

# Pendleton Round-Up announces kickoff concert act

## Country singer Billy Currington headlines show

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Happy Canyon and Round-Up have found an act for their reopening kickoff.

In a press release, the two organizations announced they were hiring Grammy-nominated country singer Billy Currington to take the stage at Happy Canyon Arena on Sept. 11.

The press release touted his 11 No. 1 singles, including songs like “Don’t Hurt Like It Used To,”



Jack Plunkett/The Associated Press, File

**Billy Currington performs at the iHeartCountry Festival at the Frank Erwin Center on Saturday, May 5, 2018, in Austin, Texas. Currington will take the stage at Happy Canyon Arena on Sept. 11 for the kickoff concert to the Pendleton Round-Up.**

“That’s How Country Boys Roll,” and “Pretty Good at Drinkin’ Beer.” A Georgia native, Currington grew up listening to Waylon Jennings, Kenny Rogers and Willie Nelson.

Both Happy Canyon President Tanner Hawkins and Round-Up President Randy Bracher expressed excitement at booking Currington.

“Billy Currington has a great combination of high-energy crowd pleasers and relatable ballads that will connect with so many different people,” Bracher said. “He’s a great fit to kick off the week after such a crazy year.”

The Round-Up, Happy Canyon and all of their associated events were can-

celed last year during the COVID-19 pandemic, the first time Pendleton didn’t host its signature rodeo since World War II.

The Round-Up spent 2020 raising money for businesses and organizations affected by the rodeo’s cancelation and quickly committed to a comeback event in 2021. With COVID-19 restrictions beginning to ease across the state, Gov. Kate Brown has repeatedly expressed confidence that the Round-Up will meet its goal.

Tickets will go on sale on June 24 at 10 a.m., with prices ranging from \$46 to \$150. Tickets can be purchased at [www.pendleton-roundup.com](http://www.pendleton-roundup.com) or by calling 541-612-3421.

## CARS

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run by nonprofit organizations, generate money that allow the clubs to hand out gift cards to residents, buy school supplies for struggling students or donate to women’s shelters and warming stations. He noted shows such as the annual Hermiston Cool Rides Car Show attracts car owners from as far as Seattle or Portland to display their chrome-covered rides for thousands of visitors.

Lopez said the pandemic last year shut down the events, but this year, with new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they can resume as the shows take place outside, with minimal risk of spreading the virus. That’s good news for classic car collectors who call Eastern Oregon home.

“We have a lot of fun with these cars. It’s almost as if we’re in our right mind. People say, ‘Look at those guys, they’re still living like they’re in the ‘50s and ‘60s — and they’re right,’” Lund said.

Lund, who owns a modest collection of cars he’s acquired and restored over 40 years, keeps dice on every rearview mirror. But the cars he owns aren’t just for showing off. Rather, they hold personal stories of a time when drive-ins were king, a few dollars would buy a burger and a full tank of gas and cruising “the gut” was Friday night fun.

“My wife says I never get rid of anything,” he said. “I kept her for 51 years. She’s a keeper.”

Of his collection, most notable is the deep mahogany 1951 Chevrolet Bel-Air — round and sleek with plenty of chrome. It’s his wife Dixie’s favorite car. It’s also the second car he’d ever owned, though upgraded with newer mechanics and brakes, putting some serious power behind the wheel. And the pair of fuzzy dice hanging from the rearview mirror.

“You gotta have dice,” he said.

Lund gets a kick out of the reactions people have to seeing a classic roll along.

“You can’t go down the street without putting a smile on people’s faces, and that’s what it’s all about,” Lund said as he drove down Adams Avenue in La Grande. “The whole idea, for me, is bringing joy to other people, and helping them remember a much simpler, less stressful time.”

Lund stepped on the gas as he exited town and turned on to Mount Glen Road. The gentle hum of the 1951 Chevrolet Bel-Air turned to a thunderous roar as he shifted into second, then third gear. He smiled and cruised down the road.

“Yeah,” Lund said, “it’s got some power.”

Lund drove to meet fellow car enthusiast Ken Leavitt, of Island City. Leavitt, who long since has sold off most of his collection of cars — nearly 30, at one point — and now only has a Chevrolet Corvair. It was through Leavitt that



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

**Ken Leavitt and Ed Lund look through photos of classic cars that Leavitt has restored or owned, inside Leavitt’s Island City home on Friday, May 28, 2021. Leavitt, who at one point owned more than 30 classic cars, has sold most of them following his retirement, and now collects smaller die-cast replicas of classic cars, as well as restores old telephones to sell online.**

Lund was able to restore some of the cars he owns.

“We’ve been friends since 1986. He’s been helpful to me over the years, whenever I run into problems fixing things,” Lund said.

“And get you into deeper problems,” Leavitt replied.

