) and soon after attracted the stellar talents of Chris Collins (guitar) and Vince Littleton (drums). With a

dedication to performing a dazzling, rockin' show and a reputation as one of the best live bands in the country, Super Diamond continuously draws full-capacity crowds and has a loyal, dedicated and ever-expanding fan base that bridges generations.

Super Diamond has caught the attention of major media publications such as Rolling Stone Magazine, Spin Magazine, New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Washington Post and LA Times. The band has been featured on CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, Comedy Central and interviewed for VH1's Behind the Music-Neil Diamond Episode. In November 2008 Super Diamond was seen by millions when they were the musical guests on The Late Show with David Letterman.

Super Diamond's dream came true when Neil Diamond joined them on stage for a surprise appearance at the House of Blues in Hollywood. A moment of endorsement that swelled the band members' hearts and stunned the audience that night. Neil Diamond also praised the band when questioned about the success of Super Diamond by Katie Couric and Larry King on national television. Super Diamond was fortunate to be joined on stage by Neil Diamond a second time, at the premiere party for the movie *Saving Silverman* and has been delighted over the years to bring on stage current and former members of Neil Diamond's touring band.

Super Diamond delivers a glittering, smoke-filled show performing Neil's power ballads and up-tempo hits with unrestrained enthusiasm. The show is pure entertainment - classic music combined with fun, energy and passion - creating nostalgia for the good old days and excitement for today's generation.

For further information please call Daniel Swan (510) 655-7926.

Press articles can be downloaded and printed out by going to:

<http://www.superdiamond.com/press.html>

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Super Diamond Is Surreal McCoy

By M.R. REES

Washington Times May 6, 2004

February 2001 marked a postmodern high point in the history of the entertainment industry: Providing the music at the Hollywood premiere party for the film "Saving Silverman," which features Jack Black and his pals playing in a Neil Diamond cover band, was a real-life Neil Diamond cover band, Super Diamond. Joining Super Diamond on the stage was none other than the Neil himself, who crooned with his much younger and much hipper progeny through "Cherry Cherry" and "Forever in Blue Jeans."

More than three years have passed since that epic moment, but two elements of the entertainment industry remain the same: Neil Diamond still marks a cultural fault line throughout the world - equally loved and loathed - and Super Diamond continues to capitalize on his success. They do about 100 gigs a year (attracting as many as 2,500 people), and tomorrow night they bring their well-choreographed and slightly self-parodic show to the 9:30 Club.

If you're only a fan of weepy Diamond dandies like "Hello" and "Heartlight," stay home. This is not your mom and dad's Neil Diamond show, where they could wear a new pair of Hush Puppies with no worries of getting a scuff. Think of a Super Diamond show as a fun-loving, somewhat raucous white-bread fraternity party for the 25-to-39 set.

The master of ceremonies is, of course, Super Diamond's lead singer, Randy Cordero, aka "Surreal Neil" Cordero, who sounds more like Mr. Diamond than he looks like him, and compensates by outfitting himself and the band in vintage Diamond-style sequins, bell bottoms and platform shoes. He has described the band's concerts as "Neil Diamond on steroids," and the group sticks to the pre-'82 Diamond tunes that lend themselves to dancing, drinking, and singing.

Given the band member's musical influences (Rush, Scorpions, Van Halen), they mischievously infuse the occasional Diamond song with 10- to 15-second riffs of such tunes as "Tom Sawyer," "Rock You Like a Hurricane" and "Runnin' With the Devil." For 30-something Diamond fans who cling to those songs with as much passion as their high school

lettermen's jackets, Super Diamond will hit your sweet spot.

Your average job placement service does not typically post listings for full-time employment as the lead singer of a Neil Diamond tribute band. How did Surreal Neil land the gig?

Mr. Cordero says he was a Diamond fan during his childhood - at 38, he's old enough to have listened to him on eight-track - but heavy metal got the better of him.

