

## Aspen summer brings mountains of music

**By Stewart Oksenhorn**  
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The sound is everywhere these days. Aspen is abuzz with music.

Not music, per se. Those looking for actual live music in Aspen at the moment are in for a painful, fruitless search.

Widespread Panic, with bassist Dave Schools, plays a pair of concerts at Jazz Aspen's Labor Day Festival in Snowmass Village. Aspen Times photo/Stewart Oksenhorn.



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But the talk of the impending summer of music is everywhere. Just a year ago, the mood surrounding the music scene was one of disappointment. That has been replaced by a palpable anticipation as Jazz Aspen Snowmass, the Belly Up, the Town of Snowmass Village and Aspen Skiing Co. have started rolling out lineups that promise to make the upper valley rock like it never has.

"The good old days when the Double Diamond was around, it was raging - but it was only the Double Diamond that was raging," said Josh Behrman, whose dual roles as talent booker for Snowmass Village and the Skico have left him momentarily forgetting a music series or two he is responsible for. "Now we have bookend festivals for the summer, festivals on every mountain. And I love what the Belly Up is doing.

"It was just a few months ago that everyone was saying, 'This town sucks.' Now people are afraid to leave for a weekend."

The explosion is a coincidence of various factors. Jazz Aspen's steady rise became rocketlike with last year's Labor Day Festival, which broke attendance records by huge margins. Michael Goldberg, dismayed by the absence of a music club in Aspen, provided a club par excellence with the Belly Up and has proceeded to fill it with more and more diverse acts than were seen in the Double D days. The Skico, tired of Aspen being branded as a graying fuddy-duddy, saw music as a way to liven up its image.

And leading the way is Snowmass Village. The town's sleepy quotidian existence is about to be transformed by the building of the massive Base Village. But for some years, Snowmass has been building a name as a concert hub, a development that accelerated with the November 2002 passing of a sales tax that provided funds for events like the Massive Music & Movies series. While villagers are dreading the coming sound of construction, Snowmass aims to drown out the white noise with a nonstop parade of music. Between the three Massive Music & Movies weekends, Michael Martin Murphey's West Fest and the Free Summer of Music series, bookended by the Chili Pepper & Brew Fest and Jazz Aspen's Labor Day Festival, Snowmass has 29 prominent music days - and twice as many acts, virtually all of



Bluesman Charlie Musselwhite plays in the Massive Music & Movies series in July.

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"In Snowmass, our goal is to have a reputation as a music destination," said Behrman, who also books independent concerts (mostly in the winter) through his Mountain Groove Productions. "We want to be the Red Rocks in the mountains."

On to the juicy details.

### **Belly Up**

The Belly Up is first out of the gate, reopening Friday, May 27, with an all-ages show by Mike Doughty, former frontman of the defunct '90s rock band Soul Coughing. The club's first summer season boasts a lineup nicely split between old favorites and newcomers to town, acts for the older folks (even one early-evening show) and for all-age audiences.

Among the familiar faces are New Orleans icon Dr. John (early and late shows on June 6); boogie-rocker Leon Russell (June 8); Colorado rock vets the Samples (June 16); and the New Orleans Radiators (June 17). Arriving in Aspen for the first time are alt-country rocker Neko Case (June 2); Los Angeles-based Afro-Cuban Ricardo Lemvo & Makina Loco (June 9); Arizona rockers the Gin Blossoms (June 12); estranged Allman Brother Dickey Betts (June 13); Louisiana soul singer Marc Broussard (all-ages show on June 19); and San Francisco

jam band Tea Leaf Green (June 21).

Deeper into the summer, look for shows by Young Dubliners (July 19) and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band (Aug. 3).

### **Bluegrass Sundays**

*every Sunday from June 12-Sept. 4  
on top of Aspen Mountain*

High on a mountaintop on a summer Sunday afternoon has proved to be a fine place for acoustic gigs. No surprise, then, that the Bluegrass Sundays series has drawn increasingly more prominent acts.

Opening the series is Steel String Theory, a North Carolina outfit whose new release, "Curve in the Road," reveals a talented and innovative band. Other touring acts heading up the mountain: Two High String Band, led by the pair Billy & Bryn Bright (July 17); rising Colorado quintet Hit & Run (July 24); progressive traditional group Crooked Still (July 31); and northern California's swing-grass act Free Peoples (Aug. 14). The series also features the best of the local pickers, including the Flying Dog Bluegrass Band (June 26); Paonia's Sweet Sunny South (July 10); Fryling Pan Bluegrass Band (Aug. 21); Coyote Gospel (Aug. 28); and Lone Pine Bluegrass Band (Sept. 4).



Country-rock singer Shelby Lynne performs in the Snowmass Summer of Free Music series next month. Aspen Times photo/Stewart Oksenhorn.

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## **Chili Pepper & Brew Fest**

*June 17-19*

*Snowmass Village's Fanny Hill*

Don't let the name throw you. Snowmass' Chili Pepper & Brew Fest, entering its second year, is a music festival - with plenty of chili and beer on the side. The lineup, topped by headliners Michael Franti & Spearhead and Keller Williams, makes it not only an eye-catching way to kick off the upper valley's festival season, but one of the most anticipated events of the summer. Keller Williams, a one-man electro-jam band who is a prominent presence on the jam circuit, hasn't played the valley since the '90s; Franti's last local gig, early last year at the Snowmass Conference Center, earned him this paper's best show of the year award. The undercard features eclectic California jammers New Monsoon, alt-country rocker Chuck Prophet and the All the Freaky People Funk Party.

A late-night component has DJ Harry and Lotus at the Blue Door.



