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Summer Solstice Music Festival Impressions From About Town - *repeat story*

photos by Seldovia Arts Council

Local Entertainer Enjoys a Captive Audience!

It's always a lot of fun to perform at the Solstice Festival and Susan is so dedicated to bring in both talented professionals, while encouraging us locals to participate. And personally I've really been blessed to get to jam with different groups of friends each time, and am proud to see other friends that I haven't had the opportunity to play with get up there and go for it and Wow the audience. What a great bunch of entertainers we have right here!



I consistently hear from other performers that it is one of their favorite venues due to the "captive audience". And all the folks

here are very warm and supportive. Also, every year, friends here on vacation say that the performances are top notch and look forward to coming. I'd like to see a few others that I haven't yet seen, that I know can pull something off, we'll see.

Thanks,
Rob Rurka - Seldovia



Kudos to the Organizers of the Solstice Festival!

Kudos to the organizers of the Solstice Festival in Seldovia this last weekend ! I was a first time attendee along with some relatives and was enthralled with the venue, the energy, and the genuineness of the event. Having been a long time festival buff up and down the highways of Alaska, I was especially impressed by the artful and intimate blend of local musicians and the headliners. This isn't always pulled off as well as the Seldovia Arts Council managed to do this. It must be really hard to satisfy everyone's tastes in music style. Having local musicians lends an authenticity and style that is Seldovia and creates pride in the local folks' bountiful talent. It also encourages the young ones to take up an instrument, dance, or sing a song of any kind and make music.

The addition of the performance comedian was a surprise to me and I was at first bewildered and then glued to his act. It all moved so fast there was little time to react and laugh out loud. Brilliant in retrospect. Thanks Seldovia for sharing the town, its beauty, talent and creativity with so many ! Thank you to the organizers and volunteers who spent many hours of their own time creating something memorable for the town and its visitors.

Rebecca Lambourn - Kenai/Seldovia

Thoroughly Entertained!

Ila and I attended our ninth consecutive Seldovia Solstice Music Festival this past weekend and not only were we thoroughly entertained Saturday night but have also been greatly entertained over these past six days discussing it with friends and trading stories of each of our favorite and most memorable moments of this festival and festivals past. We remember one of the first concerts when an off-color artist by the title of Reverend Fair Child unexpectedly took the stage and began a set of songs with less than desirable lyrics. Serious discussion of the purchase of a stage-hook ensued soon thereafter, in order to persuade such characters off the stage.

No stage-hook was necessary last Saturday night however. The audience was given four and a half hours of pure entertainment and ate it up from its opening acts of Irish music to the closing act of a jazz quartet with vocal accompaniment. The "Irish" bands Faolan and Back Alley Banned reinforced the great notion that even Alaskans have 'a wee bit of the Irish in them'. The toe-tapping music would surely have had most of us dancing a jig if we knew the principal's office wasn't just down the hall. What great talent has sprung from the alleys of Anchorage. I hope we hear them again.

The acappella-enthusiasm of Betsy Scott was hard to deny. She packed her fifteen minutes of stage-time to the brim with a wondering blast from the past, Broadway-style. I could feel the audience immerse themselves in her excited energy, and when she sang a song she had written about local beach-logger Joe "Fleck" she sealed the deal.



The confident professionalism of singer-songwriter Jaimie Michaels was worth the price of the folding chair. His guitar playing was crisp and clean and listening to the story-like nature of his lyrics was as comforting as turning the next page on a favorite novel. I wish we could have given him another fifteen minutes. Rob and Carri and Jennifer, The Red Mountain Ramblers, followed suit with a short set of well-done favorites. It is simply a delight to see the giant steps forward these musicians make with each new appearance. The steady lead of Rob backed by Carri's fiddle and Jennifer's pure vocals will no doubt lead to many great evenings of music for us locals well into the future. Their KT Kunstall song, Black Horse and The Cherry Tree, fired up the audience and reminded us that we were there to celebrate the manic days of the midnight sun.

