

ROCKIN' PICKLED FISH



RUSTIC VENUE ATTRACTS BIG NAMES



Photos by JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

ABOVE: The musical duo Luke and Kati, of Astoria, perform at Pickled Fish at the Adrift Hotel and Spa in Long Beach, Wash., in early June. TOP: Pickled Fish is located on the top floor of the four-story hotel.

By ERICK BENDEL
The Daily Astorian

Without rush or fanfare, the Australian guitarist Blake Noble and his three bandmates take the stage at Pickled Fish on a recent Friday evening. Even with the shades partly drawn, the cozy, rustic space on the top floor of the four-story Adrift Hotel and Spa in Long Beach, Wash., is saturated with sunlight. Couples perched at the windows gaze out at the expansive ocean-front view. The musicians ready their instruments — guitars, Dobro, drums and didgeridoo — and check their volume levels amid the clattering of silverware and the drone of conversation. “We’re doing our best not to blast your eardrums while you’re finishing dinner, because that would be really unfortunate,” Noble tells an audience sipping beer and craft cocktails with their cuisine. For the next two hours, the group lays down a set of funky, bluesy rock numbers charged with Aboriginal elements.

Atmosphere

Noble was among the first performers to play Pickled Fish when the hotel’s owners, Tiffany and



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Ezra Holbrook, left, the music booker for Pickled Fish and one of the founding members of The Decemberists, chats with venue co-owners Tiffany Turner, center, and her husband, Brady Turner.

Brady Turner, chose to add live music at the restaurant in winter 2013. A Seattle-based musician, Noble is used to playing dark, downstairs venues packed with lighting rigs and short on atmosphere. “At a normal venue, you are the atmosphere, and that’s it. And if you’re not, then it’s a boring show,”

he said. “Here, it’s all about the atmosphere. So rather than try and compete with the atmosphere, you try and become a part of it instead.” Noble has now performed at Pickled Fish almost 10 times. “It’s nice to play down at the beach, that’s for sure,” he said. Kati Claborn, a guitarist and

banjo player who, with her partner, Luke Ydstie, an upright bass player, has performed at Pickled Fish the first Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of each month for almost a year. “The room encourages the breaking down of the wall between performer and audience,”

Claborn wrote in an email. She and Ydstie, a couple from Astoria, have been active members of Blind Pilot since 2009. “It is intimate and casual.” And the venue — which can hold 150 people and usually draws between 80 and 120 for dinner shows — doesn’t charge for tickets, either.

Americana

The music booker is Ezra Holbrook, a founding member of The Decemberists who has produced albums for about 20 years and played in approximately 40 bands. He reckons that about 60 to 70 percent of the musicians that play Pickled Fish tour nationally, including Fernando, Jerry Joseph, Scott McCaughey, Tony Furtado, The Maldives, Rabbit Wilde, and The Wild Ones. Whenever possible, he tries to attract artists working in folk, country, blue grass, rock ‘n’ roll, vintage swing and other classic American genres. That someone like McCaughey — the current leader of The Minus 5, a former guitarist for R.E.M., and a big fish in the alternative rock community — would play such a small venue testifies to how well the owners treat the talent, Holbrook said.

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