"When I was 12," he says somewhat wistfully, "I didn't know anyone my age who listened to Neil Diamond." However, in 1989 this amateur musician found himself drawn back to the man Rolling Stone dubbed "the Jewish Elvis," and on a lark he started performing solo at clubs and parties. The act gained popularity, and Mr. Cordero eventually hooked up with other San Francisco-area musicians also willing to confess they were fans of the Man. Faster than you can say, "I Am ... I Said," Super Diamond was born.

Eleven years later, the soft-spoken Mr. Cordero insists he still loves what he does - Super Diamond has been his full-time gig since 1998 - but he doesn't sugarcoat it.

"When I tell people my job," he says, "60 percent of them tell me they hate Neil Diamond."

Not Quite The Real Thing but Stars Just the Same

By DAVID BERNSTEIN *New York Times*

September 30th, 2003

If there weren't enough Elvis impersonators out there, now there are plenty of Bonos, Bruces and Blondies, not to mention Madonnas, Meatloafs and Marilyn's (as in Manson).

They're all part of a growing tribute-band scene, which provides some consolation (or not) for musicians who dream of being rock stars but can't and for fans who can see carbon copies of their favorite artists — especially some defunct older acts — usually at a fraction of the cost of the real thing.

Overlooked for years in rock-music circles and most often dismissed by critics as schlocky Las Vegas lounge acts, tribute bands are increasingly becoming headliners at nightclubs, concert halls and state fairs, all of which see them as lucrative draws. They span the musical alphabet, from Abba to ZZ Top. There are dozens of Beatles tribute bands alone.

Of course like their first cousins, cover bands — which perform the songs of many artists without trying to impersonate them — most tribute bands languish in bar-band anonymity. But a handful, like Super Diamond, a Neil Diamond tribute band that tours nationally, have become enormously successful and have achieved pseudo-stardom in their own right.

Super Diamond, a San Francisco-based sextet, was formed 10 years ago as a novelty act fronted by Randy Cordero, better known as Surreal Neil, a 38-year-old singer-songwriter whose uncanny impersonation of Mr. Diamond's throaty, baritone voice is, well, surreal. The band regularly fills midsize concert halls around the country, including Irving Plaza in Manhattan and the House of Blues in Hollywood, and commands fees of up to \$20,000 a performance and ticket prices as high as \$30 apiece, said Daniel Swan, the band's agent.

For such bands there is no radio time or royalties from album sales (although some bands sell CD's of their live performances at concerts), so they rely solely on touring. Super Diamond plays about 120 shows a year around the country — from nightclub concerts to corporate parties and weddings. The band is scheduled to play two nights at Irving Plaza on Oct.

17 and 18.

The tribute phenomenon has even had an offshoot on television. The Fox network just concluded a short run of the reality talent show "Performing As," an amateur karaoke competition where celebrity impersonators mimicked stars like Britney Spears and Elton John and competed for a \$200,000 grand prize.

Tribute bands are also featured at state fairs and summer festivals. No less than a dozen Beatles look-alike tribute and cover bands performed in Cleveland last month during "Abbey Road on the River," an annual festival held along the banks of the Cuyahoga River in the city's Flats neighborhood.

On any given night in most cities, fans are likely to find tribute bands headlining nightclub shows. Randy Fibiger, a talent buyer for the House of Blues clubs in Hollywood and Las Vegas, said that "Super Diamond is definitely topping the list of tribute bands right now."

The onus is not on the tribute bands' to worry about the use of other people's music. Establishments like the House of Blues or any business that uses licensed music must pay yearly fees to music performing-rights organizations like the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (Ascap) and BMI (Broadcast Music Inc.) for the right to perform copyrighted music. These groups represent songwriters, composers and lyricists.

Lenny Mann, a computer programmer and musician from Ventura, Calif., who created a popular tribute band resource Web site, Tribute City (www.tributecity.com), said nearly 1,100 bands had registered on his site since he started it two years ago.

"I don't see a week that goes by that a new band isn't registering," said the 44-year-old guitarist, who doubles for Jimmy Page, the famed guitarist from Led Zeppelin, in his tribute band, Led Zepagain.