We have seen and heard Robin Hopper and her family many times over the years but her stage presence will never cease to amaze me. What a perfectly well-tuned voice she has indeed. And being the great teacher she is, she had no trouble involving the audience and launched us into intermission with ear-to-ear grins and felicitous faces for one another.

Post-intermission, Robert Post had us following him down a path of magical realism. Robert's style of stage comedy is one nearly extinct in our modern day world of electronic over-stimulation. The pure pleasure of laughter brought on by the hilarious acts of one man on a stage reminding us not to take life too seriously was reminiscent of decades gone-by. He likened himself to the great Sid Caesar and thanked Sid for providing him with a foundation for his art. However, all things considered, Robert has left Sid by the wayside long ago and plunged himself into his own happily demented mind, which became apparent while he was acting out five characters in a hilarious "who done-it" play. Five characters at once. Really. Changing only a hat or hair-piece while ducking behind a two foot wide stage curtain, Robert would emerge on one side of the curtain as a foxy French consort and in one fell swoop emerge on the other side of the curtain as a bumbling English chief of police. Five characters at once, what a challenge. Of course his literal "handy-work" never ceases to amaze the audience, from juggling sticks, to dexterously disjointed conniptions of elbows and phalanges that leave one wondering how safe it would be to stand next to this fellow at a cocktail party. Upon first glance I mused what an easy life it must be to be a stage comedian, but by the time Robert finished it was quite apparent that what he does is in no way easy. He held nothing back, but rather left it all right out there in the middle of the stage. Fantastic.

Featured artist Mary Jane Lamond & Co. brought the dreamy ballads of Nova Scotia to Seldovia and what a perfect match it

was. It was easy to imagine the fog and the ring of Cape Breton's bell wafting over the stage as her melodious voice smoothed the audience as only Gaelic proverbs can do. Saturday's set was a short one for her, yet she managed to allow Wendy MacIsaac a fiddle solo during which Homer-boat-builder Renn Tolman displayed his lust for life and thorough resilience while clogging to the ever-increasing tempo of Wendy's fiddle. Here's to Renn. Thank you for reminding us all to live life to its fullest.

Emily Kurn. What a breath of fresh air. Her's was some of the best poetry I have heard sung in many years. Emily can take simple and mundane images and reveal that even while taking out the garbage our lives play a significant role in the universe. Inspiring.

The night closed with the Dan Mac quartet. Their fluid jazz was familiar yet one of a kind. It was obvious by the well polished numbers that these four musicians love their art and practice it often. Katie Strock joined in with vocals and simply arrested the audience with her version of Van Morrison's "Into The Mystic",

Thanks are not enough, but I'm here to give them once again; Thank you Susan Mumma what a beautiful community you have helped make Seldovia be.

Tim and Ila Dillon - Seldovia

Seldovia Second Time Visitors for the Solstice Music Festival

We had a great time in Seldovia, camping out at the city campground and of course, at the Music Festival. The talent is truly amazing. This is our second year and plan to come again next year. Seldovia is also a very welcoming town so we never feel like outsiders. We are from Montana and have a cabin near Homer.

John and Marilyn - Montana

Seldovia Puts the Aurora in Its Summer Solstice Festival

On Thursday they came streaming into the Tide Pool, bustling, and buzzing, their instruments tuned, ready and waiting. This new catch of musicians came from the four corners of the lower and upper 48 and from the beloved 49th. They gleamed with anticipation, their spirits buoyant, their conversation lively, chatty. They were anxious to play. One said he wanted to ignite our Seldovian Summer Solstice Music Festival. They did that and more!

