



Eric Porter

Eric Porter was born in Guatemala City to American parents, David and Kathy Porter. His great grandfather William Porter toured the globe with the original Christy Minstrels.

Eric grew up in upstate NY. He was influenced by Latin, jazz and 60s pop music and played the sousaphone in high school band.



His love of guitar led to work with groups at high school dances and later clubs and theater tours of *Godspell*, *Prairie Passion* and others.

Eric was hired by HBO / Comedy Central to write and perform music for the Emmy nominated *Two Drink Minimum*, which aired 28 live episodes.



He has worked with several major artists including Joan Osborne, Chris Butler, The Waitresses, Ralph Carney, Tom Waits and Charlie Pride.



Eric now lives in Oxford, NY and is busy with several projects and groups performing and recording blues, rock and folk.



WEBSITE: <http://ericporterstudios.com/>

SAMPLE MUSIC: <http://ericporterstudios.com/documents/Lovely-Lillie.mp3>

THE EVENING SUN

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2021



“The Players and the Pirates” performance this weekend

In this created image the actors and musicians performing in “The Players and the Pirates,” an original show put on by Gregson Theater, strike a pose. Performers include Barbara Gregson, Kathy Varadi, Clark Vischi, Eric Porter, and Carl Pickett. (Submitted graphic)

By Sarah Giglio

Sun Staff Writer

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NORWICH — The Gregson Theatre will be putting on their original show “The Players and the Pirates Along the Chenango Canal” at 6:30 p.m., Friday, August 27, and at 11 a.m., Saturday, August 28.

The performances will take place at the Martin Kapel Theater of the Chenango Arts Council in Norwich, and are free to the public.

Performers include Barbara Gregson, Kathy Varadi, and Clark Vischi. Original music and sound effects will be provided by Eric Porter and Carl

Pickett.

The play tells the story of musicians, actors, and magicians traveling along the Chenango Canal, set in the 1870s, according to Barbara Gregson, proprietor of the Gregson Theater. She said it will be based on a tenth century Japanese legend of a musician being ambushed by pirates, who saves his own life with a musical performance.

“It’s based on an old Japanese legend, tenth century, of a musician that was sitting in the harbor ... and all of a sudden he’s attacked by pirates,” she said. “He plays his beautiful song and they say, ‘okay, you’ll live.’ And they leave him in peace.”

The show is based on both the legend and historical research done by the performers and the Chenango County Historical Society. But, all characters in the show were invented and developed by the performers themselves, Gregson said.

“We’re doing the research with the Historical Society. It’s so cool to find out like what actors were traveling through here performing. Like real people, and who were the bandits. And that’s how we’re gonna write it,” Gregson explained. “You’re gonna do the research and we’re gonna maybe give you some ideas, but you’re gonna

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have to create your character.”

Due to COVID-19 concerns and guidelines, officials ask that all audience members wear masks when in the Martin Kapel Theater, as it is an enclosed area. There will

also only be 200 available seats at the show, to allow for proper social distancing.

Both shows are free to attend, but officials will be accepting voluntary donations at the door.

This project is made possible with public funds from the Statewide

Community Re-grants Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and administered by The Earlville Opera House.

THE EVENING SUN

TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 2021

Performers wanted: Theater prepares for upcoming show

By Sarah Giglio

Sun Staff Writer

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NORWICH — Barbara Gregson of Gregson Theater and local musician Eric Porter are seeking performers and musicians for their upcoming show, "The Players and the Pirates Along the Chenango Canal."

They will be holding an information session from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., on Wednesday, June 30, in the Community Room at Guernsey Library. Everyone interested in the production is welcome to attend, regardless of experience.

"We need people," said Gregson. "I'm sure we'll get an audience. It's the actors we need. You know, anybody. They don't have to be experts. Like we say, all creatives want-



Barbara Gregson and Eric Porter of the Gregson Theater. They will be holding an information session for their upcoming show "The Players and the Pirates Along the Chenango Canal" on Wednesday, June 30, in the Community Room at the Guernsey Memorial Library, from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Submitted photo)

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ed.”

The information session will allow those interested to learn more about the production, and Gregson’s creative process when putting together a show.

