

ECLIPSE PARTY

Acoustic musicians to crank it up at Merry Time

Simon Levene, Ghost in the Willow and Seventeen Excuses play original music

By **KAELIA NEAL**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Three musicians will seek to transform the typical acoustic guitar sound into something a bit more energized at the Merry Time Bar and Grill.

Astoria's Simon Levene, Ghost in the Willow and Seventeen Excuses will perform 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 20.

With the musicians playing mostly original music, their goal is to reach out to people who have not heard their songs before.

"Be prepared to listen — listen to the words. Everybody has something to say. Everybody has a message that they want to get across," Levene said.

"It'll be more upbeat singer-songwriter," said Nate Kuning, whose project is Seventeen Excuses. "It won't be ballad-y. It'll be a little more energy behind most of the stuff with a little classic country coming from my side."

Gil Rodriguez, whose project is Ghost in the Willow, is traveling from Phoenix, Arizona to share his folk-rock music.

That same night, there will be an eclipse-themed party 8 to 11 p.m. with "mystery

drinks" and "mystery raffles." The Merry Time is located at 995 Marine Drive. (Note: The bar will open 11 a.m. Monday, Aug. 21, so staff can view the eclipse.)

Influences and instruments

Levene said music helps him release stress. He has been writing songs since 1998, but has yet to write a song he considers perfect.


"It's an ongoing search," Levene said. "I try to write songs that stick in people's minds, the subject material is usually serious, and I want it to be catchy."

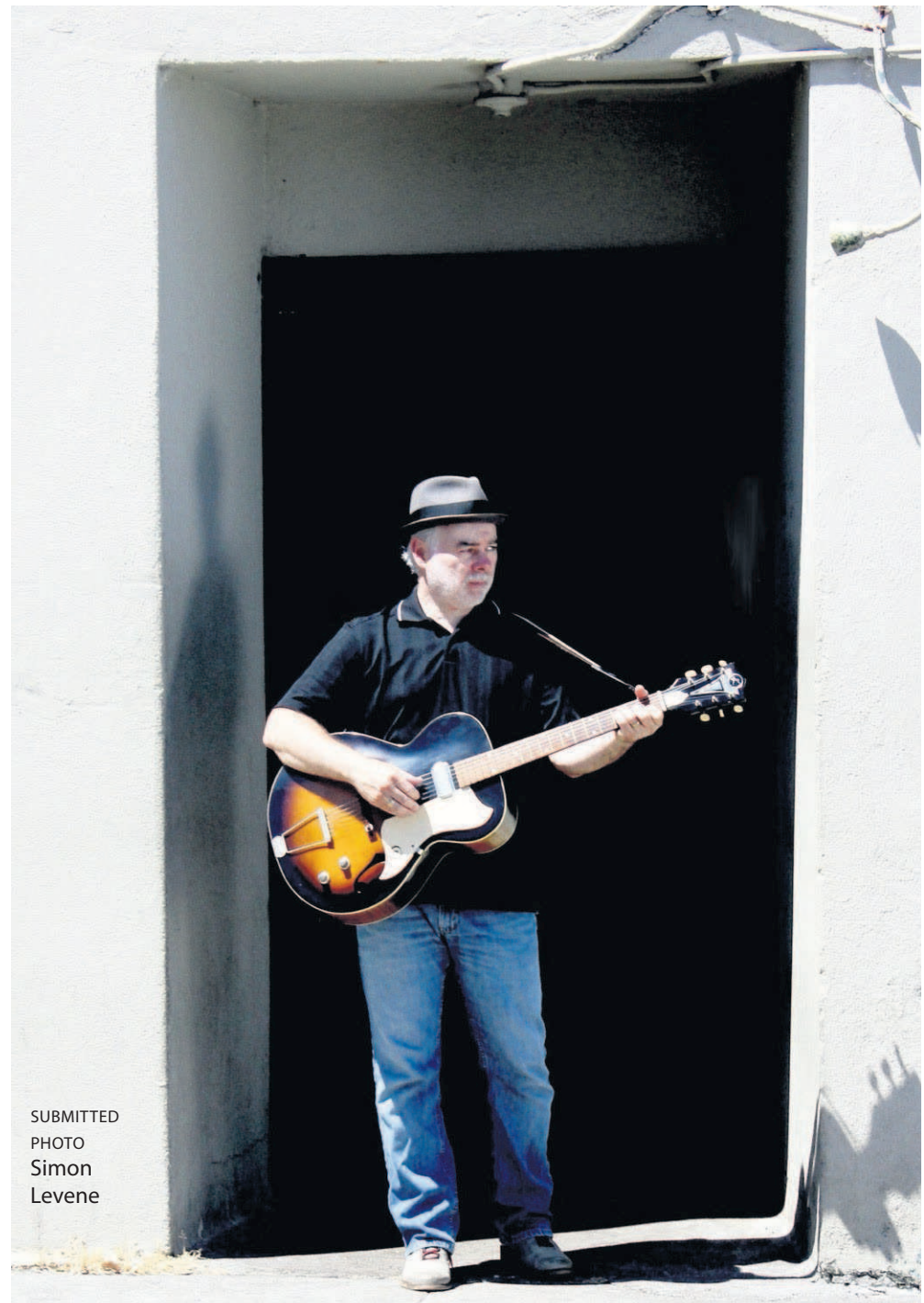
Being from Manchester, England, a lot of his music is British-influenced. "I think it stands out a little because it's so different," Levene said.

