

'Beautiful Sun' will shine on the Lane County Fairgrounds

BeauSoleil, a Louisiana French cajun band, will perform on March 15

By Carl Yeh
Freelance Editor

The beautiful sun came out for students this past week, and it will come again — Louisiana French style.

BeauSoleil, the Grammy-winning cajun band whose name means "beautiful sun," will perform at the Wheeler Pavilion at the Lane County Fairgrounds on Sunday, March 15 at 7:30 p.m.

"If you're going to present cajun music, you couldn't do it without BeauSoleil," said Jim Ralph, president of the Oregon Festival of American Music, a local organization that presents American music concerts during the year.

Cajun music is the music traditionally played by the Louisiana French people, Ralph said. The instruments of a traditional cajun band are a diatonic accordion, a fiddle, a guitar and a triangle (known as a petit fer, or "small iron").

But BeauSoleil is not your regular cajun band, Ralph said. BeauSoleil has also incorporated elements of zydeco and New Orleans jazz into their songs, Ralph said.

The primary person behind the



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Al Tharp, David Doucet, Tommy Alessi, Jimmy Breaux, Billy Ware and Michael Doucet are BeauSoleil.

combination of styles is the band's lead member, Michael Doucet. Born in Louisiana, Doucet's musical past is rooted in cajun music, but he cares a lot about zydeco, Ralph said.

"On top of being comfortable with all of these styles, he writes a lot of pieces which are cajun, but they are heavily influenced by zydeco and jazz," Ralph said. "All

those influences come in, and you get a much more eclectic sound."

Ralph describes zydeco music as "more sassy" while introducing a rhythm and blues sound to cajun music. Meanwhile, New Orleans jazz is a combination of marching band sounds, some ragtime and some Latin American elements, Ralph said.

Although cajun music is now in-

ternationally popular, it was not always that way, Ralph said. "[Cajun music] was considered to be low-class music when Doucet got started in it [in the 1960's]," he said. "Lots of Cajuns wanted to distance themselves from it."

Doucet himself spent years tracking down the artists who wrote and sang on the first Cajun records, listening to their old mu-

sic and immersing himself in what was then a little-known history.

Part of the Oregon Festival of American Music's goal is to expose people to new or different kinds of music, Ralph said. "[We] introduce people who may be more comfortable with classical music or jazz to explore some new stuff," he said.

Ralph also said he believes his work has paid off. "People who were just straight symphony buffs were saying, 'Thank you, thank you' for introducing us to [cajun music]," he said.

People also dance to cajun and zydeco music — in fact, it is almost required, Ralph said. Whereas jazz is essentially "listen music," cajun and zydeco is "dance music," he said.

"There are a lot of people on the West Coast who are into zydeco and cajun music," Ralph said. "Locally, we have some really good cajun and zydeco dance instructors, including Deb Seeck."

Seeck will be coming from Salem to instruct people in a cajun/zydeco dance lesson. The lesson will be offered to all ticket holders at 6:30 p.m. at the Wheeler Pavilion.

Tickets are \$16.50 in advance and \$17.50 at the door. For more information, call the Oregon Festival of Music at 687-6526.

An 'Incident' to occur at the EMU Ballroom on St. Patrick's Day

By Carl Yeh
Freelance Editor

Star Trek has its prime directive — and so does The String Cheese Incident, a Colorado band which will be performing at the EMU Ballroom on Tuesday, March 17. The musical group lists the following prime directive in their press release: "To make people laugh and experience unearthly joy while shoving a sacrilegious mix of bluegrass, Calypso, Salsa, Afro Pop, Funk, Rock and Jazz down their tender throats."

The group, whose concerts are known as "incidents" (referring to the spontaneity of the event), formed at the "precise moment all the planets in the solar system aligned," said Sara Kelly Jones, the band's publicist.

This cosmic event was "just indicative of

the fact that some things that happen are meant to happen," Jones said. "This group of people coming from backgrounds as diverse as they are — all the pieces fit into place."

As indicated by the group's prime directive, the band mixes many different types of music. "The music is unique because the primary foundation of the music is bluegrass," Jones said.

Jonathan Zwickel, national music coordinator for the UO Cultural Forum which is hosting the group, said, "Their song structures are pretty novel. They are definitely rooted in bluegrass, but they toss in a little funk and jazz."

Jones said diversity also exists with each member of the band "if you look at everybody's backgrounds." She gave as examples

group member Michael Travis, who specializes in Latin percussion, and Michael Kang, who plays the mandolin and violin.

"Kang was trained classically," Jones said. "What you hear that sounds like an electric guitar is actually Kang's electric mandolin," she said.

Jones said she thinks this mixture of diverse talent is what makes this band unique: "It's really hard to get guys who come from so many backgrounds and mix their talents into something completely different," she said. "So many bands are built around the guitar player and the whole band follows suit. This is a purely collaborative effort from five guys with totally different backgrounds."

Zwickel added that he thought The String

Cheese Incident "is the kind of band that has an appeal in Eugene." The band has not been in Eugene in a while, but "the last time they were here was at the Country Fair, and they had huge turnout," he said.

Jones said dancing often takes place at the group's concerts, where the band passes hula hoops to the crowd. "It's definitely a dancing event," she said.

"You're not going to walk away from the show without a goofy grin on your face."

The String Cheese Incident will perform in the EMU Ballroom on Tuesday, March 17 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for students and \$12 for the general public. Tickets can be purchased at the EMU Ticket Office. For more information, call 346-4363.

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