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'Let Don and Billy hear you out there'

Six-hour memorial concert celebrates two beloved Springfield musicians.

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The friends of late musicians Don Shipp and Bill Brown honored the memory of their pals the best way they knew how on Saturday: with music.

The six-hour Concert to Celebrate Their Lives brought friends, family, bands and fans together at the Shrine Mosque.

Proceeds were to be donated to the families of Shipp and Brown, who died in a house fire July 23.

Shipp, a bassist, and Brown, a guitarist, were fixtures on the local music scene, playing in various blues, rock and funk bands during the last 30 years. So it was only fitting that the city's most high-profile bands of the last three decades showed up to play.

"It's really special, and I think this is closure for a lot of these guys to honor them with music," said Brown's ex-wife, Cathey Brown.

"It's what Don and Billy would have wanted."

Organizers said about 1,200 advance tickets had been sold by Saturday, and they were hoping for strong walk-up sales at the box office.

That appeared to have worked, because the venue was filled with cheering fans by the time the Ozark Mountain Daredevils closed their set with "It'll Shine When It Shines."

Many of the fans came out to see bands they don't often get a chance to hear, such as the Ozark Mountain Daredevils, Fools Face and the Misstakes, a group Brown co-founded.

The Daredevils were the reason Dawn Strod of Springfield bought her ticket. She last saw them 18 years ago in Kansas City.

But she said she was also happy to support a good cause, and was rocking out in the front row to the music of opening band Benefit of a Doubt.

The pop-punk group features Brown's two sons, 16-year-old guitarist Cooper and 14-year-old drummer Dillon.

"They were fantastic," she said just after the band's short but energetic set.

"A little punk. They were awesome."

A few minutes later, Cooper was short of breath and clutching his side



Michael "Supe" Granda (center) plays with Bo Brown (right) of Howie and the Hillcats and members of Supe & Sandwiches at the Concert to Celebrate Their Lives, in honor of musicians Don Shipp and Bill Brown, who died in a July house fire. The concert featured the city's most high-profile bands of the past three decades, including the Ozark Mountain Daredevils, Fools Face and the Misstakes.
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Cooper Brown, son of the late Bill Brown and a member of Benefit of a Doubt, tunes his guitar before the concert starts.
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M-Dock's Howard Cotner gets the crowd going at the Shrine Mosque.



Brown



Shipp

backstage after bouncing around, singing and playing guitar for the largest crowd Benefit of a Doubt has ever played to.

"I think we were all overwhelmed," he said between gasps.

For the older musicians involved, the show was both a labor of love and a reunion of sorts.

As harmonica player Clay Goldstein observed, "Did you ever see a rock concert with so many hugs?"

Guitarist Terry Wilson, a Springfield native who moved to Hollywood 23 years ago, flew in from the West Coast to play guitar with the Misstakes in Brown's place.

He was a mentor to Brown in the 1970s.

"It's almost like it's a reunion to end all reunions," said Wilson, a composer and music editor for Hollywood films.

Out in the audience people sang along, dance and clapped with groups like the M-Dock Band, Howie & the Hillcats and Supe & the Sandwiches.

A large banner featuring Shipp and Brown performing, bass and guitar in hand, hung behind them on stage.

"Hey, everybody clap along with us," said M-Dock lead singer Howard Cotner as his group broke into a cover of U2's "Angel of Harlem."

"Let Don and Billy hear you out there."

Cotner, who was also one of the event's organizers, said the day was an emotional one for everyone involved.

"You could see, especially when we hung that banner, a few tears in the guys' eyes," he said.

As M-Dock played Sly & the Family Stone's "Dance to the Music," a few tears rolled down the cheek of Margret Fannell, Shipp's sister.

She admitted it was not easy for her to be at the concert, and she also stressed the event's importance to her family.

"We just appreciate the support and the things they've done for my brother and Bill Brown," she said.

"And bless this crowd for their response. This is something we will never forget."



The M-Dock Band guitarists jam out at the Concert To Celebrate Their Lives. Proceeds from the concert were to be donated to the families of musicians Don Shipp and Bill Brown.
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Want to help?

Donations to the official memorial funds for both the Brown family and the Shipp family can be made at any Bank of America location.

Make donations to either the Bill Brown Family Fund or the Shipp Family Fund.

Use the specific titles of the funds when making a donation.