

Juniper Jam returns to Enterprise

The festival on Sept. 3 is the first since 2019

By Katy Nesbitt

Go! Magazine

ENTERPRISE — Music lovers from around Northeast Oregon will gather for Juniper Jam 2022 on Sept. 3 at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds.

Dubbed "The sweetest little music festival in Eastern Oregon," Juniper Jam showcases original songwriting of all genres from folk to rock to bluegrass.

"As far as I know it's the only all-original music fest in Oregon," said Janis Carper, festival organizer.

Coming this year is "Never Come Down" a bluegrass/Americana band from Portland. In a 2021 interview with banjo player Brian Alley he said he'd been playing bluegrass "his whole life," but fixed microscopes for a living before deciding to chuck the career, cash in his 401k, and try his hand as a professional musician.

Alley said guitarist Joe Suskind brought the now five-piece group together. In 2018, along with mandolinist Kaden Hurst, Ben Ticknor on bass and Crystal Lariza on vocals and guitar, "Never Come Down" released its first album. The band toured extensively for two years until the COVID-19 pandemic stopped live music performances.

"The pandemic made things interesting," Alley said. "I moved out to Hood River to teach snowboarding and we all taught music lessons."

Now that venues are reopened, the band is back on the road. After performing in Eastern Oregon, "Never Come Down" heads to the midwest and the East Coast,

including an appearance with "Old Crow Medicine Show" in New London, Connecticut.

"Never Come Down," along with most of the 2022 lineup, were scheduled to play Juniper Jam in 2020 and 2021. The festival was canceled very late last year due to the spread of the Delta strain. With the Small Business Administration's Shuttered Venue grant, Carper said she was able to compensate bands and the sound crew. While some of the bands were in town anyway, she arranged a mini showcase at Terminal Gravity.

"It will be great to be back at the Fairgrounds," Carper said. "Most bands are coming back, with a few additions."

Some of those returning are "Sweet 'n' Juicy," "Wanderlodge," "Rut Nut," Bart Budwig and Ashleigh Flynn.

"Since we first booked 'Sweet 'n' Juicy' they started playing in the county a lot," Carper said. "I think they are one of the most unique bands — very talented funk musicians in fruit suits. I am always blown away at how tight they are and how they can ad lib a whole song and make up songs on the spot."

Some of the new bands Carper said she is excited to host are "Siren Songs," "Ezra Rose" and "Daisy Maker."

Tracy Spring, a collaborator and former band member of Carper's, will teach a songwriting workshop Saturday morning before the festival begins.

Juniper Jam is a fundraiser for the Wallowa Valley Music Alliance, which has provided Wallowa County with music performances and music education since 2004.

For a full lineup, tickets, volunteer and sponsorship opportunities, and information on the songwriting workshop, visit www.juniperjam.com.



Contributed Photo

"Never Come Down" — a self-described "fresh grass" five-piece band from Portland — performs at Juniper Jam in Enterprise on Sept. 3.

JUNIPER JAM

Tickets are \$25 at the gate or \$20 in advance at Joseph Hardware, The Bookloft, and M. Crow, or online at www.juniperjam.com.

Admission is free for ages 12 and younger with a ticketed adult.

Gates open at 11 a.m. at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds, 668 NW First St., Enterprise.

Camping is available for \$10 per night at the fairgrounds with a festival ticket.

For complete festival information visit www.juniperjam.com.

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