Robin Hopper's laughter was infectious, her ready smile and wit, bespoke a talented singer-song writer, whose down-to-earth and rhythmic lyrics heartedly beckoned the Friday and Saturday audiences to easy refrains and fun-loving rhymes. Robin's easy manner reminded you of your beloved teacher or favorite auntie. The Hopper Family Band's Alaskan harmonies and tight melodies initiated our Seldovian family into one of the best festivals yet to date and ushered in a renewed corporate spirit of camaraderie and community championship.



Officiating over and weaving all the acts into a seamless musical tapestry was Robert Post, our Master of Ceremony and Master of Surprise. Who can forget his tango with a pair of red long johns, as he and the long johns slithered and dipped their way to ecstatic applause and uproarious delight? Robert's signature persona, the Hapless Burglar was delivered and executed with flawless efficiency, and magician-like expertise. His rapid-fire character changes (not to mention his quick changes of several hats) in his British murder sequence was sheer mastery of a particular genre of comedy lost since the time of the late Milton Berle, but happily metamorphosed here in a zany but clever slight-of- hand. Bravo Mr. Post, do come back again!

As Friday night retired into a harmonious brew of gypsy jazz, blues, boogie woggie, Gaelic foot tapping song, bluegrass, world music and country, the young and young at heart could be seen dancing and swinging to the vibes of Relatively Famous, Tim Davis, Hot Club of Nunaka, Eric Braendel, Radoslav Lorkovic, Mary Jane Lamond, Wendy MacIsaac and Patrick Gillis, Town Creek and to our very own Billy Goat band. Father's day would not have been more memorable without the heart-felt song of a son missing his dad, sung by first-time performer, Tim Davis. The consummate Radoslav Lorkovic ripped and roared, his piano tunes enlivened by an almost spiritual-like fervor was heady stuff. Mary Jane Lamond, sick and nursing a fever was a tour-de-force and that fiddle of Wendy MacIsaac was unstoppable. Wendy's fiddling drew all to dance as a sea of children engulfed the front row. Memorable is little Carmen in her red sarong and her young companions with painted faces, pigtailed and bubble-clips swaying and Irish stepping.

Saturday night was just as heady with lively Irish music, bluegrass, and jazz. Faolan, a group of teenagers who showed the virtuosity of a group more mature and seasoned than their tender years played great Irish music. Back Alley Banned, who are not in the alley anymore, if they were metaphorically ever there, (we guess not), is a band with a singular style and passion that just thrilled the audience, which shouted for more. Followed next was the incomparable Betsy Scott, a 20 year veteran of the theater and yoga teacher extraordinaire Radoslav said that after her performance all he could think of was performing a West-Side Story solo. Jaime Michaels, one-of-a-kind, singer-song writer, inspired us with some universal truths and great guitar plucking. The Red Mountain Ramblers welcomed us into their Southern comfort style of banjoing with much hoopla and festivity. We can still remember Emily Kurn's lyrics to her song, "I'm Just Like You." Dan Mac Quartet rocked the night away. As one of the longest days of year drew to a close, and we could see our Seldovian sun finally setting in the morning hours, we were warmed and comforted with resonating sounds and lasting memories of our shared communal experience which now hibernates in each and every one of us. Thank you Seldovia Arts Council.

Debbie Campbell - Florida

A Chat With Joe

I had the opportunity to visit with the now famous "Joe Fleckenstein" who was the subject of one of Betsy's songs. He was completely surprised - as he had no idea what Betsy was up to - only that she insisted that he come to the festival. Joe has known Betsy a long while and Stu for over 30 years! He has always known that Betsy was such a nice person with a beautiful voice - but he exclaimed more than once that this was "The nicest thing that anyone has ever done for me." He was completely blown away!

It couldn't have happened to a nicer guy!

Thank you to all the folks who generously gave of their time and energy to put together such a great "picture" of this past weekend's activities for the Spotlight! This music festival has become quite an extraordinary event, and we have to thank the Arts Council for their hard work and passion in making this such a fabulous experience for everyone who participates each year!

Jenny Chissus

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