

Music keeps summer hot in Sisters

Sisters' music-filled summer continues in August.

The family-friendly Food Cart Garden at Eurosports welcomes Central Oregon favorites The Quons on Friday, August 4, performing their originals and covers with Linda's big vocals and Mark's guitar. Eurosports' music runs 5 to 7 p.m.

Central Oregon country-folk-Americana band Honey Don't plays on the same evening at Angeline's Bakery & Café.

On Saturday, August 5, Hardtail's Bar & Grill continues its summer of musical tributes with Erotic City — a tribute to the beloved and recently departed artist Prince.

Erotic City delivers a high-energy show that features classic Prince songs from his ultimate collection. When it's time to party like its 1999, Erotic City doesn't hold back with the high heels, the lace pants, the infamous purple coat, and all of the sexiness you will get in a Prince show.

On, August 5, at Eurosports, it's swing-time with Austin native Paul Eddy and his smooth vocals featuring original music and covers like Bob Wills, Nat King Cole and other greats, while over at Sisters Saloon it's Thomas T and the Blue Chips.

The Allan Byer Project plays August 5 at Cork Cellars Wine Bar & Bistro, at 7 p.m.

August 10, Halden Wofford and the Hi-Beams bring their Colorado twang and honky-tonk to Fir Street Park in the third of the Sisters Folk Festival's free summer concerts. Music starts at 6:30 p.m.

Brad Tisdell Extravaganza takes the stage at Angeline's on August 11.

Sisters Folk Festival favorite Beth Wood makes her debut at the Garden on Saturday, August 12, 5 to 7:30 p.m. Wood is a winner of the festival's songwriting contest and has organized the event's community show annually for several years. With her honest songwriting, charismatic stage presence and lovely vocals, she is one of the Pacific Northwest's most beloved folk singers.

Chops Bistro offers live music that night as well, with longtime Sisters musician Tony Lompa.

The folk duo NTT plays at Cork Cellars on August 12, while the Bobby Lindstrom Band takes the stage at Sisters Saloon.

BUNKHOUSE: Buckaroo life is rich — but not in dollars

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with people, "settling up" in Len's words, and I mentioned, perhaps too bitterly, that, "We can't stop what's coming."

Len just smiled: "You can't even slow it down," he said. "Just be glad you got in on a piece of it. That's the way I look at it."

One of the things I love about Len — and it's been true of so many of the real buckaroos of his generation — is how genuinely open-minded he is.

"I never wanted anybody telling me what to do, and I never wanted to boss anyone," he said.

A man like Len can say that without irony, and offer his life as proof, which makes him rare enough in the world.

In his hand-built log studio, which could easily stand in for a perfect bunkhouse on any ranch I've ever known, Len has an old FA Meaney saddle sitting on a rack. It has the WT mark on it,

meaning it was built in the Wyoming Territory, probably in the 1860s, and most likely in Cheyenne, by Frank Meaney — another legend of the cowboy underworld. He has a collection of beautifully crafted rawhide reatas — which he still ropes with — beautiful enough to make a sad-sack townie like myself cry out loud. He has a pair of big-rowelled spurs that his father traded off a Sioux Indian back in Wyoming, a rack of muzzle-loaders that he has killed bucks with, and a single skylight that throws the heavenly desert light down onto his canvas while he works.

Winters, he sits by the big wood stove in the middle of the room, turning beeswax into beautifully sculpted horses.

He has a buckaroo's hands, lithe and precise, soft in a horse's mouth, steady for brushstrokes on canvas, but hard enough in the right places to knock a rude man into next Wednesday.

Len focuses his work on the early years of the open west.

"After the automobile came in, the glamor of

cowboying went out the window," he said. "I did a lot of good cowboying, but not like you wanna draw pictures of. People come around and say, 'Well, Len, I guess you get a lot of ideas out there,' and I tell 'em I really don't because what would you paint? Somebody getting out of a horse trailer? An old black cow staring at you?"

Len wants his paintings to sell, and they have, and I'm confident he's on the edge of something much bigger, once the world finds him — but that isn't why he does it.

"The people I've associated with could count all their money without taking their hands out of their pockets," he said.

Which is the same motivation a buckaroo finds when he is moving three hundred pairs alone, miles from anywhere, up-canyon in a storm blowing sideways. Money isn't the reason a man signs up for that kind of thing. It's passion, a deep, abiding, unwavering passion.

My own grandfather begged me not to go out into the desert.

"You'll never have a pot to piss in, or a window to

throw it out of," he said.

He was right about that, and I knew it, but we both knew that in my case it wouldn't matter. You either hear the siren song or you don't. And if you look out into the desert and hear it, and chase it down, lashed to the mast like Ulysses, it alters forever the way you see the world.

What informs Len Babb's art, his drawings, paintings, and sculptures, is that siren song. He's heard it his entire life, since the day his father moved the family from South Dakota into Glendo, Wyoming, hauling one truck full of horses, and one full of cattle, and stopping every now and then to pour water on the over-heating engines.

And then Charlie Russell came into Len's life and threw gas on the fire.

Len Babb truly is a legend, and a man I am honored to have shared a few laughs with on a beautiful desert afternoon. He has heard those beautiful sirens of the outback singing in his ear, been lashed to the mast, and has sailed as close to the shores of Titan as a man in the modern era ever will.



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