

Ohioan Jani Lane dies; sang with band Warrant

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There was a lot more to Jani Lane than "Cherry Pie."

That salacious 1990 hit may be what most people best remember about the headbanging singer and his hair-metal band, Warrant. But Lane, a Northeast Ohio native, was a colorful character with varied interests.

He was found dead Thursday afternoon at a hotel in Woodland Hills, Calif. The cause of death has not been released. He was 47.

With the golden-haired, leather-clad Lane handling lead vocals, Warrant scored a string of hard-rocking hits in the late '80s and early '90s, including "Down Boys" and "Sometimes She Cries." "Cherry Pie" was a Top 10 smash.

Matt Patrick, a Houston radio talk-show host who spent 30 years in Northeast Ohio as a rock disc jockey and can still be heard every Saturday on WTAM AM/1100, was saddened by the news of Lane's death.

"Jani was an incredible talent and will be missed by me and his many fans," Patrick said via email. "I had the opportunity to talk to Jani on many occasions about the enemy we both struggled with, alcohol. Jani was one of the great front men of the metal bands of the '80s. He loved being in Warrant, loved his family, loved his music."

Lane, whose real name was John Patrick Oswald, was born Feb. 1, 1964, in Akron. When he was 6, his guitar-playing older brother, Eric, gave Lane his first drum kit and introduced him to the Beatles' "Rubber Soul" album, according to a self-penned bio on Lane's website.

From a young age, Lane was passionate about rock 'n' roll. He cited Led Zeppelin, Judas Priest and Queen among his formative influences. Before Lane was even in his teens, he adopted the stage name Mitch Dynamite and started sitting in with bar bands. He eventually took up guitar and piano and honed his chops in Cyren, a local group.

He also excelled in sports, playing football, basketball and soccer.

Lane developed a taste for musical theater, too. At Field High School in Brimfield Township, he appeared in "The Pajama Game" and "Show Boat," among other productions.

After graduating in 1982, Lane moved to Florida. He toured with a popular cover band called Dorian Gray.

Lured by the thriving hair-metal scene on Hollywood's Sunset Strip, Lane moved to Los Angeles in 1985. Following a stint in the group Plain Jane, he joined Warrant.

The group's debut, "Dirty Rotten Filthy Stinking Rich," was released in 1989. It went on to sell 2 million copies, according to the Recording Industry Association of America.

Lane was the band's chief songwriter. He penned the tender power ballad "Heaven" after his father, the late Robert Oswald, suffered a serious illness. The song became Warrant's highest-charting single, reaching No. 2 on Billboard's Top 40 chart in 1989.

A follow-up album, 1990's "Cherry Pie," also achieved double-platinum sales, spurred by the hit single of the same name.

"I've been the 'Cherry Pie Guy' ever since," Lane once said.

He married Bobbie Brown, the actress from the "Cherry Pie" video, in 1991. They divorced two years later.

Lane and Warrant parted ways following the release of the 1992 album "Dog Eat Dog." By then, grunge was all the rage, leaving Warrant and other glammy heavy-metal groups in the dust.

Lane put out a solo album, "Back Down to One," in 2002. He also reunited with Warrant occasionally for various recording projects and tours. In recent years, Lane was arrested for drunken driving and appeared on the VH1 reality series "Celebrity Fit Club." He filled in on vocals with Great White, too.

Despite Warrant's commercial success, the band was dismissed by many critics. "I don't care what critics call us," Lane told The Plain

Dealer's Jane Scott during a 1991 interview, speaking by phone from a hotel where he was checked in under the pseudonym Bud Light. "We're a fun band, but we have serious thoughts in our songs, too," Lane said. "You need both sides."

Survivors include two daughters from two different marriages.

Information from Plain Dealer reporter Michael Heaton and the Associated Press was used in this story. To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: jsoeder@plaind.com, 216-999-4562

- **Caption:** Lane

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