“Basically show everybody how we work. We’ll do a workshop, a theater music workshop, so they’ll see. We’ll do some theater exercises, games, improvs, and get to know everybody a little. And they’ll get all the information, the schedule. They’ll get to see how we work,” said Gregson.

Rehearsals for the production will begin on July 12 and run through the summer, and end with the performances on August 27 and 28, which will be held at the Chenango Arts Council in Norwich. Schedules will be given out at the information session Wednesday.

The show is made possible through decentralization grants from the Earlville Opera House and the City of Norwich. Gregson said she had received several in 2019 but due to the timing of receiving them, she couldn’t use them until now.

“You apply usually around the fall or something like that, it was all different this year, and crazy. And then you hear about it like by December, and then you get your award,” she said. “So in 2019 we had applied for a bunch of grants, and we got them all, but that’s why we’re doing them all now.”

“The Players and the Pirates Along the Chenango Canal” will be an original piece. Gregson said it is based off of a Japanese legend.

“It’s based on an old Japanese legend, tenth century, of a musician that was sitting in the harbor ... and all of a sudden he’s attacked by pirates,” she said. “And he says, ‘don’t kill me yet, just let me play one song.’ And of course he plays his beautiful song and they say, ‘okay, you’ll live.’ And they leave him in peace.”



The show by the Gregson Theater will follow the legend, but instead of tenth century Japan it will take place along the Chenango Canal in the 1870’s.

Gregson said she has always done original works, and that working with Porter allows her to add in original music as well.

“Always I’ve done original work with the group. So I don’t come in with a script. And Eric does original music. He’ll find like is there a band, who plays what, who sings. Okay, let’s put together original music that’s gonna go with the theater piece, what we’re doing. It’s really fun. It’s the only way I work,” said Gregson.

Due to coronavirus concerns, Gregson is asking that only vaccinated individuals participate, to ensure the safety of everyone involved as masks would hinder performance abilities.

“We’re saying you need to be vaccinated,” said Gregson. “You can’t do it in a small group, you can’t run around with a mask on doing theater or music or singing.”

In addition to creating their own original work, Gregson and Porter will also be doing research with the Chenango County Historical Society to ensure their play is historically accurate.

“It’s honoring the forefathers in this area, who built this whole community, the infrastructure,” said Porter. “Their way of life and how they coped with life. You know, it’s in some ways sim-

pler but in a lot of ways it’s different and probably more difficult for them to pull things off.”

Cast members are tasked with creating their own characters, said Gregson, but added that there is one character they want to make sure to include in the performance.

“One character that we definitely want to have is a concert pianist from New York City, who’s coming by to test out the pianos in the piano factory that was made right here in Norwich,” said Gregson. “So you can see imagining a concert pianist traveling by boat to come and check out the pianos for them in there, and he gets attacked.”

Gregson and Porter also stressed that the production is a group effort, meaning everyone involved is expected to participate in all facets of putting the show together.

“It’s gonna be a collaborative effort,” said Porter. “I mean they contribute to the whole production.”

Gregson added that, “everybody does everything. That’s the thing. Nobody just sits there and does all the acting, and nobody does just the set. Everybody does everything. That’s how we do it.”

“It’s going to be really fun,” said Gregson. “Very creative.”

For more information on the show, contact Barbara Gregson at 607-895-6032, or email her at blgregson@gmail.com.

COMMUNITY

E-mail local items to news@evesun.com

Guitar Heroes!

Chenango Guitar Heroes featured in Arts Council benefit concert Sept. 26



Tom Rasely

NORWICH – The Chenango County Council of the Arts in Norwich announces “Chenango Guitar Heroes,” featuring Tom Rasely, Ron Palmer and Mark Sherwood, and the Eric Porter Trio on Saturday, Sept. 26 at 7 p.m. in the Martin W. Kappel Theater. The concert is a benefit for the Council.

The featured guitarists are well known, popular, Chenango County musicians with strong followings who have performed for many years throughout the area. They have never, however, been seen together in one concert.

Tom Rasely began playing the guitar in 1964, shortly after the Beatles hit the American music scene. As a (mostly) self-taught guitar player, Tom had a vast training in music theory. He studied music at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, and received a Bachelor of Music Ed. from SUNY Fredonia ('73).

