



Cabell Tice

Brian Bovenizer & The Koala Cowboys' debut show at the Voodoo Room in Astoria in October.

# KOALA COWBOYS RIDE THE 'SURF COUNTRY'

Astoria band has indie-rock credibility

By JAMES DEAN KINDLE  
For the East Oregonian

When asked to give a succinct description of the sound of his backing band, The Koala Cowboys, Brian Bovenizer is quick to reply, "surf country."

It makes sense: Surfing is a popular pastime near Astoria where Bovenizer and his band hail from, and having pedal steel guitar and twangy guitar in the mix of instruments places the band in country territory.

He is also very quick to praise them as well. "I'm pretty blessed to have this band. I've never been comfortable enough to do it alone."

Considering his backing band is a Pacific Northwest indie-rock supergroup, saying he is blessed is almost an understatement: Guitarist Jeff Munger was one third of Sally Ford's former backing band The Sound Outside, bassist Luke Ydstie is a member of indie folk bands Blind Pilot and Hook & Anchor, Luke's drummer

brother Olaf has been a touring member of Portland band John Heart Jackie, and pedal steel guitarist James Owen Greenan most recently did time in the coastal alt-country band The Cedar Shakes.

The Koala Cowboys mark Bovenizer's first musical project after leaving Holiday Friends, a fellow Astoria band, in late 2012. Without a band commitment he was content to fulfill his duties as "ambassador of marketing and music ambiance" at Fort George Brewery and Public House while quietly working on a batch of his own songs in collaboration with Ydstie. He had no intention of performing the songs in a band until Ydstie asked Bovenizer to open up for all three of his solo album release concerts this past fall. It presented the perfect opportunity for Bovenizer to reach out and work with the Astoria-based musicians that he had admired.

Via Chicago

Originally from Chicago, Bovenizer

started his music career as a teenager working for Peterson Electro-Musical Products, a company specializing in high end instrument tuning devices.

"I was in charge of artist relations and marketing back when Myspace was a thing," says Bovenizer. "I redesigned the Myspace page, put up videos and made sure that the top players representing the brand were taken care of."

With Peterson being the brand of choice for many professional pedal steel guitar players, it didn't take long for him to start meeting country musicians and developing an appreciation for the genre.

"That's where I started to learn about country and folk music," recalls Bovenizer. "It wasn't till I was 19 or 20 that I learned country could be cool and it didn't have to be rhinestones and bubble gum. I got a call from Ricky Skaggs one day and almost (expletive) my pants."

Of course there were elements of Chicago's local music scene that also had an impact on Bovenizer's perception of country music. He cites John Prine as one of his primary musical influences. "Growing up in the

Chicago suburbs, he was a hero of mine. He was big in opening up alt-country, I hate to say outlaw country, but that true country that is trying to tell a story — not sell a song."

Live to tape

Bovenizer is optimistic about the future of his new band. "We're doing these shows to tighten up the songs before we head into the studio. Hopefully we can cut it live to tape, then overdub on top of that," says Bovenizer.

Although it probably won't happen for their debut record, Bovenizer is hoping to have a full-fledged professional studio in Astoria available for subsequent recordings. North Coast Range, as he has christened it, will be a turnkey studio designed for bands along with their studio engineers to escape to the coast for a weekend.

"Right now I have a temporary studio where we are demo-ing things. Late 2016 or early 2017 is a realistic timeline."

James Dean Kindle is a Pendleton musician and executive director of the Oregon East Symphony.



**9-1-WHAT?**

THE BEST OF THE WORST CALLS TO ASTORIA 911 DISPATCH

## Get down

So it is generally a good idea to stay off roofs. Whether you are a large raccoon at an apartment complex in Astoria, or idle kids at a church in Elsie, get down. Please.

Unless, of course, you are the dude walking toward Hammond in a cowboy hat, tank top and gun in a holster on your hip. You rock. You can go anywhere ...

Follow reporter Kyle Spurr on his 9-1-What? Twitter watch, where a few of the sometimes head-scratching calls to area dispatch take center stage. The full feed is at [www.twitter.com/9\\_1\\_WHAT](http://www.twitter.com/9_1_WHAT).

9-1-WHAT?

#9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{1/18 @ 8:56 a.m.} Report of a large raccoon on the roof of an apartment complex.

#Astoria

7:00 AM - 26 Jan 2016

9-1-WHAT?

#9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{1/18 @ 12:54 p.m.} Two kids were on the roof of a church and riding a wheelchair down the bank nearby. #Elsie

LIKES  
2

9-1-WHAT?

#9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{1/23 @ 2:02 a.m.} Woman says her husband has torn apart her camp stove and is refusing to give it back to her. #Astoria

7:10 AM - 26 Jan 2016

9-1-WHAT?

#9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{1/22 @ 7:30 p.m.} Woman dialed 911 to get her vehicle a jump start. She was advised to call a tow truck. #Astoria

7:06 AM - 26 Jan 2016

9-1-WHAT?

#9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{1/24 @ 11:45 a.m.} Man walking toward #Hammond in a cowboy hat, tank top and gun in a holster on his hip.

7:12 AM - 26 Jan 2016

9-1-WHAT?

#9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{1/23 @ 2:02 a.m.} Woman says her husband has torn apart her camp stove and is refusing to give it back to her. #Astoria

7:10 AM - 26 Jan 2016

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