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Marin mixes country folk with Zappa punk

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By Genevieve Keevil
Mike Thomas Yukon News



Roger Marin is performing in parts of the territory.

Roger Marin was still sleeping when Gordie Tentrees banged on the door.

It was quarter past 12 on Friday, and the crowd at Arts in the Park was waiting patiently.

“That’s today?” said a groggy Marin.

Five minutes later, he jumped on the stage at LePage Park, his hair still mussed up.

“That’s the fastest time between waking up and playing a show,” he said with a laugh.

“I thought the gig was tomorrow.”

As Marin broke into Whiskey Keeps my Engine Clean, Tentrees showed up with a bottle of water and a coffee.

After downing the water, Marin looked a little better.

“Is this a straight set,” he asked organizer Steve Slade after the first few songs.

“Are there any breaks?”

After several more songs, including one with the line, “The girl with the dirty hair said she’d be mine,” Marin ran across the street to the Java Connection.

He came back after about five minutes, his hair slicked down with water.

“I just have to tell you right now, I’m pretty hung over,” he told the crowd, explaining he’d played Coaster’s the night before.

“I thought I’d start with one song and just get through it, but to tell you the truth, I still feel pretty rough.”

The hangover didn’t stop Marin from telling stories.

Apparently, the band barely made it up the Alaska Highway. The clutch is slipping in the van, he said.

“We’re from Ontario, and I didn’t realize you had so many mountains up here — on some of those hills the guys had to get out of the van and start pushing just to make it over.”

Marin likes teasing his rhythm section.

After the abrupt morning wakeup, Marin yelled at the guys — “Come on, you’re playing with me, this isn’t a solo show.”

Grumbling, they had started getting dressed when Marin breezed out the door with a “Just joking.”

“I love pissing them off,” he said with a laugh, before breaking into a song about aging Blondie and Dagwood.

The song was off his most recent album, *High Roads*.

After touring with Fred Eaglesmith for six years, Marin got sick of life on the road and went solo.

“But after quitting I went home for a month and realized it’s not for me — so I went back out on the road,” he said.

He’s been touring since he was seven.

“I was too young to be in the bars, so I’d have to sit in the kitchen on breaks,” Marin told the crowd.

As a kid, Marin played country with his dad, joining him for five or six songs a night.

By the time he was 14, he was playing for a living.

“I’ve never done anything else,” he said, perched on the edge of the stage after his show.

Although he’s pegged a country-folk musician, Marin calls some of his songs punk.

“As a songwriter, I don’t have a genre of music anymore,” he said.

“It’s more about the words — the music is a background for the words.”

If they’re angry words, the song is more punk, said Marin.

Sporting long hair and goatees, Marin’s rhythm section is also more punk than country.

“Without me they’re like Frank Zappa times 5,000,” said Marin.

“But add me and I bring it back 5,000 times.”

In August, Marin is hosting a music festival in Niagara Falls.

Tentrees is playing it, as is Tom Wilson and one of the Dixie Chicks.

But there will also be a lot of unknown bands taking the stage.

“One of the credentials to play the festival is if you can’t get a gig anywhere else,” said Marin with a grin.

Seven years ago, the country rocker played Dawson City Music Fest with Eaglesmith, and after touring the territory last summer, he hoped to play the festival again.

But he didn’t get in.

Instead he crashed the Dawson festival’s Whitehorse meet-and-greet, drank lots of free booze and ate all the food.

“I didn’t even have to play a show and I got all the benefits of the Dawson City Music Fest,” he said with a laugh.

This fall, he and Tentrees are heading from Toronto to Texas on tour.

Marin, who plays about 250 shows a year, sometimes questions his schedule.

“But when I’m not doing it, I realize it’s a pretty cool thing to do,” he said.

The Roger Marin Band played The Pit in Dawson this week, and will be back at Coaster’s on Thursday and Friday night.

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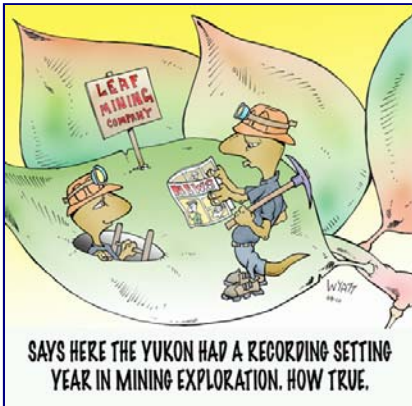


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