### Car lovers

Love for classic cars, as it turns out, is rather common among Lund’s generation. Around 40 members belong to the Timber Cruisers Car Club — and those are just the dues-paying members. Many more exist in La Grande alone that have one or two classic cars sitting in a garage or barn or even in front of their house collecting rust.

It’s the latter that interests local classic car restorers such as Ken Bruce and Leavitt.

Bruce is the type of collector for whom a car rusting in a field is a personal challenge, the silent voice of a frozen engine like a siren song of yesteryear. He only needs to probe his memory to recall what the engine should sound like.

Along with restoring the mechanics of classic cars, Bruce is an especially skilled mechanic in another way — his ability to procure obscure parts for classic automobiles throughout the country is remarkable. He searched as far as Shelburne, Massachusetts, which is where he got parts for a 1966 Chevrolet Corvair he was working on. Little did he know, a car collector in California was working on the same car, only three serial numbers apart.

“I was working on that ‘66 one time and I called

up for something,” Bruce recalled, “and the girl answered — her name was Cheyenne, I’ll never forget it — and she answered and she said, ‘What can I get you today?’ and I gave her the list and she said, ‘Y’know, would it be alright if I put that on your friend’s account?’”

Bruce became cautious.

“I said, ‘Well, let’s be careful, I don’t have too many friends, and I don’t want to wear out the friends I have,’” he recalled. “‘Do you know who it is?’ And she replied ‘Yeah, you know him really well — it’s Jay Leno.’”

Leno, American comedian and TV host, is an avid collector, with some sources pegging his sprawling collection at more than 150 cars and 160 motorcycles, from a 427 Shelby Cobra to McLaren P1 supercars. Leno and Bruce had long since shared correspondence, relishing over new project cars they had been working on, and how much labor goes into restoring the classic cars to their former glory.

“They represent the ability to appreciate what we did in an earlier time,” Bruce said. “This is how we got to where we are today.”

Bruce said Leno once relayed that his restorations would cost tens of thousands to finish only to turn around and sell the car to a neighbor for a fraction of the cost.

“If you go into this sort of craft or this sort of profession, don’t ever go into it with the intention of making any money because you probably won’t,” Bruce said. “If you do, it’s going to be an exception.”

Maintenance comes with the territory.

In the past, cars came with instructions in the user manuals on how to adjust valve timings and other involved procedures, a far cry from the types of guidance you receive with a newer car. Older cars also had a certain panache, according to the collectors. The kind of style that you don’t see on newer models.

“The stylings (on new cars), really, are not good,” said Leonard Wolf, a classic car collector from Baker City, during a meetup at the Baker City Truck Corral, just off Interstate 84 in Baker City.

A few of the collectors who met for the Sunday gathering nodded in agreement. The group, which was formerly known as the Charley’s Angels due to meeting up at Charley’s Deli & Ice Cream in Baker City, has nearly a dozen members.

“There’s a few of them out there that look pretty nice,” Wolf said. “Others you can’t even tell the brand because they all look the same.”

The collectors gave varying responses to what they find appealing about yesteryear’s rides, from form to quality, but they all agreed on one point:

“Chrome,” said Ken Schuh, an avid collector and long-time car enthusiast.

“So much chrome,” continued Sandy Payton, another collector.

Lee Swiger, sitting across from Wolf, flicked through his phone while waiting for his breakfast to arrive.

“I have lots of pictures of cars on my phone,” Swiger said, looking for a photo of a DeSoto he owns. “I don’t have any pictures of grandkids, but I’ve got pictures of cars.”

### Who comes next?

Classic cars and their owners shared eras. As an older generation leaves, a question remains.

“What will kids restore as they get older? What will they like?” Lund said.

A fair few will, of course, find an interest in the cars, especially those for whom classic cars run in the family. Others, the collectors contemplated, will move on to start their own classic car clubs with now-modern vehicles.

“When they hit 50 years old, they’ll be trying to find a Datsun or a Nissan,” Swiger said.

“We’re caretakers of the cars,” Lund said. “We’re just caretakers for this time in our lives, and we’ll pass it on to somebody else. Hopefully they’ll appreciate the hobby, and hopefully make people smile just as much as we do today.”

## CATS

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Animal Control Ordinance 2021-03, mentions them at least a half a dozen times, including in section four where it states that the Union County Sheriff may “... enforce all of the county and state laws relating to the control of dogs/cats within the county, including that of making arrests.”

The proposed updated ordinance also stipulates how responsibility for cats would be determined in the event that a cat is found to be a nuisance. It states that anyone who has provided shelter for a cat and fed it for at least seven consecutive days would be deemed responsible for the animal.

Union County’s animal control ordinance was last updated about six years ago.

The Union County Board of Commissioners approved a first reading of the proposed ordinance on Wednesday, June 16. Commissioners will vote on a second reading at their June 30 meeting. If passed, the ordinance would go into effect immediately.



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