Probably the most influential musician in Tom's life was his father Charles W. Rasely. A Juilliard School graduate ('42), Charles was a teacher, singer, composer, pianist, violinist, conductor. He was a man who lived and breathed music.

As a teacher, Tom has taught thousands of players at his private studio. He has also taught at NPM Guitar Schools all across the country, at the National Guitar Workshop in Connecticut, and was the Director of the Norwich Guitar School. Two of Tom's original songs were featured in Fingerstyle Guitar Magazine. Tom has written several guitar instruction books, including the “Chord Chart Guitar Method” (self-published), and “Types and Uses of the Capo” (Mel Bay Publications).

As a performer, Tom has toured 26 states and parts of Canada, and has performed twice at the White House for the Christmas VIP tours. His live gigs also include basic blues seminars, and a variety of background music venues. Tom Rasely's “Guest Artist” appearances include: Holiday Tours at the White House ['98, '02], BC Pops [Binghamton NY], Buffalo [NY] Festival Orchestra, Marywood University Orchestra [Scranton PA], Syracuse [NY] Symphony Pops, The Oneida [NY] Area Civic Chorale.

Ron Palmer and Mark Sherwood are a couple of guitar players who, as they say, “got together through the fickle fingers of fretted fate.”

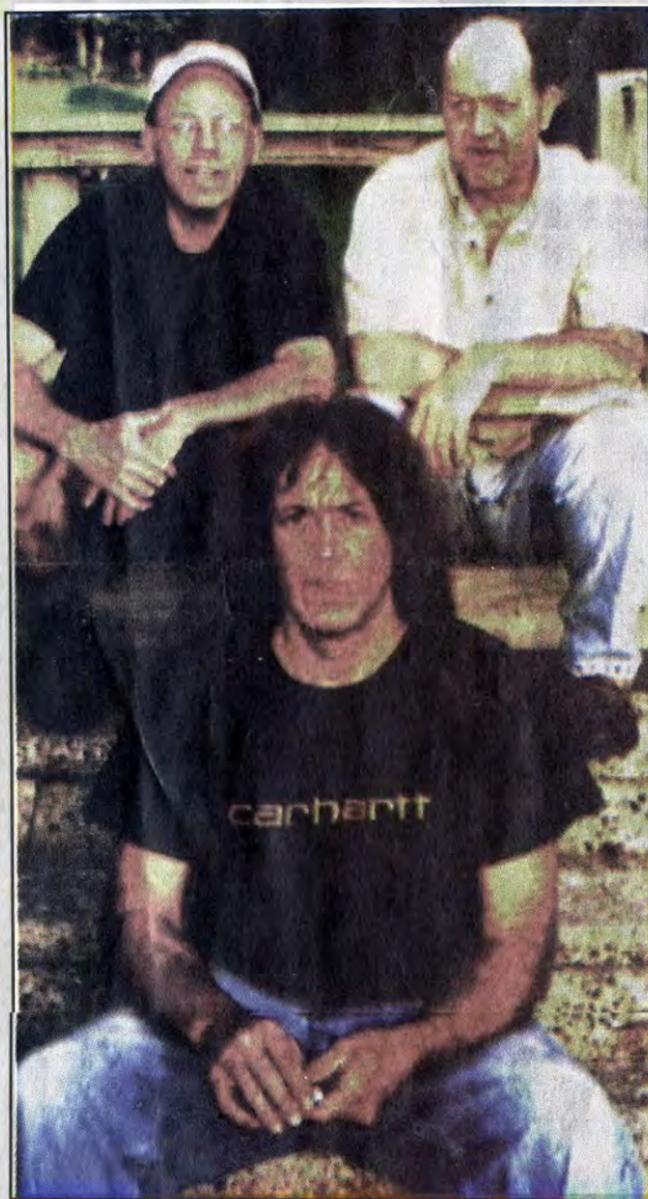
Ron was the lead guitarist in the original Harry Chapin Band from 1971-1974 and is a life long finger-style guitarist.