Guitarists Camile Baudoin, left, and Dave Malone lead the New Orleans Radiators to a return gig at the Belly Up next month. Aspen Times photo/Stewart Oksenhorn.  
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## **Jazz Aspen's June Festival**

*June 26-29*

*Rio Grande Park*

The June Festival, on which Jazz Aspen was founded 14 years ago, has been eclipsed in attention by the organization's own Labor Day Festival. Good thing the June Fest found a niche two years ago with the relocation to downtown Aspen's Rio Grande Park. This year's lineup includes groundbreaking jazz vocalist Bobby McFerrin, long-running reggae band Steel Pulse, soul singer Boz Scaggs and former Talking Heads leader David Byrne, who will again attempt to play his acclaimed show featuring the Tosca Strings. (Last year's Labor Day Fest appearance was abbreviated due to cold and rain.)

And if the June Fest isn't careful, it may even be overshadowed by its own JAS After Dark component. This year's lineup of late-night shows, mostly at the Belly Up, includes jazz guitarist John Scofield, vocalist Maria Muldaur, keyboardist Ramsey Lewis, New Orleans horn act Bonerama and jazz-funk group Robert Walter's 20th Congress.

## **Snowmass Summer of Free Music Series**

*every Thursday from June 30-Aug. 25*

*Fanny Hill*

The biggest, best, free, bring-the-kids party is typically strong with Louisiana flavor. The series opens June 30 with Buckwheat Zydeco, celebrating the release of their new CD, "Jackpot!" Bandleader Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural Jr. comes with a new trick up his sleeve: The accordionist has added keyboards to his instrument arsenal. Also making the trip from the Bayou state: guitarist John Mooney & Bluesiana (Aug. 4); the subdudes, whose members hail from New Orleans and Colorado (Aug. 11); and Chubby Carrier & the Bayou Swamp Band (Aug. 25).

Rounding out the series: country-rock singer Shelby Lynne, touring behind her new CD, "Suit Yourself" (July 7); roots banjo and guitar master Tony Furtado (July 14); guitar virtuoso Jesse Cook, who combines rumba, flamenco and other styles from around the globe (July 21); Malian singer Issa Bagayogo (July 28); and California singer-guitarist Jackie Greene (Aug. 18), who hopefully won't repeat last year's episode of passing out cold on the Fanny Hill stage.

## **Michael Martin Murphey's Westfest**

*July 1-3*

*Fanny Hill*

Michael Martin Murphey's career peaked with his hit "Wildfire," but it didn't end there. Murphey brings a spanking new CD, "Storm Over the Rangeland," to his annual festival, held in Snowmass for the second year. Joining Murphey are the top singing cowboys, including Dan Seals, of the duo England Dan & John Ford Coley, and Craig Morgan, whose "That's What I Love About Sunday" hit the top of the country charts last month.

## **Sunset Wednesdays**

*every Wednesday from July 6-Aug. 17*

*Sundeck (on top of Aspen Mountain)*

If one day a week of music on top of Aspen Mountain is good, two days has got to be better. The inaugural Sunset Wednesdays series, held Wednesday evenings inside the Sundeck, features a mix of regional and local bands.

Opening the series is Colorado's Newcomers Home (July 6), arriving with accolades for their new self-titled CD. The series continues with California soul singer Samantha Stollenwerck (July 13); 12-piece San Francisco Afrobeat band Aphrodesia (Aug. 3); string band ThaMuseMeant (Aug. 10); and cutting-edge funk band Mama's Cookin' (Aug. 17). Other Wednesdays will feature local acts, including Smokin' Joe Kelly & the Gypsies, Soul Feel and Seventh Hour, with dates to be determined.

## **Massive Music & Movies**

*various dates, Fanny Hill*

Massive Music & Movies brings three weekends of free concerts paired with appropriate movies to Fanny Hill.

The weekend of July 8-9 has blues harmonica player Charlie Musselwhite on day one, with a double bill of New Orleans r & b man Eric Lindell and singer-songwriter Shawn Colvin the following day. No movie has been scheduled. Eighties English post-punk band the Psychedelic Furs, still led by brothers Richard and Tim Butler, open the Aug. 5-6 weekend, followed by the combination of worldly jammers the Derek Trucks Band and Texas funk band Papa Mali. On-screen will be "Pretty in Pink," the 1986 film inspired by the Psychedelic Furs song. The series closes Aug. 27-28, with a concert by the Funk Brothers and the film "Standing in the Shadows of Motown," the 2002 documentary of the band, which comprises the studio musicians behind the Motown sound. Additional acts are still to be announced.

## **Jazz Aspen's JASummerNights Swing**

*July 23*

*Aspen Highlands*

Last year's bash at Aspen Highlands took JASummerNights Swing, Jazz Aspen's annual summer benefit gala, to new heights. This year features a similar format: five top student bands jamming inside Iguana's, followed by Los Angeles funk-rap band Ozomatli under a big tent.

## **Jazz Aspen's Labor Day Festival**

*Sept. 1-5*

*Snowmass Town Park*

And what a way to wind up a mighty decent summer. The Labor Day Festival, which broke through

Widespread Panic, whose three June Red Rocks shows sold out in minutes. The festival, in fact, has been expanded to five days to accommodate Widespread's two-night stand, which includes openers New Orleans avant-funk band Galactic and South African singer Johnny Clegg.

The reunited Loggins & Messina plays Sept. 3 (making for a most unusual segue from Widespread Panic), with Willie Nelson and groove band Karl Denson's Tiny Universe on the bill for Sept. 4.

And if all that isn't enough, seven more mainstage acts plus a handful of JAS After Dark gigs have yet to be announced.

And then there's the rest of the Belly Up lineup. And Glenwood Springs' Summer of Jazz series. Mountain Fair. The JAS Summer Sessions concerts. Carbondale's concert series. The Aspen Music Festival. Main Street Bakery. Steve's Guitars.

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