

WHISKY: About 18,500 concertgoers packed Round-Up Grounds

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the arena Pitbull had the crowd up on its feet. Ever the showman, he worked the stage with grin wide and hips constantly moving, flanked by a squad of female backup dancers busy shaking what God gave them.

The performer nicknamed Mr. Worldwide infused his upbeat tempos with an even more upbeat attitude, and it was easy to believe he absolutely meant it when he said he was having the time of his life. “Every day above ground is a great day,” he said. “When you come to a Pitbull concert the number one message is ‘Have the time of your life.’”

He said he was honored to share a show with Shelton, and he loved the diverse mix of people the lineup had brought together. “If you speak English, Spanish, Chinese or Portuguese, it doesn’t matter because we speak music here,” he said.

After Pitbull’s set Blake Shelton charmed the audience with a slower tempo, joking that he saw people in the crowd starting to make moves on each other post-Pitbull, but they couldn’t all pair off yet because he still had a lot of romantic songs to sing.

He told the crowd he was nervous, but he looked at ease in the historic Pendleton Round-Up Grounds, in a city whose motto is “The real West.” He moved seamlessly through his classic hits and got the audience singing along to their favorites.

In honor of the Whisky Fest name, he crooned his way through a few “drinking songs,” including “Sangria,” which became his 20th number one hit on the Country Airplay chart after it was released in 2015.

Earlier in the afternoon, former American Idol contestant Britnee Kellogg had gotten the early-comers warmed up. The big-voiced country singer from Vancouver, Washington, rocked some girl-power anthems and drew knowing cheers from the audience as she joked about her ex stalking her Instagram page without following it.

“I love me some whisky, but Pendleton is my favorite,” she said. “I’m not just saying that!”

She debuted a song she wrote specifically for the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest, which featured a chorus asking a bartender for “a little Pendleton on the



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Pitbull performs at the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest as fans take photos on their phones.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Thousands of people packed the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds and stands.

rocks.” After Kellogg came Filmore, a band from Nashville, Tennessee.

“This is one of the last states I haven’t been to, so thanks for helping me cut that off my bucket list,” he said.

Filmore’s style was a fusion of country and pop — fitting for a Pitbull/Blake Shelton concert — and he glided between both genres as he warmed up the crowd for Pitbull and Shelton. Pendleton is my favorite

Local impact

An estimated 18,500 concertgoers were expected to pack the stands on Saturday — a new record for the event — and Randy Thomas of the Pendleton Round-Up board said the rapidly growing event was helping contribute to the estimated \$65 million in economic impact that the Round-Up as an organization contributes to Pendleton each year.

The event’s organizers are an excellent partner in that they are happy to share branding with via Pendleton Whisky, he said.

Last year Pendleton Round-Up ticket sales saw a spike the week after Maroon 5 played at the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest, and Thomas said they expected a similar bump this year as people who have never been to the Round-Up get a taste of what Pendleton has to offer.

“We’re really excited that the Whisky Fest thinks outside of the box and brings in artists like Maroon 5 and Pitbull, that bring in people who have never set foot at a rodeo,” he said.

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COPS: Keeping the crowd flowing after the show ended proved a challenge

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people bopping around like bees in a hive in low light, tracking down someone who threw an elbow was a high hurdle.

Keeping the crowd flowing after the show ended also proved challenging, he said, and officers even commandeered a couple of Mid Columbia buses to get the last few hundred folks to their hotels.

The most serious threat to public safety occurred Saturday around 1:47 a.m. Roberts said officers heard

gunshots in the area of the 500 block of 15th Street and found 9 mm shell casing at the scene. The investigation led to the arrest of Chanse Bennett, 21, of Pendleton, for unlawful use of a weapon, second-degree disorderly conduct and reckless endangering. Roberts said police seized a Ruger 9 mm pistol from Bennett and took a rifle from him “for safekeeping.”

The festival weekend coincided with an up-tick in and around Pendleton of arrests for during under the influence of intoxicants.

While the bump in population may have played a part, Roberts said Pendleton police had every available officer on duty during the weekend and the department received plenty of help from its law enforcement partners. Extra policing often correlates to extra arrests, he said, and officers during these big events keep a close watch for impaired and distracted drivers.

Juan Miguel Diaz, 24, of Milton-Freewater, and Roy Jaimes-Rogel, 21, are among those who saw the inside of the Uma-

tilla County Jail, Pendleton. Police arrested Diaz for DUII and arrested both men for unlawful possession of a firearm following reports of gunshots Sunday around 1:15 a.m. near the Walmart store.