Mark is a graduate of the Guitar Institute of Technology (GIT), completing the Journeyman Guitarists Program in 1995. He is known for his chord structures and unique melodies, always striving to transcend the concept of who he is as a player.

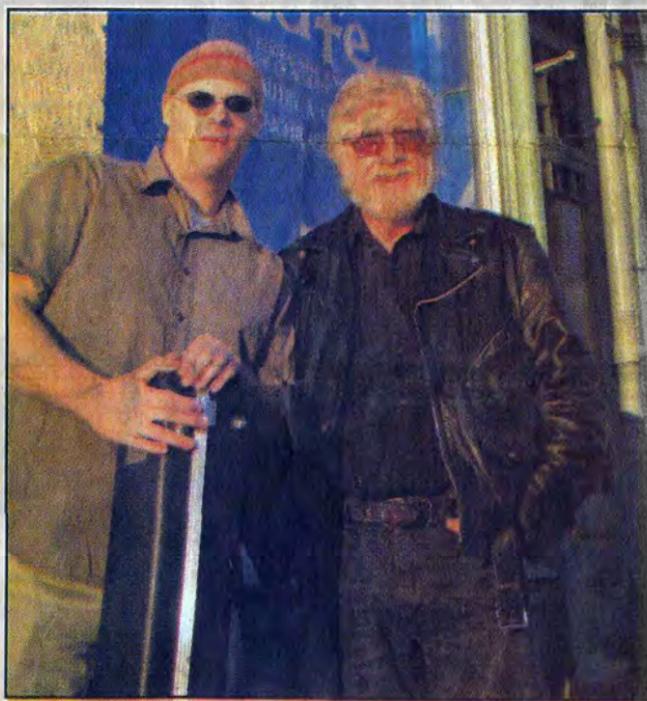
On the evening of Oct. 24, 2004, there was a total lunar eclipse. That night, Ron and Mark put together their first original piece, and named it “Lunar Tune”. It became a kind of blueprint for the way they blend their individual styles into a cohesive and exciting musical experience.

The Eric Porter Trio: Eric Porter, Jim Kolet and Robert Tousignant

Born Eric Glade Porter, Aug. 14, 1958 in Guatemala City, Guatemala to American parents in a musical family, Eric returned to the United States when he was 3 yrs. old. He grew up listening to a lot of Latin music, getting his first guitar at age 4 (a wind-up plastic guitar made by Mattel that played multi-colored discs!) When he was 13, he heard Stairway to Heaven, and realized then that playing guitar was what he wanted to do. Without any formal training, he learned to play by ear and began his musical journey listening to and emulating what he heard on records. Eric soon learned the powerful magic that drew people to music, stating he “would have become a hermit but for my desire to be part of a band and share this new exploration with my friends by forming a group with the dream of becoming rock stars.” Eric has played guitar and sung in a multitude of bands, recording music for radio and television (HBO and Comedy Central), and working as a musician in live theater including Off-Broadway plays. He has recorded in major studios (Hit Factory, House of Music) with recording artists such as Joan Armstrong and Chris Butler of The Waitresses. He has played in and out of New York City and New Jersey, as well as locally, and has composed and recorded an eclectic mix of thousands of songs spanning hard rock, progressive acoustic folk, electronic reggae funk and meditative. Recently he has been



The Eric Porter Trio



Mark Sherwood and Ron Palmer

recording nature sounds to use as ambience. Eric is currently playing club dates with 2 bands (Thistle Dew and What if), and looks forward with great enthusiasm to many more musical adventures.

