

School of Rock rolls into Lear’s

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

If Wallowa Valley Music Alliance’s School of Rock awarded degrees upon graduation, four local kids would hold doctorates in the subject. The four young men and teachers Matt Harshman and Casey Kiser proved rock ‘n’ roll is still alive and well in Wallowa County during their May 10 performance at Lear’s Main St. Bar and Grill in Enterprise.

In addition to the instructors, the nameless band was composed of Enterprise junior high students Zion Mark, Foster Hobbs and Wesley Johnson on guitar and Dan Salin on drums. The players’ instrument experience ranged from several months to more than six years. Although the band met only once a week for official school practice, all the members said they generally practiced more



The instructors and graduating class of 2016 School of Rock rock the night away at Lear’s. From left: Matt Harshman, Wesley Johnson, Foster Hobbs and Casey Kiser.

than an hour per day to learn their parts. Each player said he signed up for School of Rock as soon as he heard about it. Although the classic rock the band played was popular long before any of the band members were born, they were already familiar with it — not only because they saw their parents listening to it, but be-

cause they genuinely like the music. “I’ve been listening to Stevie Ray Vaughan since I was 3,” Johnson said. They said they listened to modern music and even country and western as well, but their hearts remained with classic rock. As Harshman and Kiser

were the band’s only seasoned performers, some timidity by the others was expressed for the first few songs, but as the show progressed, so did confidence and amplifier volume. The show started with Albert King’s blues-rock staple “Crosscut Saw,” with Harshman taking lead vocals and switching off song-for-song with Kiser before taking over most the vocal duties. For more than an hour, windows rattled and rafters shook as amps turned to 11 blasted out such rock staples as “La Grange,” “One Way Out” and “You Shook Me All Night Long.” After the performance, the proud artists basked in congratulations from parents, friends and girlfriends on a job well done. The graduating members of School of Rock said they thoroughly enjoyed their performing experience, particularly the audience response

and getting to play loud music and strut their stuff before an audience. “We rocked,” Hobbs said. All the musicians said they would attend School of Rock again if the opportunity presented itself. Harshman said it felt good to get the program on track after a hiatus of several years while his children were growing up. “It’s fun to see kids get going, or getting someone started.” Harshman graded the performance as an easy A. “I think they did great; they really stepped up.” School of Rock has a future if the demand is there. “If there’s kids who want to play, I’m all for it,” Harshman said. “I won’t solicit kids to play; I want them to be excited to play, because that makes it fun.”

THE SCENE

Thursday, June 2

- Blue Mountain Old Time Fiddlers Fiddle Show, 6 p.m. at Hurricane Creek Grange
- Von Stomper, 7 p.m. at Terminal Gravity

Thursday, June 16

- Ned Crisp and Bart Budwig, 6 p.m. at the OK Theatre

Saturday, July 2

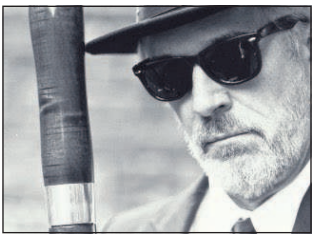
- Joseph Mountain Jubilee, 1 p.m. at multiple venues in Joseph. www.josephmountain-jubilee.com.

Please submit Entertainment Calendar event information to rday@wallowa.com

Accomplished bassoonist makes a home in county

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Many people call themselves musicians, but for those who define the term by someone who actually makes a living playing music, it narrows the field by a considerable margin. Local musician Mark Eubanks can claim membership in the latter group. Eubanks recently retired from the Oregon Symphony with the title of Principal Bassoon, capping a four-decade career as a symphony and opera musician. Eubanks cut his music teeth early, learning the clarinet in fourth grade. He also fell under the spell of the bassoon after hearing the lead bassoonist in the Seattle Symphony play Mozart’s “Bassoon Concerto.” “While the other kids were shooting spitwads and twitching, I was zeroed in on this beautiful solo,” Eubanks said. Around 1960, Eubanks heard the eight-bassoon theme