Oregon State Police troopers in and around Pendleton also took in their share of impaired drivers, including Christopher Lane Leroy Rosecrans, 21, of Athena, and Tiffany Ann Marie McKenzie, 29, of Eugene. For a fuller list of arrests, check out the *East Oregonian’s* public safety log.

Shawn Penninger, Pendleton’s interim fire chief, said his department was more organized and prepared for this year’s fest and had plenty of staff on hand at the event, including the ambulance service out of Athena.

“Fortunately, we didn’t need them all,” he said.

Penninger said staff handled various emergencies at the site, mostly heat- or alcohol-related, or both, “but that can be expected when you have a large number of people in town.”

Really, he said, on the

paramedic and fire side of emergency readiness, the fest “was fairly uneventful.”

Public safety services in Pendleton don’t get much rest. Pendleton Bike Week revs up starting Tuesday and lasts until noon Sunday. The event draws several thousand motorcyclists and cycle enthusiasts. Organizers claim Bike Week is the fastest growing motorcycle rally in the western United States.

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SIGHTING: MUFON helps gather UFO reports

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opposite and come back to the original spot.

Pendleton’s Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in the northwest section of town is home to the Pendleton UAS Range. Darryl Abling, the ranger manager, reported Project Vahana tested one of its craft at 8:30 that morning for a five-minute hover about 25 feet off the taxiway. Otherwise, he said, nothing else flew on the range.

Ann Adams is an assistant forecaster with the National Weather Service near the airport. She said several sites in Oregon and Washington launched weather balloons, but not Pendleton. The Weather Service and other agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, sometimes launch smaller pilot balloons or “pibals” to observe the cloud ceiling as well as wind speed and direction. Pibals are about the size of a beach ball and often red.

Adams said as far as she knew, the Pendleton staff did not launch balloons of any sort Wednesday.

Chinook helicopters and a C-130 military transport plane flew Wednesday out of the Oregon Army National Guard base at the airport, and Army paratroopers with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment out of

Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, also were in the air over Pendleton.

Paratroopers sometimes use balloons and balloon-like devices to judge wind speed and directions before jumping. Those devices often are orange.

Bates said the situation grew stranger when a second similar object came into view and drifted down beside the first. Then one object zipped off in a straight line over McKay Creek drainage east of Pendleton.

“It just kept going until we couldn’t see it any more,” he said, and the other object seemed to disappear.

The eyewitnesses said they watched the sky show for at least an hour, probably longer.

The National UFO Reporting Center and the Mutual UFO Network — or MUFON — provide websites for people to report UFOs. Both receive hundreds of reports or more each year.

Peter Davenport operates the national center from his home in Washington and urges witnesses to take the time to write down what they observed and report sightings. He said a witness from Pendleton contacted the center about Wednesday’s UFO and reported two objects and “at one point during the

sighting, they appeared to move quite abruptly.”

That source also reported the objects suddenly disappeared.

Davenport received a report from Redmond about a UFO there Wednesday evening. That witness stated the object appeared to be a translucent white sphere with a flat bottom and “striation marks on it like that of a watermelon.” The object also contained a rectangular area beneath the center and what looked like some sort of propellers.

Davenport said he wondered if the objects might have been high-altitude, helium-filled balloons carrying a package of scientific instruments. “However, generally, those balloons are launched out of New Mexico, and Oregon is a long way for one of those balloons to drift,” he said.

Also, he added, scientific balloons don’t just disappear.

Tom Bowden is the director of the Oregon chapter of MUFON. He said UFO witnesses sometimes don’t know who to call. UFOs are generally not a matter for police, the U.S. Air Force claims it does not investigate UFOs, and the Federal Aviation Administration “definitely does not want to deal with UFO reports,” he said, “and maybe they should.”

MUFON helps fill that vacuum.

“We do our best to investigate a UFO sighting to continue to amass data on them for study,” he said. “Without data, there is nothing to study. We also have the expertise to basically weed out the reports that are explainable.”

Bowden has been involved in the study of UFOs since the 1970s, he said, and he would love to have an investigator in Eastern Oregon. MUFON asks a lot of questions about the person making the report, he said, because “the perception of the individual is very important,” and multiple witness always is better.

“Without their story, we have nothing,” Bowden said. “Even photos and video are nothing without the story behind them.”

Smith said she has seen UFOs at night, but this was her first daytime sighting. She and Bates said they had no idea what that saw, but it sure was interesting and a bit exciting.

MUFON at www.mufon.com provides a link to report a UFO. The National UFO Reporting Center at www.nuforc.org has a link to report a sighting, or witnesses can call the center’s hotline at 206-722-3000 if the sighting occurred in the last week.

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