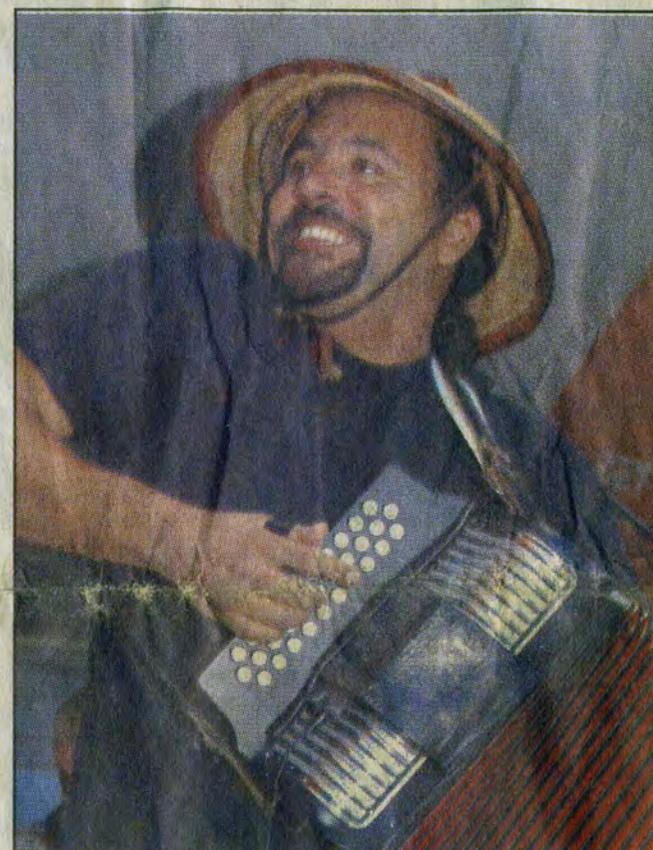
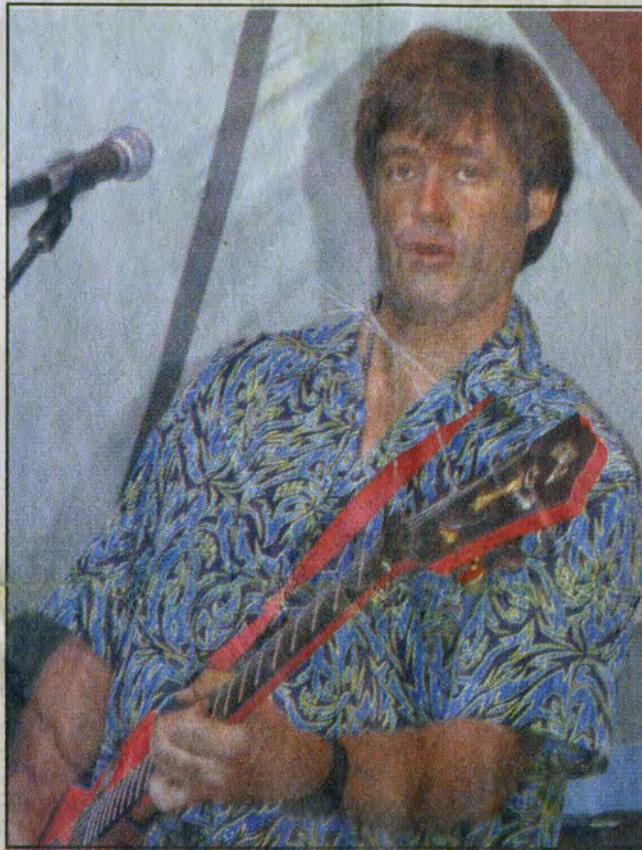
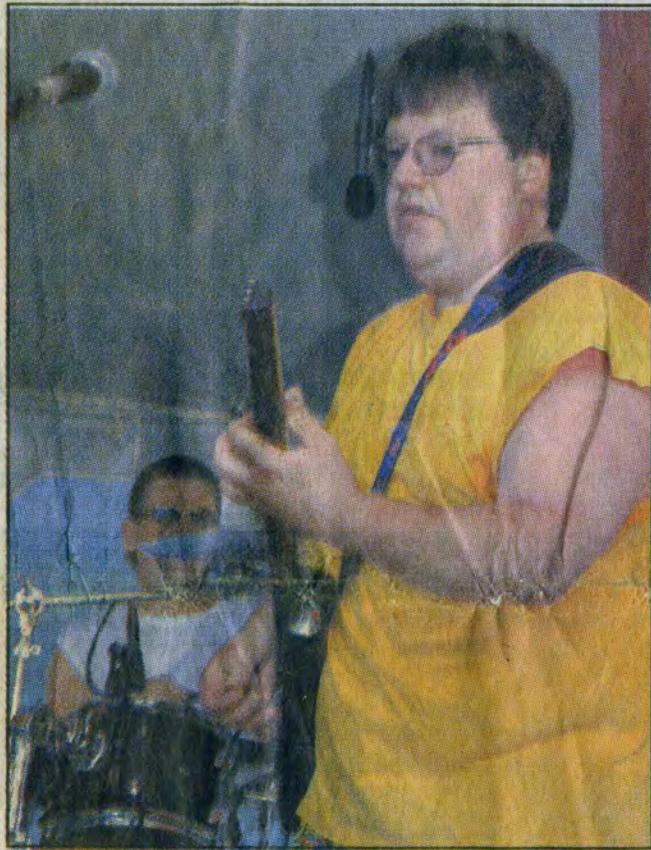
Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Robert Tousignant began playing trap set at the age of 12, which led to conga and bongo drums as well as a rudimentary education in drum and bugle corps. He started playing the drums in school band, which progressed to local music performances in the Troy/Albany region, working with Nick Brignola, a well-known jazz saxophone musician in the area. Upon high school graduation, left to start his musical performance expedition, including performing and recording with musical greats. His band, The Music Explosion, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, and Robert continues to play drums locally.

