

Singer Brings Nostalgia, News About New Movie And Broadway Show

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Listening to the Tommy James and the Shondells concert at The Sharon on Tuesday brought back memories of school dances and first loves.

For Gary Bayles, of Ocala, it was a chance to see an old school friend. Bayles came to the concert wearing a black T-shirt that said "Niles High School," which was where lead singer Tommy James went to school.

"We hung out together in Niles," Bayles said. "I was in choir with him."

"We used to listen to Tommy James and the Shondells all the time," said Verne Betlach, of the Village of Poinciana. "In fact, I think I wore out the eight-track tape that I had."

Betlach and his wife, Colleen, joked that the songs bring back memories they can't talk about.

"Sneaking out of the house, back seat of a car ... that's what it brings back," Colleen said.

"The good old fun days. Just clean fun and clean lyrics."

The band opened the concert with "Draggin' the Line" and played a number of other hits such as "Crystal Blue Persuasion," "Getting Together," "Say I Am" and "It's Only Love."

It was recently announced that James' autobiography, "Me, the Mob and the Music" is being made into a Broadway play and movie.

The book recalls the details of James' dark history with Roulette Records. When founder Morris Levy passed away, James felt bad, especially since he couldn't make it to see him.

James acknowledged that their relationship was difficult, but he wouldn't be here today without Levy.

"In the ending scene of the movie, I have an imagined conversation with Levy, and this song plays," James said, and began playing, "I Think We're Alone Now."

Recognizing the song immediately, the audience erupted in cheers.

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