

Two full nights of Americana country

Back Country Bash set for Aug. 6-7 in Joseph

By Katy Nesbitt
Go! Magazine

JOSEPH — Tickets are on sale for Northeastern Oregon's favorite Americana country music festival, the Back Country Bash, with seven bands and two full nights of music at the Joseph Rodeo Grounds Aug. 6-7.

Tickets can be purchased through the website, www.backcountrybashjoseph.com. Entry to both nights of music is \$80; attendance to the separate events is \$45 per night.

Now in its fourth year, the music festival is organized by Randall Eschler, who said as a lover of music and rodeo he wanted to host an event that would bring



Submitted photo
William Clark Green headlines the Back Country Bash.

people to Willowa County, and to the rodeo grounds in particular. With help from Brook and Darrell Pace, the first event drew hundreds to the Harley Tucker arena in 2017 and quickly became a new tradition.

Eschler is also one of the Chief Joseph Days directors. He said besides bringing great music to the arena, he sees the Back Country Bash as a way of raising revenue for the rodeo rounds.

"If we can have more than the rodeo every year, we can make money and continue improving our facilities," he said.

Fans are encouraged to come for the music and stay for the Willowa Valley experience at the 40-acre campground adjacent to the rodeo arena, which is just a couple blocks from downtown Joseph. Revelers can walk to shops, restaurants and bars, and the Willowa County Park at the foot of the lake is less than 2 miles away.

Eschler said he thinks the bands booked for the Bash will appeal to inner mountain music fans.

"Most of the acts we have booked sing about where they

live," he said.

This year's lineup features some of the most exciting up and coming bands in the alternative country scene. Ward Davis is a singer/songwriter whose songs have been recorded by big name artists like Trace Adkins, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard and Jimmie Van Zant. Most recently, Davis co-wrote "I'm Not the Devil" with Cody Jinks, with whom he toured across the country.

"After his first album I thought, 'We need to get this guy.' He has a very unique voice and is getting ready to put out another album, so we might get to see some new songs," Eschler said.

Charles Wesley Godwin has shared billings with the likes of Shooter Jennings, Tyler Childers and David Allan Coe. Godwin sings about his home in the Appalachians of West Virginia, and his songs will speak to those who love open landscapes, whether they hail from the West or the East.

Eschler described Texan Tanner Usrey as one whose fame is rising.

"I think he's going to blow up pretty quick," Eschler said. "When I first talked to him he was book-

ing his own gigs — then I went to check in with him and he was with a booking agent," he said.

Usrey's first EP, titled "Medicine Man," was released in 2019.

Sunny Sweeney is the first woman to grace the Back Country Bash stage, Eschler said. Also hailing from Texas, she has released four albums, drawing praise from media outlets such as Rolling Stone, NPR and American Songwriter for her rock and honky-tonk style.

"Sunny is the veteran of the scene and has the most followers," Eschler said.

Friday's lineup includes two acts traveling together — The Lowdown Drifters, a country/folk/rock band from Seattle, and Jordan Nix who is making waves with his song "Bye, Bye."

The Bash's headliner, William Clark Green, is also well known, especially for songs like "She Likes the Beatles" and "Ringling Road." On his own or with the supergroup "The Panhandlers," Green draws the crowds.

"People love this guy," Eschler said.

For the full schedule as well as camping information, visit www.backcountrybashjoseph.com.

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