At age 13 Jim Kolet was given his first guitar, an old Harmony acoustic with only three strings on it. Jim boasts “With only three strings I had no choice but learn to play bass lines on it”. He played his first live performance when he was 15. Throughout his professional career he has had the pleasure of performing with guitarist Kim Simmons, Brian Setzer, Kenny Neal and long time friend Eric Porter, drummers Steve Holly, Pete Mendillo, Rob (Wacko) Hunter and Robert Tousignant, singer/songwriter Carol King and folk singer Jamie Brockett. Jim has shared the stage on numerous opening performances with Benny Mardones, Foghat, Lover Boy and The Outlaws just to name a few. Jim is also an accomplished singer/songwriter.

This may be your only chance to see all these local legends on stage at the same time! Tickets for Guitar Heroes are \$20 and all proceeds benefit the Council of the Arts.

Since 1975, the Chenango County Council of the Arts has provided arts services to the residents of Chenango County and the surrounding region. This is accomplished by focusing on activities that bring the arts and the community together in a rural area. The Council offers a Subscription Performance Series that brings a wide range of high caliber professional performing artists, including a new Chamber Music Series, to our 500 seat theater; a year long series of professionally curated Gallery exhibitions; classes in the visual and performing arts for all ages; grants for individual artists, teachers, schools and cultural organizations; workshops and networking opportunities for artists; and technical assistance and referrals for artists and arts organizations. CCCA is now in its 34th year as a cultural service provider, and has also been administering programs in Broome County since 2003.

The Chenango County Council of the Arts is located at 27 West Main Street, Norwich. Tickets may be purchased online at www.chenangoarts.org or by calling the Council at 336-ARTS (2787).



LIVE IN CONCERT

FRANK SPEZIALE PHOTOS

Local musicians John Natoli and Eric Porter joined Terrance Simien and the Mallet Playboys for a free concert Thursday evening in West Side Park in Norwich. This was the first in a series of four free outdoor concerts sponsored by the Chenango Blues Association. Watch 5:01 for a complete schedule of performers.

FACE THE MUSIC

Music in and around town this weekend:

TONIGHT

ROCK 'N' ROLL

■ Rare Form — Amps, Binghamton.
■ Andrea's Karaoke DJ Dance Bash — Balloons Lounge, Super 8 Motel, Binghamton.

■ Four O'Clock Collection — Corky's Tavern, Binghamton.

■ Karaoke Jeff Decker Style — Country Lounge, Great Bend, Pa.

■ Rockin' Horse — Davy's Last Chance Saloon, Chenango Forks.

■ Giant Steps — Executive Inn, Endicott.

■ Karaoke and Dance Party with Milo — Grand Central, Owego.

■ Cosa Nova (5-8 p.m. on the deck) followed by No Compromise (late night) — The Inn-Between, Johnson City (unwind your mind party on the deck).

■ Thom Rayne — Kara's Kafe, Westover.

■ The Chambers Brothers — Le Bar in the Holiday Inn-Arena, Binghamton (party on the patio).

