

Back Country Bash bigger than ever

Eight acts take the stage over for two days

By **JEFF BUDLONG**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — As the popularity of the Back Country Bash grows so does its music lineup.

What began as a one-day, three-act event in 2017 will become a two-day, eight-act extravaganza with four bands playing each day, Aug. 5-6, at the Harley Tucker Memorial Rodeo Grounds.

The Bash is described as a weekend of Americana and Red Dirt music. Red Dirt is a genre of country music that gets its name from the color of soil found in Oklahoma. Many Red Dirt acts got their start in bars surrounding Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

“People want to come here, you just have to give them a reason,” said Chief Joseph Days director Randall Eschler, who along with his father, Rusty, and fellow director Jake Thompson plan much of the Back Country Bash. “It is fun to put on an event for your community members and say it is for them. We want the community to come out and enjoy something we don’t have every day.”

The idea for the Bash began as a way to use the grounds more, but it has been enhanced each year.

“Wallowa County is the perfect venue for music,” Eschler said. “People want to come here and that is why our motto is come for the music, stay for the adventure.”

Friday’s lineup has the Read Southall Band, Kody West, Austin Meade and Them Dirty Roses. Saturday features Whitney Morgan & the 78s, Bart Crow,



The Back Country Bash is a two-day, eight-act extravaganza with four bands playing each day, Aug. 5-6, at the Harley Tucker Memorial Rodeo Grounds.



Wallowa County Chieftain, File
Corb Lund, who has an authentic ranching background, wows the Back Country Bash attendees with one of his ranch-flavored numbers.

Josh Meloy and Sam Morrow. Each day gates open at 4:30 p.m. and the music starts at 5:30 p.m. Children under 8 receive free admission with tickets costing \$60 for one day and \$90 for both days.

“People buy their tickets

for the event, not a specific act, but we have yet to have anyone pull out,” Eschler said.

Eschler said the music may not be mainstream, but it is “real music without the autotune.” The sound is



Wallowa County Chieftain, File
Shane Smith, rocks out with his band, The Saints, as the opening act of the 2019 Back Country Bash. Smith, whose Thunder Room appearance was sold out, probably got as much audience adulation as anyone who played the rodeo arena on the following day.

better live than what someone hears on the radio on streaming, he said.

The Bash also provides an opportunity for area musicians who set up on a

BACK COUNTRY BASH

When: Friday and Saturday, Aug. 5-6

Where: Harley Tucker Memorial Rodeo Grounds

Tickets: Available online \$60 for one-day pass; \$90 for two days

Website: www.back-countrybashjoseph.com

stage outside of the arena and perform in between acts.

“We get Wallowa County people to perform by the food vendors,” Eschler said. “They go for about 15 between sets.”

Last year’s event came after 2020 was canceled because of the pandemic and people were still getting used to the idea of gathering in large numbers again. Eschler said this year’s event feels more similar to the first couple of years.

“Last year, it felt like you were still looking over your shoulder, but this year feels totally normal,” he said.

The inaugural event saw Cody Canada and the Departed headline the all-day music event plus performances from Corb Lund and Micky and the Motorcars. It drew about 600 people, and this year around 1,200 are expected at the campgrounds.

Eschler said people are able to make a weekend of activities out of their trip to the Bash with nearly 40 acres of camping ground available. Wallowa Lake offers plenty of activities and a chance to view the scenery, and shopping and food are available in town.

“People turn it into their own thing and just have a great time,” Eschler said.

The event draws locals as well as enthusiasts from Lewiston, Idaho; Walla Walla, Washington; and those from several states away.



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