

Country star Morgan rocks Clatsop County Fair

Headliner a treat for music fans

By ELI STILLMAN
The Daily Astorian

Big entertainment came to the small stage at the Clatsop County Fair on Thursday night, as spectators filled bleachers and set out chairs around the amphitheater to see country star Craig Morgan.

With more than 15 Country Billboard chart songs and previous sold-out tours, there was a high expectation of ticket sales. However, first year fairground General Manager Kathi Mattinen wasn't worried about people missing out on the entertainment due to space. "We could put 10,000 people up on that hillside," Mattinen said. "It's a thank you to the community for supporting the bond."

Clatsop County voters in May approved Measure 4-178, a local tax levy of 5 cents per \$1,000 assessed value each year for five years for the county fairgrounds. The measure extended a previous tax for the fair, but at a lower rate.

The community seemed to welcome the gesture with open arms, as the crowd quickly filled the bleachers before the show began. Mattinen's prediction was correct as fairgoers had no problem finding alternative seating on the grass, in folding chairs and even on fallen logs destined for Saturday's logging show.

"We haven't had headline entertainment like this in years," said Linda Brim, of Astoria. "I hope they have more."

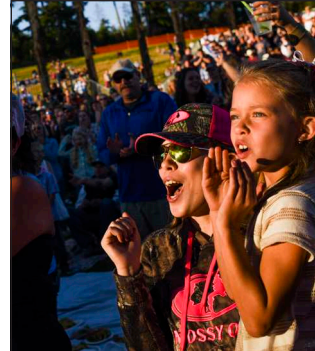
Having a big name come to the local fair was a treat for country fans who didn't need to travel far to see a show. "You get the whole staycation, you know everybody and it's affordable," said Cheryl Matson, of Astoria. Two weeks ago, Matson and her family traveled to Seattle and saw a sold-out country show at CenturyLink Field. On Thursday, she was able to sit 30 feet from Morgan and get up without worrying about losing her seat.

Many of the fans were ready to dance as Morgan and his band strummed up their first number. The set had dedicated fans on their feet and singing along. But the concert wasn't only for devout country listeners.

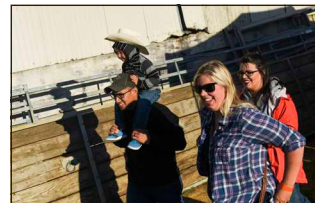
"I always tell my kids, if you have a chance to see a legend do it," said Astorian Lisa Bergerson. Out with friends, Bergerson admitted she wasn't a huge country fan, but was still enjoying the evening. "It's like a fun class reunion," she laughed as her group waved down old friends throughout the show.



Craig Morgan performs Thursday during the Clatsop County Fair at the fairgrounds in Astoria.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian
Fans cheer Craig Morgan at the Clatsop County Fair Thursday.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian
Country music fans wait for Craig Morgan to begin his performance.



Fans wait for Craig Morgan to perform Thursday during the Clatsop County Fair.

Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Gearhart fire damages garage, vehicle

The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — A house fire in Gearhart Thursday night burned through a garage and vehicle and left significant smoke and ceiling damage to the home.

Firefighters responded to the fire at 939 Ocean Court at about 8 p.m.

When crews arrived on the scene, the attached garage was engulfed in flames, according to Gear-

hart Fire Chief Bill Eddy.

The occupants, an elderly male and female, vacated the house safely and did not require medical attention.

Eddy described the garage and the vehicle inside it as a total loss, and because of concealed spaces in the design of the roof, the living quarters sustained significant smoke and ceiling damage.

A neighbor, who was

hosting a family gathering nearby, said his family witnessed the fire. His two brother-in-laws helped carry the elderly couple out of the house before fire crews arrived.

Firefighting crews were on

the scene until just after midnight.

The fire, which originated in the garage, is under investigation.

Assisting Gearhart firefighters were the Seaside, Warrenton and Cannon Beach fire departments.

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(503) 440-9114

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