



May 12, 2008

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Songwriters tell stories at the Comm

BY JOSH MCAULIFFE
STAFF WRITER
04/11/2008

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In the first two years of its existence, PocoNotes brought renowned acts like Hot Tuna and the subdues to the area for full-scale concerts.

And yet, "from the very beginning, what we wanted to do were smaller events," said Dolores Hippler, who runs the Lake Ariel-based company with her boyfriend, Pat Harper.

"Something a little more intimate," she said.

And now they are with "Hear 'Em at the Comm," an acoustic storytelling series at the Waverly Community House featuring four nationally known guitarist-singer-songwriters.

If you go

What: "Hear 'Em at the Comm" series, featuring Patrick Sweany and Billy Rogan
Where: Waverly Community House, 1115 North Abington Road, Waverly
When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.
Details: Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door and available through The Comm and at www.PocoNotes.com. A meet-and-greet session with the musicians will follow the show. Also, Mr. Sweany will hold an instructional workshop from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Admission is \$40. For more information on the series, call the Comm at 586-8191, ext. 2, or PocoNotes at 888-800-POCO.



Billy Rogan is among artists who are participating in "Hear 'Em at the Comm."

First show

The series premieres Saturday with Patrick Sweany, and continues with Toby Walker on June 28, Spencer Bohren on Sept. 13 and Roy Book Binder on Nov. 9. All shows start at 7:30 p.m., and prior to each performance the headliner will offer an instructional workshop funded in part by a Lackawanna County Arts and Cultural grant.

As a nod to the local music scene, four area musicians — Billy Rogan, Charles Havira, Pat Flynn and the Young Geezers — will serve as the shows' opening acts. "We wanted to elevate their exposure a little bit," Ms. Hippler said.

Mr. Rogan, who will open for Mr. Sweany, is just coming back to performing after suffering a serious snowboarding accident on New Year's Eve.

"The moment we heard Billy, we knew he had it," Ms. Hippler said. "He's someone who says something with his guitar."

They teach, too

All of the series' headliners serve as instructors at Hot Tuna guitarist Jorma Kaukonen's Fur Peace Ranch Guitar Camp in Pomeroy, Ohio. A couple of years back, Ms. Hippler sent Mr. Harper, a longtime amateur guitarist, to the camp as a gift.

"They're all very accomplished. All very good people. Wholesome people," Ms. Hippler said of the assembled artists. "They're all about the promotion of music."

"They all have heavy duty chops," Mr. Harper said. "And they're all different delivery styles."

Mr. Sweany, for instance, has been described as a "musical omnivore," combining Piedmont picking and Delta slide guitar with a smooth vocal style. He typically plays over 150 shows a year, and has shared stages with Grand Funk Railroad, Wayne Hancock and The Detroit Cobras, among others. His most recent album, "Every Dollar Is a Dollar Gone," was produced by Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys.

"Pat Sweany has more of a roadhouse style," Mr. Harper said. "He's the kind of guy you can see in the smoky bar at 3 o'clock in the morning."

"He plays everything," said Mr. Rogan, who just started listening to Mr. Sweany's stuff. "It's really special when you get to play with someone like that."

Mr. Walker's act incorporates traditional and contemporary blues, roots music, western swing and ragtime with tales of travels through the South in search of old-time blues masters. Among the notables he's played with are Richie Havens, Taj Mahal, Bo Diddley, Charlie Musselwhite and John Sebastian.

Known for his variety of guitar techniques, Mr. Bohren has performed with the likes of Professor Longhair, the Neville Brothers and the Radiators. Recently, he developed a performance/lecture called "Down the Dirt Road Blues," which

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traces a single song's journey from 16th century Africa to modern-day American and British rock, and recorded the song, "The Long Black Line," a tribute to post-Katrina New Orleans.

A storyteller par excellence, Mr. Book Binder mixes country blues with ragtime, bluegrass and folk music. He's performed with Bonnie Raitt, Ray Charles, Doc Watson and B.B. King, and is among the planners for MerleFest, the popular roots music festival in Wilkesboro, N.C.

Contact the writer: jmcauliffe@timeshamrock.com

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Reader Comments

Added: Monday April 14, 2008 at 01:46 PM EST

WOW!

We were there to see Billy Rogan and Patrick Sweany, and it was incredible. We can't wait to see the others!
 Colleen Ostrowski, Garrison, NY

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