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Lisa Britton

Go! Editor

editor@goeasternoregon.com
541-406-5274

Sarah Smith

Calendar Coordinator

calendar@goeasternoregon.com

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What we're into

LIVE MUSIC

I'm not musical, but I do enjoy music.

I didn't realize, though, how much I love live music until we didn't have it.

Concerts ceased in March of 2020, like so many other things we take for granted. Many musicians turned to the internet and offered livestreamed concerts. While this was the only solution at the time, it just wasn't the same.

I interview musicians quite often for Go! stories. As live music slowly returns, there is a common theme throughout the interviews: They miss a live audience.

We have music events on the horizon. Joseph Mountain Jubilee announced its event for July 2, and the brand-new Chautauqua Music Festival is set for May 20-22 in Richland. In Baker City, where I live, the Ison House is bringing back Concerts on the Lawn, and the Powder River Music Review returns for the summer.

But those are a few months away.

For now, concerts are sporadic. Eastern Oregon University presents "We've Got Your Number" Feb. 25-26 after postponing



Amanda Senior/Contributed image
Live music is returning to Eastern Oregon — the duo Fox and Bones, pictured here, plays Feb. 18 at Churchill School in Baker City.

the original dates. In Baker City, Churchill School is ramping up a schedule of concerts, including Fox and Bones on Friday, Feb. 18. Many of Churchill's scheduled bands are based in Oregon, but this year brings several groups from Minnesota as well.

It was when my kids and I listened to the duo of Lauren Napier and Vic Ruggiero on Aug. 21, 2021, at Churchill that it struck me how much I missed live music — not just the lyrics, but also the interaction as the musicians tell stories between songs.

I think we all could use more music in our lives, now more than ever.

— LISA BRITTON, GO! EDITOR

New releases

'DRAGON NEW WARM MOUNTAIN I BELIEVE IN YOU,' BIG THIEF

Brooklyn-based indie rock band Big Thief seems to draw from a bottomless well of creativity. After releasing two records in 2019, the band's fifth LP, "Dragon New Warm Mountain I Believe In You," is a sprawling 20-track double album.

While quantity does not always equal quality, in Big Thief's case, the band never compromises the excellence of their songwriting. Instead of churning out carbon copies of the same song, they use each album as a playground for exploration — and it pays off.

In "Dragon New Warm Mountain I Believe In You," the group of four — Adrienne Lenker, Buck Meek, Max Oleartchik and James Krivchenia — recorded in four different studios with four different engineers and drummer Krivchenia as producer.

The effect is a collection of songs that feels dynamic with unexpected turns throughout the track list. The soft love song "12,000 Lines" is followed by the buzzing "Simulation Swarm."

As with all Big Thief records, Lenker's voice and songwriting shines in the album's quieter moments. Opener "Change" — unknowingly recorded while the band was rehearsing the song in the studio — is a striking analysis of change. Whether change is viewed through the lens of the end of a relationship or the end of a life, Lenker is able to find the beauty and necessity at the heart: "Would you walk forever in the light/ To never learn the secret of the quiet night?"

It's the perfect opener for an album not afraid of change as Big Thief weaves through genres and themes on "Dragon New Warm Mountain I Believe In You."

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