

Portland duo Hillstomp coming to Churchill

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

BAKER CITY — The road to a gig might be long, but once Hillstomp hits the stage the world shifts for Henry Kammerer and John Johnson.

"The second the first song starts, we are 24 years old again," Kammerer said.

Now in their mid-40s, these two have played as a duo for 21 years.

"Damn near half of our lives," Kammerer said. "But we've taken it seriously the last 10 or 12 years."

They auditioned potential bass players once, thinking to grow the band. But their sound, it seems, was already complete.

"Three of them in a row said 'there's nothing to do here,'" Kammerer said.



Revere Pictures/Contributed image
Hillstomp, the duo of Henry Kammerer (front) and John Johnson, play at Churchill School in Baker City on Saturday, April 30.

So Hillstomp remains a duo with Kammerer playing guitar and banjo and Johnson on the drums.

"Always. From the beginning," he said.

Hillstomp will play live at Churchill School, 3451 Broadway St., on Saturday, April 30. Doors

open at 6 p.m. and the music starts at 6:45 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 in advance at www.churchillbaker.com, or \$15 at the door. Proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test is required. Admission is free for fully vaccinated youth age 15 and younger who attend with a ticket-holding adult.

Hillstomp has been to Europe 10 times and played in 38 states.

The last two years, Kammerer said, made them realize how much they love the stage.

"We're more excited to play than we've ever been," he said. "Live music — there's no replication."

They livestreamed a couple shows, but missed the people.

"Every time we ended a song, it was just crickets," Kammerer said. "We're so used to people dancing around. The audience is genuinely the third member of the band."

This summer is busy — he said they've even turned down a few requests.

"This summer looks good. We have a lot of shows," he said.

He describes their music as hill country blues, with the sound of the 1950s.

Oregon, Kammerer said, "has embraced us."

"Everybody in Oregon has that hillbilly cousin — we're like that hillbilly cousin," he said with a laugh.

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