Mark Eubanks

song to “The Alfred Hitchcock Hour” and convinced his skeptical junior high band director to let him take the school’s bassoon home for the weekend. When he returned, he had already obtained a degree of proficiency on the instrument. By age 15, Eubanks was sitting beside his music teacher in the Tacoma Symphony. The next year he began his career as a professional musician. Although some may picture symphony musicians as the type who turn up their noses at pop or rock ‘n’ roll music, Eubanks was quite the opposite. “I had a rock band called

The Galaxies that I played in all the way through high school and college,” he said. The band, composed of students from his largely black school, became the first rock act allowed to play at school dances. The Galaxies later recorded their own commercial releases. Two songs found their way to the Billboard charts. “My soul is still in rock ‘n’ roll,” he said. Playing professionally opened Eubanks’ eyes to the rigors of life as a symphony/opera musician. “I got put in my place a few times, but it turned out to be a great career,” he said. “An orchestra is like a music factory. It’s a full-time, crank-it-out, next product coming down the line, while you’re playing a concert that night.” On the upside, although the Oregon and Seattle symphonies he played with worked 40-42 weeks per year, it left Eubanks with 10-12 weeks at a time in

the summer to pursue other interests, which included playing with other orchestras, ballets and musicals. “It put me in a position of making a lot of money in the summer, playing shows like ‘Chorus Line.’” Eubanks’ designation as a “doubler” — meaning he was proficient on more than one instrument — made it easier to find work as a musician. During the “Chorus Line” 100-plus show run, he played five instruments: Flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone and the bassoon. At times, he changed instruments mid-bar. As word spread of his skill as a dependable musician who also was capable of reading and even arranging music, he found himself also playing with the likes of such musicians as Linda Ronstadt, Ray Charles and many others as a saxophonist with the Oregon Symphony Pops. He has also diversified his talents by playing such roles

as record producer, reed maker and college professor, among others. In keeping with his rock ‘n’ roll sensibilities, Eubanks has an alter-ego personality as a member of the Bassoon Brothers. “We dress like the Blues Brothers and take other people’s music and call it our own, giving it our own twists and turns. We try to find some humor in music.” Eubanks became aware of the Wallowa Valley through a harrowing winter driving experience with his band in the late 1960s. During a night driving stint, Eubanks thought he had found a shortcut from Rupert, Idaho, to Lewiston through Enterprise. “I tackled the Rattlesnake grade not knowing what I was getting into. I fishtailed this van full of musicians and equipment up and down, and there wasn’t near as many guardrails back then. I was lucky I knew how to pump the brakes and

WALLOWA HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2016



Graduation ceremony: **Saturday, June 4 at 11 a.m.**
Valedictorian: **Emily George** Salutatorian: **Koby Frye**



Dakota Allen



Noah Allen



Skyler Blush



Ashley Campbell



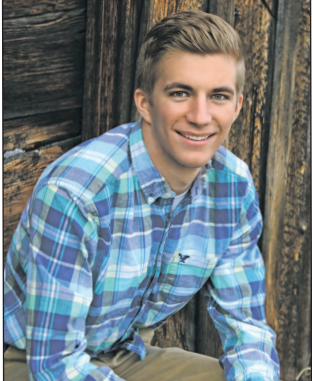
Robert Delancey



Koby Frye



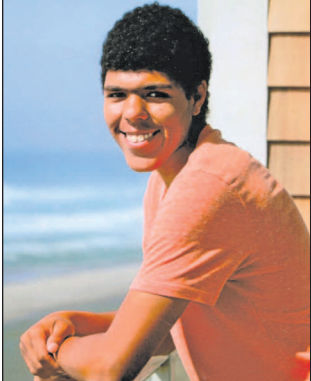
Emily George



Cole Hafer



Marybeth Hulse



Thomas Jamerson



Megan Jones-Allen



Sunnie Moore



Josh Rummell



Marli Tracy



*Our annual Graduation special section in the May 25 edition omitted Wallowa senior Josh Rummell. Today, we're republishing the entire class with Rummell included.