

The road to growth

Extensive touring gives Niagara's Roger Marin and band plenty of material for new CD

Posted 1 month ago

It seems like Roger Marin is always going somewhere.

Take this week, for instance. A few days ago, the Thorold-based guitarist and his band were in Texas to play a dozen or so shows. (This comes after a six-week Western Canada tour.) He's in St. Catharines to perform at this weekend's Cicada Fest, which he and St. Catharines photographer Thom Lepp co-founded, and then he's off to the northeastern United States and Canada until September.

During their sets at Cicada Fest, which gets underway Friday at 6 p.m. and concludes Sunday at 9 p.m., Marin and his band -- Matt Keighan on drums, Phil Bosley on bass and Mike Tuyp on guitar -- will perform some new ditties from their third album, *Silvertown*, which was released about a month ago.

Before branching out on his own, Marin toured as a pedal steel player with Fred Eaglesmith, appearing on some of his albums, as well as those by Alun Piggins, *newworldson* and Jesse T. Reid.

In 2005, Marin released his first disc, *Roger Marin Jr.*, which was followed by *High Roads* in 2007.

"I never imagined I would tour on my own. But I got calls to do festivals and dates and I've been doing that for the last six years," said Marin, during a phone interview from Elkford, B.C.

Silvertown, Marin stressed, is a band effort. And to Marin, writing songs about everyday life and things people can relate to rather than trying to get radio hits is paramount.

"I think this album shows growth as a band.... You learn a lot in six years, playing 200 shows a year. You learn about yourself, about people and how politics are. You see the changes in your songs," he said. "We've grown as a band. This is a strong band record as opposed to me writing a bunch of songs and going into the studio."

It was, in part, the amount of time Marin spends on the road that was the impetus for Cicada Fest. Many performers who have appeared over the years were people Marin met while touring.

"We've been so lucky. We had Susan Gibson, who wrote the Dixie Chicks' *Wide Open Spaces*, come," he said. "The initial (thought was to have) talented musicians across Canada and the U.S. and local artists who don't have a venue to perform in."

This year, 32 performers will hit two stages between Friday and Sunday, including Julian Fauth, Ariana Gillis, The Dust Devils, The Black Flies, C.R. Avery, Serena Pryne and the Mandevilles, a reunited Duke the Bull, Jesse T. Reid, High Wire String Band and Broken Lyre.

What began as a backyard event at Lepp's Port Dalhousie home is now in its fourth year as a commercial venture. After two years at Club LaSalle, this year's Cicada Fest will take place on Henley Island in Port Dalhousie.

"The facility is incredible; it's on top of a hill and is surrounded by water. There is a cool breeze, a shaded area and you can sit and be nice and close to the stage," Lepp said. "What I like about the area is it's a place people are coming to anyway. The community is supportive of the events as well. In St. Catharines, everything is downtown. It's always a downtown thing and this is not a downtown thing. There is grass and water around us and it makes for a relaxed time."

Aside from the music, the festival will also feature workshops, hosted by members of local group Barnyard Static, and on-site camping.

Last year, more than 800 people attended the three-day event, and Lepp hopes more than 1,000 visitors arrive this weekend. The City of St. Catharines recently awarded a St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program grant to Cicada Fest, the first step to becoming more mainstream, Lepp said.

"We want to be embraced. We are doing something that's neat and unique in the area. There are not other three-day events when you can come and stay," he said.

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Here is a list of performers for this weekend's Cicada Fest, at Henley Island in Port Dalhousie.

Main Stage

Friday-- Mike Maves Band, 6 p.m.; Lofty Pines, 7 p.m.; Serena Pryne and the Mandevilles, 8 p.m.; Ariana Gillis, 9 p.m.; Julian Fauth, 10 p.m.; Duke the Bull, indoors, 11 p.m.

Saturday-- Rod Standish, 1 p.m.; Left on Red, 2 p.m.; Jesse T. Reid, Greg Cockerill and Phil Bosley, 3 p.m.; Thugs @ Bay, 4 p.m.; Steve Payne, 5 p.m.; Indio Saravanja, 6 p.m.; Broken Lyre, 7 p.m.; Kevin Higgins and Barbara Malteze, of The Dust Devils, 8 p.m.; Roger Marin Band, 9 p.m.; C.R. Avery, 10 p.m.; Black Flies, indoors, 11 p.m.

Sunday-- Moonshine Cafe Hour, noon; Greg Cockerill Band, 1 p.m.; Jack Harlan, 2 p.m.; High Wire String Band, 3 p.m.; Brock Zeman, 4 p.m.; C.R. Avery, 5 p.m.; Kevin Higgins and Barbara Malteze, 6 p.m.; Alun Piggins, 7 p.m.; Roger Marin Band, 8 p.m.

Second Stage Workshops

Saturday and Sunday-- Who's on First? -- Opening Act Woes; The Morning After hosted by Indio Saravanja; Perfect Pitch -- And Other Musician Jokes; Northeast by Southwest -- Donut Eaters and Shatner Stealers hosted by The Dust Devils' frontmen; Daredevil Hearts -- Reckless Love Songs hosted by C.R. Avery; Dynamic Duos hosted by Left on Red; Road Songs hosted by Jesse T. Reid; Henley Island Hoedown -- Flat Picking and Grinning hosted by Darren Beaton; Vices and Verses; and Last Night at Band Camp.

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What:Fourth Annual Cicada Fest When:July 9-11

Where:Henley Island, Port Dalhousie

Tickets:Advance \$15-\$40, with camping \$80-\$99, gate \$20-\$50, with camping \$99-\$119 Information: www.cicadafest.com

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