

Five Decades in Business: (from left) Dean, Casey & Corey Rusch.



MULTI-OP KEEPS IT ALL IN THE FAMILY

By Stu Kearns

Freeland, Mich. – The way Corey Rusch tells it, you can blame it all on his dad.

See, his dad Dean started Rusch Entertainment in 1971 when he was a teenager. He had started a band, Ceyx, with two of his friends, and they played high school and teen dances. Soon the band began attracting attention, and shared stages with the likes of Ted Nugent, Tommy James, Sammy Hagar, Chubby Checker, Blue Oyster Cult and Bob Seger.

Dean saw potential in booking other acts, including bands and DJs, as his popularity grew, and saw demand for entertainment for weddings, corporate events, schools and other events. “He was even featured on a wedding show on TNT that had Boyz II Men perform – he provided the sound and entertained the rest of the evening,” says a proud Corey about this dad.

For Corey and his brother Casey, the DJ life began very early. “We always had the gear around with band and DJ equipment,” he says. “We played with and learned about the gear at an early age. Both Casey and I were doing teen dances at an early age, but we didn’t do higher profile or paid events until we were a little older such as weddings and corporate events.”

Corey’s first official taste of DJing occurred when he was 14, his first teen dance on a New Year’s Eve where Ceyx was playing for the main party. Younger brother Casey was also 14 when he got involved, DJing at middle-school dances. “Dean would call middle schools in the area that didn’t have dances and convince them to have a dance for a fundraiser,” says Corey, “and we’d go DJ them for free to gain experience.”

Today, all three work together in the office handling the daily operations for the multi-op—a great benefit, business-wise, Corey be-

lieves. “The biggest benefit to our family working relationship is trust,” he says. “We know we can all rely on each other for support no matter what’s going on in the office or out in the field.”

Dean’s wife Jean also works in the office. “She’s been the ultimate supporter,” says Corey. “She helps with payroll, accounting, and does other office professional tasks. And I can’t forget to mention how important Aunt Tracy, my mom’s sister, has been to the business. She’s been there since the beginning as well. She did a lot of the booking and sales, and accounting as well with Dean in the earlier years when Dean started the business in his parent’s basement.”

While they don’t market the fact that they’re a family business, it’s well known in the Great Lakes Bay Region of Michigan, a small area, that the name Rusch equates to entertainment. “A lot of our clients are word-of-mouth and customers typically catch on as they hear the last name,” he says. “In our area, everyone knows it is a family business. Dean was the band or DJ for people back in the earlier days. They’ve remembered him, and now Casey and I are DJing their kids’ weddings 30 years later. Some of these couples are having him DJ or his band Ceyx come back and play the kids’ weddings.”

On the Gear Front: for PA systems, Rusch Entertainment uses QSC Audio’s KW Series for most gigs and units from RCF’s Evox series for smaller events. For playback control, it uses Numark NS7, Numark Mixdeck Quad, Pioneer CDJ-2000 digital players and Technics SL-1200 turntables. For software, the company uses a variety of platforms, including Serato DJ, Pioneer rekordbox, Virtual DJ and Native Instruments Traktor Pro. On the lighting front, Rusch uses primarily Chauvet gear, including an array

of Intimidator Spot 350 units.

With the benefits of a family-run business, there are challenges, too. “The biggest challenge is the time it takes and requires to put into the company,” says Corey. “We aren’t able to go on many family vacations because we need someone in the office. Working every day with family can start to take away the time that we want to spend together as a family. There are times where we work 50-60 days in a row during our busy times without any days or time off.”

And how do they deal with it? Sundays is the day they typically have no gigs. So when they get together as a family they try not to talk about the business and just enjoy being together. “It’s important to find the off switch at times,” says Corey.

Whatever their formula, it appears to be working. Over the past 40 years, Rusch Entertainment has exceeded over 2,000 events each year; for 2016 they’re closing in on 2,500—a large majority of them being weddings, but with a mix of everything, such as schools and corporate events. They service all of Michigan and surrounding states, and Corey cites their recent Memorial Weekend, where they booked nearly 50 events, from Detroit to Northern Michigan and Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

Dean shows no signs of slowing down, either. “He hasn’t been showing any signs of retiring and is actually working more than when I was a kid,” says Corey. “My brother and I have both expressed interest in taking over when Dean decides to retire. We have goals of growing and expanding more perhaps to other regions.”

In five years Corey says he hopes to see Dean relaxing and the sons running the company. “We plan to grow the business he created,” he says, “and continue to provide a top quality experience and service for our clients.”