Despite his success with Super Diamond, Mr. Cordero, whose true passion is his original music band, Tijuana Strip Club, admitted he had mixed feelings out the genre he helped popularize.

"Even though I'm in a cover band, it hurts me to see so many cover bands popping up all the time," he said. "People just go and support cover bands

and not original bands. It's sad. I guess I just have myself to blame."

Rod Leissle, a founding member of Bjorn Again, an Abba-inspired group that tours internationally, says there are about 150 Abba tribute bands in England alone.

"There are so many tribute bands," Mr. Leissle said by phone from London, where he lives. "I think everybody is tripping each other up." What's worse, he added, "we've been blighted by people going: 'This is easy money. Who are we going to imitate? Oh, the Rolling Stones? O.K.'"

Bjorn Again is among the most successful groups on the tribute circuit today. Founded in Melbourne, Australia, in 1988, the act is now a widely popular franchise with five touring companies in England, Europe, Australia and North America. All of the bands combined have played more than 3,000 shows in about 50 countries, Mr. Leissle said.

Mr. Cordero and the members of Super Diamond say they stand out above the clutter of tribute bands because they do not merely try to be a facsimile of their muse; instead, they say, they use Mr. Diamond's songs to create their "own" music.

Calling its act "Neil Diamond on steroids," Super Diamond interprets Mr. Diamond's pop tunes with heavier guitars, mixing in contemporary riffs by Guns N' Roses, Kiss and AC/DC, and with an alterative-rock tone.

"We've taken the rock aspect of Neil Diamond and pushed that to the extreme," said Rama Kolesnikow, Super Diamond's keyboardist. "I think we're even more original than some original bands."

Among the Neil Diamond — and indirectly, Super Diamond — devotees at the House of Blues in Chicago one night last month was Erich Muller, the Chicago-based, nationally syndicated disc jockey. For Mr. Muller, 37, the show was a nostalgic trip; his first live concert, he said, was Mr. Diamond's "Headed for the Future" tour during the mid-1980's.

One Super Diamond fan is Mr. Diamond himself. The 62-year-old Grammy Award-winning pop singer has twice appeared onstage with his impersonators, the first time a few years ago when he surprised them before their show one night at the House of Blues in Los Angeles.

"It was amazing," Mr. Cordero said. "I remember he said to us, 'Thank you

for doing what you're doing,' and I said, 'Thank you for not suing us.' " Then onstage Mr. Diamond and the band of pretenders played "I Am . . . I Said."

"I felt a little more validated, somehow," Mr. Cordero said of the experience. Despite their success, the members of Super Diamond and other tribute musicians interviewed said they were still regarded by many in the music world as a maligned underclass, although in recent years the lines between original musicians and tribute players has become more blurred.

Tim Owens, a part-time office supplies salesman near Akron, Ohio, and lead singer of a Judas Priest tribute band, broke the music genre's barrier in 1997 when he replaced the real heavy metal band's original lead singer, Rob Halford, after he had quit to pursue a solo career.

Mr. Owens's rags-to-rock-star story inspired the 2001 film "Rock Star," with Mark Wahlberg. But in July Mr. Owens was replaced by Mr. Halford, who rejoined the heavy metal band for its upcoming 30-year anniversary concert tour and a new album planned for next year.

Eric Michaels, a Paul McCartney impersonator in American English, a Chicago-based Beatles look-alike band, said critics of the genre were missing the point. "It's all about entertaining people," Mr. Michaels said. "People need to have the Beatles in their lives; they have a longing to see them. We help them get that thrill."

As for anyone who mocks tribute bands, Mr. Michaels said, imitating Paul McCartney's thick Liverpudlian accent, "Fooyey on them, you know?"

