

# FROM THE COVER

an inside look at northeast oregon's  
arts and entertainment scene

## Montana-based Band of Drifters visits Northeast Oregon

Also features special guest Bart Budwig

By Lisa Britton  
EO Media Group

NORTHEAST OREGON — Ian Thomas' Band of Drifters is an ever-changing blend of musicians he meets along the way.

"Last year I had 35 Drifters," he said. "I like incorporating local players when I can. This was my life already. I decided to roll with it and embrace it."

Band of Drifters' style is described as "modern American roots music." Thomas is based in Montana, but this week he arrives in Northeast Oregon for a trio of concerts.

The band plays Thursday at the Range Rider Saloon, 107 NW First St., Enterprise, at 7 p.m.

Doors open at 6 p.m. for Friday's concert at Baker City's Churchill Dance Hall, 3451 Broadway St. (entrance is through the parking lot off 16th Street). This show will feature a guest Drifter, Wallowa County's Bart Budwig.

Tickets for the Churchill concert are \$8 in advance at Sweet Wife Baking, MC Taco Bus and [www.churchillbaker.com/events](http://www.churchillbaker.com/events). Admission at the door will be \$10.

During the concert, food will be available for purchase from MC

Taco Bus, and beverages will be served by Copper Belt Winery and Barley Brown's.

On Saturday, hq hosts the band for an 8 p.m. show at 112 Depot St., La Grande.

Thomas started out in Tennessee but has lived in Montana for the last five years. He names Hank Williams and the early honky-tonk style as inspiration for his music.

He favors "1930s to '70s country tradition. I love that stuff," he said.

Thomas has played in Wallowa County before, but this is his first visit to Baker City and La Grande.

"I decided I wanted to head back (to Northeast Oregon)," he said. "It's right next door (to Montana)."

The number of musicians in Band of Drifters changes all the time, but he said these Northeast Oregon shows will be "between a duo and a four-piece."

Having a rotating roster of musicians has its good side, and a not so good side.

"Musically, it's pretty easy. Logistically, it's a total nightmare," he said.

But it means he gets to meet a lot of musicians.

"It's exciting — I want to meet those players," he said.

Thomas said his approach to



Submitted photo

Band of Drifters will play in Enterprise Thursday, Baker City Friday and La Grande Saturday.

performances often depends on the audience. If people are prone to dancing, the band will play classic honky-honk. If those in attendance are more of the listening type, his playlist includes mostly originals.

The Band of Drifters usually tours around the lower 48 states. "Every season is different," Thomas said.

To learn more about the Northeast Oregon shows and hear samples of the band's music, visit [www.bandofdrifters.com](http://www.bandofdrifters.com).

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