During the show, Levene will play acoustic guitar and sing, and he might play a couple of songs with his ukulele.

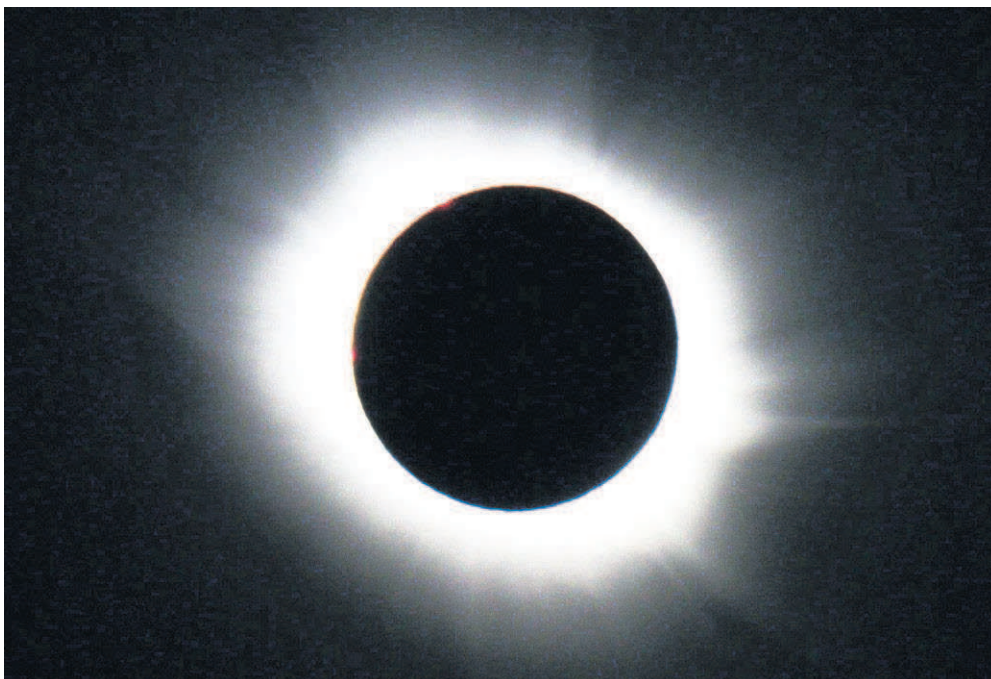
"I play ukulele like most people play electric guitar," he said. "You can still make it sound loud and aggressive depending on how you play it."

Kuning said his music "stems from being in punk rock bands and mixing with classic country and folk rock music."

He sings, plays acoustic guitar and plays harmonica and is influenced by a variety of artists from The Clash to Merle Haggard to Madonna. 



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PHOTO
Simon
Levene



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Nate Kuning, of Seventeen Excuses



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Gil Rodriguez, of Ghost in the Willow