

COUNTRY CROSS-OVER

FAMILIAR FACE, FRESH CHOICES AND MISSED MUSICAL OPPORTUNITIES AT OCF BY WILL KENNEDY

I'm going to take a sec and highjack this piece on 2017's OCF music lineup to complain that Lane County — and Eugene specifically — needs, nay *deserves*, a true music festival: a Pickathon, a Bumbershoot, a Treefort or, at the very least, a resurrected Eugene Celebration that settles its identity crisis, putting it at odds with itself as a community street fair versus an event focused on music worthy of drawing an audience.

But as it stands, The Oregon Country Fair is the eldest of all local happenings with a musical bent. For quite some time, however, OCF seems to have treated its music component as almost an afterthought, making lineup choices that are comfortable, reliable and familiar — not unlike OCF's current overall iteration.

Could OCF leverage its longevity and status to now and then take some musical risks with its concert billing? More performer and genre diversity? That would be nice. All too often with music and OCF things are, in the words of David Byrne, same as it ever was.

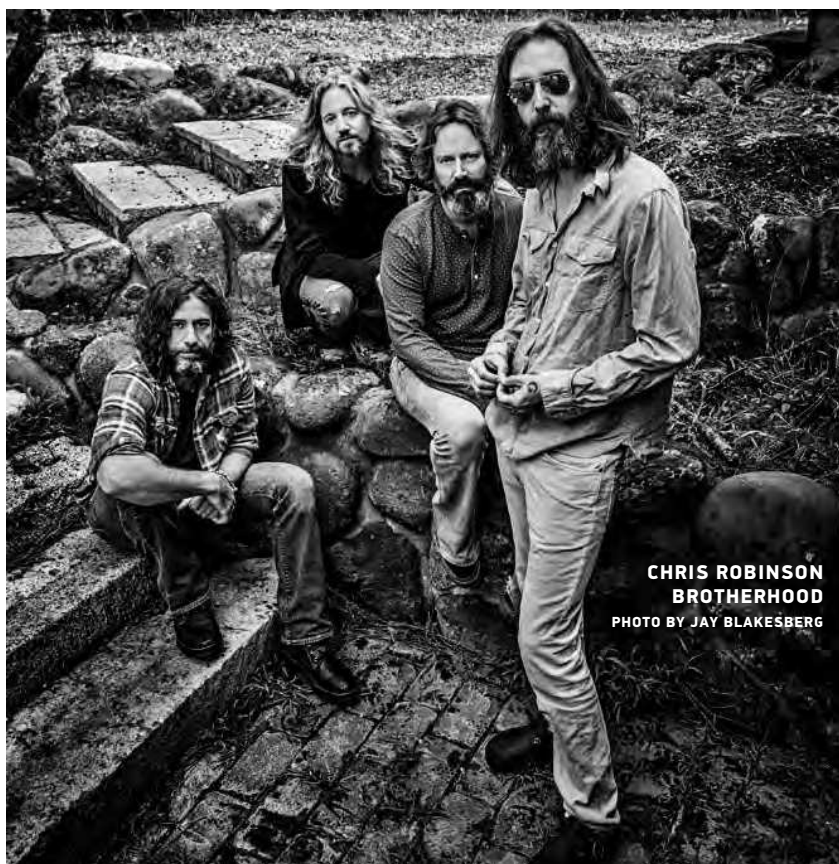
So back to OCF 2017. Surveying this year's music offerings — despite my complaints — a few things stand out. Namely, **Chris Robinson Brotherhood** performing 5:30 pm Friday, July 7, on the Main Stage. Robinson, formerly of The Black Crowes, is now on his own strange trip with a chosen fraternal gang of easygoing groove-junkies, producing stuff that's a little bit Dead, a little bit Allman Brothers and overall pretty *out there*.

And between Robinson's relatively big name, as well as the Brotherhood's consistent output, CRB seems to be one of OCF's biggest bookings in recent memory.

Elsewhere, I want to point out **Artis The Spoonman** making an appearance, first at 1:30 pm Friday, July 7, at the Daredevil Vaudeville Palace. With the recent, tragic passing of Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell — one of Soundgarden's breakthrough hits, "Spoonman," was inspired by Artis — his performances take on an extra poignancy. Artis performs several times at OCF 2017.

Also notable this year are performances from Portland singer-songwriter and world-traveling music educator **Jerry Joseph** along with his band **Jackmormons**. Joseph, a long-time fixture on Eugene area stages, performs twice at Fair: 11:50 am Saturday, July 8, on Main Stage and 5:50 pm Sunday, July 9, at Hoarse Chorale.

Also, don't miss Tahoe/Reno-based funky fellas **Jelly Bread** 3:30 pm Sunday, July 9, on Main Stage. And from Colorado, be sure to sample the vagabond soul of **Hello Dollface**, playing twice on Sunday, July 9, first at 12:15 pm on the Kesey Stage and then at 5:30 pm at Community Village.



CHRIS ROBINSON BROTHERHOOD
PHOTO BY JAY BLAKESBERG

A quick round-up of Eugene locals appearing at the Fair this year includes, among many others: **Wheels**, a Gram Parson/Flying Burrito Brothers tribute act featuring well-known local musicians, the funk-soul-disco of popular local band **Soul Vibrator** and the homegrown electro-swing sounds of **High Step Society**. Check the website for show details.

But with Eugene's music scene hotter than ever, OCF's lineup could've worked harder to reflect what its hometown has to offer.

Coming down from Portland, be sure to see **World's Finest** play "bluegrass inspired three-dimensional psytrance, funk, dub." World's Finest plays twice: 1:40 pm Friday, July 7, at Hoarse Chorale and 2:50 pm Saturday, July 8, on Main Stage.

For fans of the singer-songwriter and folk-rock genres don't miss **Johanna Warren, Ashleigh Flynn and The Riveters, Truckstop Honeymoon, Cassandra Robinson and Wynter Bynes** as well as **Joanne Rand**.

And if you like your country a little bit spazzy with an extra dose of caffeine — in other words "thrashgrassin" — check out **Whiskey Shivers** from Austin, Texas. Trust me, it's a one-of-a-kind experience. Whiskey Shivers play 5:50 pm Friday, July 7, at Blue Moon Stage and 3 pm Sunday, July 9, at Hoarse Chorale.

Also from Austin, **The Deer** — featuring vocals from singer-songwriter Grace Park — make their annual pilgrimage back to the Fair to play their endearing brand of indie-folk. ■

For more information about all these acts and more, check out oregoncountryfair.org.



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