

Triumph's Rik Emmett performs Friday

By Brock Weir

If the t-shirt has 'legend' emblazoned across its chest, Rik Emmett will wear it — albeit reluctantly.

Emmett, who co-founded the band Triumph alongside Mike Levine and Gil Moore, underscores his point, recalling a recent trip to the grocery store.

He and his wife had just settled in for a bit of a wait in the checkout aisle, when she suddenly remembered she forgot to get the chicken. It was left to Emmett to finish the job.

'I go back and grab it, and as I am taking it out, the chicken grease slops out of the plastic lid and goes all over my hands,' he says.

'So, I am walking back and am extra-grumpy and a guy comes out at the end of our aisle and says, 'Oh, my God! You're Rik Emmett, right?' Yep. 'Oh, man, this is so great to meet you. Can I just shake your hand?' I said, 'Yeah,' and I gave him all the grease. Some people see me as extraordinary in circumstances — but it really doesn't spill over into all aspects of life!'

But music is Mr. Emmett's life — and he brings his unique talents to Aurora this Friday, Aug. 24, headlining the first night of Aurora's Ribfest.

This Aurora gig is the last date this latest long-running tour, which has taken him from coast to coast, accompanied by RESolution 9.

Friday's concert will be a mix primarily of Triumph's greatest hits, peppered with the music he has developed as a solo act.

'Music is an infinite challenge, it always has been and it always will be,' he says. 'The interesting thing of it is how do you keep adjusting to the fact you can't necessarily hit the high notes that you used to hit and you can't run around and slide on your knees like a rock star? And that you don't look that good in Spandex pants anyway? What are you willing to do to try and chase that infinite quality of music, that deep spiritual value it has?'

'I think people can quite rightly say, 'Come on now, Rik, don't climb up on too high a horse. It wasn't exactly spiritual to be on MTV in Spandex pants,' but there were songs that were at the heart of what we did.'

At his heart, however, was classical guitar. He says he tried to sneak in classical guitar pieces, and maybe even a little bit of jazz here and there, to bring an 'eclectic' flair to traditional 'arena rock.'

But audiences still clamor for this arena-style rock, which can be a double-edged sword for musicians like Emmett. On the one hand, it is at the heart of what many fans want to experience at a concert, and is ultimately the bread and butter for bands that hit the road, but it can be a bit stifling for a creative artist.

'I play the songs, they're good songs, I enjoy playing them, and I enjoy being in front of an audience and giving an audience what it wants, what it likes, but there has always been a part of me that has (wanted) more, the slightly cantankerous artist who goes, 'Don't tell me what to do. I am going to let the music tell me what to do!' Then I would have to figure out how I was going to make that happen.

'At Ribfest — I am going to play the songs, we're going to rock, and everyone will have a good night.'

Rik Emmett and RESolution 9 hits the stage this Friday, August 24, at Machell Park.

For more information on the 2018 Ribfest, visit www.aurora.ca/ribfest.