

Doc Ryan serves up new music

By Jodi Schneider
Correspondent

For Central Oregon guitarist-singer-songwriter and orthopedic surgeon Michael “Doc” Ryan, it’s American Roots music, pure and simple.

Ryan has a passion for playing that “alternative country” sound — the wide-ranging genre that includes bluegrass, folk, and traditional country, sometimes mixed up with blues, rock, and jazz.

Ryan, playing acoustic guitar and harmonica, set up a livestream event and recording session with the DiRT Trio Band at The Belfry in Sisters in early June.

The Belfry in Sisters has been closed to live performances because of COVID-19 and has morphed into a recording studio for a few artists since June 2020.

Ryan told *The Nugget*, “Our Belfry experience became a marathon recording session July 22-26 where most of my third album was completed.”

David Jacob-Strain produced Ryan’s album, “Stories, Tales, Truth,” while Keith Banning at Grange Recorders was the engineer for all sessions.

Ryan noted, “I was extremely fortuitous to have David ‘off’ tour and Keith’s schedule open. Local artist Dennis McGregor and singer-songwriter Beth Wood added backup vocals to several tracks and came into the studio together. Beth had recorded a session at The Belfry earlier in June, before my livestream. We were able to talk her into coming back in.”

Ryan met Jacobs-Strain at the 2012 Sisters Folk Festival Songwriters Academy. Jacobs-Strain was one of the performing artists and song academy instructors.

“We met and played one of my original songs at the song academy,” Ryan said. “I was recording my first album at the time and I asked David if he wouldn’t mind playing on a few of my songs on it and

he agreed.”

All the performances at the Belfry were fully masked unless performing and all vocal stations were spaced well apart.

Ryan noted, “We were not able to do any gang vocals together because we needed to maintain social distancing guidelines. We set up JP Garau and his keyboards in an airplane hangar next to Sisters Airport. We would record when the fire service helicopters weren’t landing or taking off.”

Originally from Texas, Ryan moved to Bend in 1995 to work as an orthopedic surgeon. He’s been a key member of the Central Oregon music scene since the mid-2000s.

“My uncle inspired me to play guitar when I was young. Back in the 1960s in a suburb of Dallas my uncle came to live with us in our spare room,” Ryan said. “He had ridden his homebuilt motorcycle and had a Harmony acoustic guitar. He would play folk songs of that era. I later got my own acoustic guitar, playing for hours at a time. When I entered high school, I was drawn back to some of the acoustic music of Neil Young and Stephen Stills. Also, John Denver. What has defined my songwriting later in my life was having the exposure to the Texas singer-songwriters who have inspired me the most. They are not always great musicians or accomplished vocalists, but they tell an honest story from the heart. I would try to see Ray Wylie Hubbard, Jimmy and Stevie Vaughn, Jerry Jeff Walker in smaller clubs then later Robert Earl Keen, Joe Ely and others.”

Ryan has travelled with an old acoustic Guild guitar and played more campfires than stages. He draws inspiration from years of spending time outdoors on the rivers and in the mountains of Colorado and Utah.

In 2004, Ryan and other doctor friends formed the band “One Night Only.”

They began the musical event known as “Church of Neil” which celebrates the life and music of Neil Young. This event was in its 16th year and united a large part of Bend’s music community. “One Night Only” became the “Docs of Rock” and for several years they played fundraisers for nonprofit and charity events in Central Oregon.

In 2014, Ryan took a sabbatical with his family to travel the world. He intensified his musical experience by busking with street musicians in Fiji and New Zealand, performing in cafés by invitation, and recording in deep canyons in the Australian Outback. Doc and his family eventually traveled to Thimphu, Bhutan, where he discovered and played a weekly gig at the Mojo Park Bar, Bhutan’s only blues bar and venue for western music.

Ryan played with The Wychus Creek Band for eight years, performing and recording together before the DiRT Trio band was established in 2019.



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Doc Ryan’s latest album, “Stories, Tales, Truth,” was produced by David Jacob-Strain. Keith Banning at Grange Recorders was the engineer.

“I was working on getting back to a simpler setup. It was great because we could still perform, practice and record in a socially distanced setup, so the summer of 2020 was weirdly busy!”

Pre-COVID, Ryan had gigs in Sisters, Terrebonne, Bend and events in Madras, Redmond, and Tumalo. He brought his unique and original take on American music to fundraisers, ranch hoe-downs, deck parties, house

concerts and weddings.

The DiRT Trio band and The Wychus Creek Band have performed regular shows and events at The Volcanic Theatre Pub, The Les Schwab Amphitheater, The Old Stone Church, The Belfry in Sisters and the Faith, Hope, and Charity Events Center in Terrebonne.

Ryan is now playing regionally with his band bringing original and selected covers to folks virtually.



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Ivette Tijerino, the Sisters community engagement and philanthropy coordinator for St. Charles Health System, recently presented a check for their 2021 sponsorship to Sisters Folk Festival staff members Crista Munro, Brad Tisdell, Teresa Mills and Dave Ehle.