

# Jesse Lee Falls

*He's paid his dues — now he plays his music and shares his knowledge*

Jesse Lee Falls has come full circle. His life story reads like a ballad full of highs and lows, bumps and grinds.

It's hardly a new story: an out-of-work guitar player, broke and broken — no money, no car, no home. Four years ago that was Falls.

## VERSE ONE: How low can you go

"It was around four years ago when one afternoon my buddy and I, both out of work, are sitting on his front porch drinking beer," says Falls. "I'll never know why, but suddenly I get up, go inside."

He gets on the computer and looks at Craigslist. He finds an ad from a BentBeat Productions, a recording company in Sherwood.

"It was a big ad, and it was clear that they knew what they were talking about. I've spent over 20 years studying the business of the music business," Falls says. "Bottom line, BentBeat is looking to sign singer-songwriters. I see this one opportunity, and I promise myself I will do whatever it takes to make this work. I get

my catalog of music and my demo and — remember I'm broke — hitchhike from Astoria to BentBeat's studio.

"Call it the law of attraction, or positive affirmation, whatever, I'm a firm believer," he says. "Ever since I read that BentBeat ad, every goal I've set, I've accomplished."

## VERSE TWO: He's Back!

Four BentBeat interviews, a recording con-

tract, new CDs and two about-to-be released videos: Hello, Jesse Lee Falls. On Saturday, April 18, the Jesse Lee Falls Band CD Release Party is set to rock the rafters of the Astoria Event Center. Falls and his band are celebrating their new album, "Play My Guitar." The band includes Justin Kerley, Keith Warren, Calen Uhlig, Jeff Dotter, Erin Lee Atkinson, Curtis Burnett, Shelby Youmans and Jon Parrot.

Doors open at 8 p.m., and the show gets going at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and are available at tickettomato.com, The Port of Call, by calling 503-861-3820 and at the door the night of the performance.

Falls' songwriting is reminiscent of early '70s funk: Earth, Wind and Fire with the modern appeal of Jamiroquai and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The band's sound is influenced by legendary greats Joe Satriani, Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton. Astoria's Shanghaied Roller Dolls provide some outrageous background activity in the premiering video releases. Did someone say something about mud?

Also on the evening's party agenda, the 36-year-old Falls, a former U.S. Coast Guard Coastie, hopes to share some insights with other musicians about the business of making a living making music that he's learned along his journey.

"For the most part a young musician's life is full of image and illusion. You tend to think that being discovered is putting yourself out there, often in little hole-in-the-wall places," Falls says. "You want to get the gigs; musicians need to appear to be busy. 'Here's my calendar' you say to club owners. They look at it, see it's full and are impressed. So you're out there. You slave; you grind. You're still broke. It's a common image, the struggle and strife is part of a young musician's rite of passage. But it's also how bands burn out. One of the hardest things in music is keeping any band together.

"Musicians need to think outside the box about their opportunities," Falls continues. "Television, movies, radio and commercials: Every time music plays, whether it's two seconds of background or a song in a restaurant, somebody somewhere is getting a royalty check. Some of my favorite artists aren't in the limelight, but financially they're super successful."

BentBeat Productions will be at the CD Release Party accepting demos and answering questions about its role in music producing. The recording company is looking to sign new talent.

"This night is about the Jesse Lee Band, but it's also about opening doors for other musicians," Falls says. "If a band gets an opportunity to pitch their music to a record publishing company, it's a whole new experience. I want to show other local musicians how to go about approaching something I understand. I've got to tell you, I wasn't sure I was ever going to do anything, ever going to go anywhere. Then one ad, one call! Follow your dream, but know what your dream is about. Dream the dreams, not the delusions. 20 years, that's all it took me to become an overnight success."

## Jesse Lee Falls Band CD Release Party

9 p.m. Saturday, April 18

Astoria Event Center

255 Ninth St., Astoria

tickettomato.com

503-861-3820

\$10



Jesse Lee Falls at his house in Knappa.

Photo by Joshua Bessex

# the arts

VISUAL ARTS • LITERATURE • THEATER • MUSIC & MORE

Story by MARILYN GILBAUGH