

Belmont Shore’s Gregg Young adds upbeat anthem

By **AMY ORR**
CONTRIBUTOR

Like man entertainers, Gregg Young, a homegrown Long Beach musician and songwriter based in Belmont Shore, lost loads of gigs, including the iconic Dome Arclight Entertainment Center in Hollywood, when the coronavirus pandemic hit.

But Young finagled another way to continue to play. He brushed off one of his old tunes to spruce up, aiming to celebrate the inevitable national recovery.

The result: The song “Together” is being rereleased now.

“We were there since the beginning,” Young said. “COVID killed the Dome, and our tenure.”

So Young turned to his community — Long Beach. Supported by grants from the Grammys’ Recording Academy, the State of California and the Long Beach Art Council, along with PPP and EIDL loans, Young turned his front yard into a stage.

With help from various members of Gregg Young and the 2nd Street Band, he launched more than 40 performances called “Concerts on the Driveway.”

Patrons would drive by or sit and watch, wearing masks, in socially distanced lawn chairs.

Vocalist Jayme Palmer joined Young for some of the shows. Prior to COVID, she toured around the world as a backup singer for Engelbert Humperdinck.

“It was such a blessing for us

musicians during a time where the opportunity to perform was little to none, and a gift to the community to experience live, uplifting music in a safe environment,” Palmer said.

During the shutdown, Young also recorded “Spreading,” a short song designed to remind people to wash their hands and wear a mask to slow the spread of the virus.

Young recorded at Long Beach’s Mambo Sound and Recording, where he said he has been working since the 1990s.

Young called the sound engineer there, Steve McNeil, an integral part of the recording team.

Recently, Young returned to Mambo for a much larger musical endeavor — his enhanced version of “Together.”

In 2017, he enhanced the sound, adding percussion by Tiki Pasillas, string bass by Anders Swanson and vocals by Felice Hernandez and Jayme Palmer.

During the pandemic, Young said he felt an urge to expand

the song even more.

“He (Young) was ready to build a grander version to match the message with the times,” McNeil said.

“It’s a natural progression,” Young said, “similar to the growth of a child or any living being. The writing is the birth, then the baby, and then the baby grows and grows and grows, becoming more complicated, differentiated, until reaching, completing itself with adulthood.”

In the 2021 iteration, vocals are remixed and horns and keyboards are added. The Grammy Award-winning Martin brothers — Scott, Stan, and Andy — play horns and Grammy-nominated Tom Zink played the organ.

This third version of the song, retitled “Together (HK)”, was released on July 4. Young said the date is perfect because the song is “a birthday present for the USA.”

“‘Together’ is a groovy, hopeful, and uplifting reminder that no matter what our differences as human beings from around



—Photo courtesy Gregg Young

WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS. Steve McNeil (left) and Gregg Young at Mambo Recording Studio.

the world, we are truly all in the experience of life and all of the goodness that can come from it, together,” Palmer said.

Hernandez agreed: “It’s acknowledging the unity of all people. We have to take care of one another.”

To learn more about Gregg Young, go to www.greggyoung.com. To purchase “Together (HK),” visit Apple Music.

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