As the growing brigade of tribute bands rises, imitation is the sincerest form of success.... James Hebert

The San Diego Union Tribune 3/11/2001

He has the sequins on his shirt and the earnestness in his eyes. He has the grand, sweeping stage gestures and the gruff, honeyed voice. He has the swingin' five-piece band. Most of all, he has the songs: "Cracklin'Rosie," "Sweet Caroline," "Love on the Rocks."

This man, though, is not Neil Diamond, and no one packed into a steamy Pacific Beach nightclub on a cold February night believes he is. Not even the chairs.

He is, instead, Randy Cordero, a 36-year-old-ex computer engineer better known to fans as Surreal Neil, leader of the San Francisco band Super Diamond.

Generally speaking, glory does not await those who don spangled lamé and perform homages to grandfatherly pop stars.

But Cordero and his band, which formed eight years ago, have built a devoted following and a busy career: The week before the Cannibal Bar concert, Super Diamond played two nights at New York City's Irving Plaza. Such is the act's cachet that last December, the Real Neil himself dropped in unannounced to perform with Super Diamond at an LA show.

Super Diamond-at the moment, anyway - is the biggest success story in what is perhaps pop music's oddest subclass: the tribute band. And tribute bands seem to be sprouting faster than acts for them to emulate.

On top of that, the current comedy "Saving Silverman" revolves around a fictional Neil Diamond tribute act called Diamonds in the Rough. And this fall will see the release of "Rock Star," a movie loosely based on the true story of Ripper Owens, a singer in a Judas Priest tribute band who was recruited to become the new vocalist for the real Judas Priest.

For all their hard-core fans-- and hard-core belief systems--few tribute bands achieve quite the level of popularity as Super Diamond.

Lead singer Cordero was recently awarded the Silver Hammer trophy -- the Oscar of the tribute world -- by the Tribute Band Voting Academy,

headed by Web-site honcho Howard Fineman.

"He is a true example of taking it to the next level, I think," Fineman says of Cordero. "He doesn't try to just imitate Neil Diamond. He knows he's performing, and he's giving these fans something they need."

Cordero says that while he tries not to take Super Diamond too seriously, he still gets a thrill out of performing with the band.

"But I come from an original-music background and my original music is still most important to me. It's hard to believe sometimes I'm in this cover band.

"A lot of people in tribute bands and cover bands - I've seen a lot of them, a lot of them have played with us - say, 'Cover bands are a lot better than original music, because you make more money.' I hate to get lumped in with that. It's just a fun thing. Super Diamond is a fun band thing for a fun night out"

And at the very least, it beats his previous gig- as an engineer in the Silicon Valley.

"I was an engineer for 15 years," commuting an hour and a half each way to work, he says. "I'd get home and be worn out. Now, I basically work weekends. I have a perfect situation right now. I can work out my demos here at home."

Cordero is quick to add that Super Diamond is not a strict tribute - the band does such things as incorporate guitar riffs from Rush and AC/DC into its Diamond covers.

Nor is the band meant to be taken simply as kitsch, as a latter-day lounge version of the Real Neil.

"There's an element of that, but it's also a pretty heavy rock show," he says. "I'm not an impersonator. I'm up there being a character. I'm being Surreal Neil, not Neil Diamond. I wear sequined shirts, but I'm not Neil Diamond."

True Diamond fans, Cordero says, don't seem to mind Super Diamond's take on their icon.

"They seem to be really appreciative to us for turning younger people on to his music," Cordero says. "We probably play to 2,000 people a week, and they're mostly in their 20s and 30s."

Making money, and making a mark, in the super-saturated rock music scene is as difficult as ever, and tribute bands are one way to get some steady work.

But for most tribute acts, Fineman insists, "It's not just for money. It's the realization that they can become part of and experience this kind of love that's in the music."

That seems to be way Cordero views his Super Diamond career.

"I didn't start doing this to make money. I almost did it the opposite, like, 'People aren't going to like this but I'm going to do it anyway,' "he says.

"If I ever get anywhere with my original music, I would still have to do an occasional Super Diamond show. It's so fun. Plus, I've learned a lot from singing Neil Diamond. People laugh at that, but...