

Festival to 'brighten the days of January'

Weekend passes and single show tickets for the 16th annual Florence Winter Music Festival are on sale now. The three-day extravaganza takes place at the Florence Events Center on Jan. 12 to 14 and showcases a variety of international touring talent and world class artisans, along with a wealth of locally sourced cuisine and fine libations.

"The overall idea is to bring business into Florence at a time of year when the local establishments need it the most," said festival producer Howie Cusack. "We're trying to brighten the dark days of January. We've got a three-day celebration of internationally known music and world-class artisans. No one else in our region has that."

On Saturday, Jan. 13, at "The Main Event," the legendary Brit folk rocker Al Stewart performs his multi-platinum "Year of The Cat" hits, along with Oregon's favorite young storytelling troubadour, John Craigie.

The highly anticipated "Friday Night Throwdown" pairs the Appalachian bluegrass stylings of Grammy winning icon Laurie Lewis and her band alongside the blistering Americana banjo and mandolin virtuosity of Jeff Scroggins & Colorado.

"The stage will ignite, they're so hot," Cusack said of the opening act, adding that Lewis is welcome to play long into the night.

The "Supersession 16," which runs from 10:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 13, is a memorable musical marathon featuring the Celtic energy of the Portland-based Castletown, the roots harmonies of northern California's Calaveras, the folk rhythms of Cabin Fever NW and the heartfelt songs of Pretty Gritty.

"Castletown will start us off Saturday with a bang," Winter Music Festival Coordinator Rachel Pearson said. "At



10:30 a.m., people will be dancing. And we're ending with a bang, too."

The afternoon will end with the rockin' western swing of rising Canadian favorites, Petunia & The Vipers.

The Gospel Gumbo Gathering scheduled for Sunday afternoon, Jan. 14, presents some of the central coast's finest choir members performing traditional and contemporary selections under the direction of Florence musician Marty Adams.

Florence Events Center's exclusive caterer Pavilion Catering will provide a lunch of hearty, authentic gumbo and cornbread.

The festival closes with a roof raising performance by the popular Eugene and University of Oregon a capella group, On the Rocks.

"They brings in a little different charge for this," Cusack

said. "We're going to span the generations with the Gospel Gumbo Gathering"

The University of Oregon students will wrap up the entire festival.

"The day will be a celebration of faith, life and music rolled into one," Cusack said.

The festival, presented by Friends of the FEC and Sea Lion Caves, has a whole slew of Florence-area and Oregon-based sponsors, including Brandborg Winery, KLCC and Ninkasi Brewing.

The wine and beer vendors will be exclusive pourers during Florence Regional Arts Alliance's (FRAA) Artisan Fair Jan. 12 and 13, also at the event center.

Admission to the Artisan Fair is free. Vendors include FRAA members, local groups such as the Rhododendron Quilt Guild and many more fine artists.

Cusack said, "We're bringing artistry into a small setting where we can be up close and personal with people. The FEC, at the end of the day, is a really excellent venue. Every seat in there is good."

The organizers hope that the caliber of music, art and vendors will encourage repeat visitors to Florence, especially as some groups, including On the Rocks, will appear in the area for the first time.

"We're all united in trying to do something good for the community and promote Florence," Cusack said. "We're trying to grow the businesses and provide something that hasn't been done quite to this extent. ... There's a lot of talent here in Florence, and we intend to tap every bit of it"

Tickets are on sale at the Florence Events Center, 715 Quince St. in Florence, and at eventcenter.org.

For more information, call 541-997-1994 or visit wintermusicfestival.org for complete details.

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COAST CENTRAL

FREE MONTHLY GUIDE TO ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT ON THE OREGON COAST

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Submit all press releases, photos, calendar events and gallery listings to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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