■ Out of Hand Acoustic Band — Parlor City Brewery, Binghamton.

■ DJ Hammerin' Homer — Roots Tavern 2, Barton.

■ Karaoke with M&D Entertainment featuring Mark and Dianna — Round-One, Binghamton.

■ Dan Cucci (5-8 p.m.) followed by Mr. Clean (late night) — Shenanigan's, Binghamton.

■ Neon Nites — Side-Lines, Johnson City.

■ Dream Catcher — Sidetrack Lounge, Sidney.

■ Freefall — Strike Zone, Binghamton (CD release party).

■ Box of Rain — Tazmanian Embassy, Binghamton.

■ Last Call — Traders Sports Bar, Vestal.

OLDIES

■ The Hurricanes — Number 5, Binghamton.

■ Butch Neira (5:30 p.m.) — Taylor's Place, Rocket Plaza, Binghamton.



The Tampa, Fla., alternative rock band Freaks Rule, above, will come to Thirsty's, 42 S. Washington St., Binghamton, on Saturday night. Joining them will be Eric Porter, at right, and his band The Misfit Toys. Both bands play a mix of their original music and classic cover tunes.





26-SHOW MINIMUM — The pit band for the new HBO comedy show "Two Drink Minimum" is formed from the core of the Legendary Wild Ensemble. Clockwise from left, they are: Eric Porter, Ralph Carney, Chris Butler and Jim Dillman.

Legendary Wild meets HBO

New comedy show uses rhythm section of Hoboken band

By David Cogswell
Reporter staff writer

Chris Butler, drummer of Hoboken's Legendary Wild Ensemble, is the musical director of a new HBO comedy show called "Two Drink Minimum," which has recently been doing taping sessions at Irving Plaza in Manhattan.

"I'm doing the Paul Schaeffer thing with the headset and everything," says Butler. The pit band for the new show is called "Western Shrivelingization." Jim Dillman and Eric Porter, bassist and guitarist of the Legendary Wild Ensemble, and saxophonist Ralph Carney, saxophonist for Tom Waits, make up the rest of the pit band.

They are now in the process of taping 26 shows at breakneck speed, in three- and four-episode sessions. The taping started at the beginning of May and will be finished by the time this paper reaches the stands. The shows are scheduled to be aired starting Aug. 3.

"We worked out 15 eight-second and 13-second

bits," says Butler, "and named them after vegetables so we could remember them. I have a headset on and Jake Johanssen, the host, yells in my ear, 'Cue music!' It's like having God in my headset."

Butler is elated, and exhausted, by the chaotic pace of the taping sessions. "How's this for polyrhythms?" he says, "When they're starting the show, they're counting down in seconds from 10 to one, and I have to count into the beginning of the song. But our songs aren't counted in seconds and we're working with very tight tolerances."

The 26 shows will be finished by Wednesday, May 12. It will have come and gone in a flash.

"It's very neurotic," says Butler, "also very addictive. You're on an adrenaline high for three hours. Then you go home and start again the next day."

Old friends

Butler came to the HBO show through a
see HBO next page

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former band associate. Before he moved to New York to be guitarist and songwriter of the Polygram recording group the Waitresses, he was in a band from Akron called Tin Huey. The band played often in New York at the Mudd Club, Hurrah's and Irving Plaza, coincidentally where the new show is being taped. The keyboard player in Tin Huey was Harvey Gold, now a video producer, and the producer of "Two Drink Minimum." When he was putting together the show and needed a band, he called Butler.

Tin Huey itself is being reincarnated. "We are now going through 30 hours of tapes of Tin Huey that we're trying to massage into some sort of releasable shape," says Butler. "This band recorded everything. The demos were better than the record."

Tin Huey released one Warner Brothers album called "Contents Dislodged During Shipment." The title came about at the last minute. "The test pressings we

received back from Warner were all bent. The Post Office had put on a sticker saying 'Contents Dislodged During Shipment.' We didn't have a title yet. The shipping gave us the idea."

Music for laughs

Playing a comedy show, the zanier and more theatrical side of the musicians is being encouraged. Ralph Carney, who was also in Tin Huey and recorded with the Waitresses, plays sax, slide clarinet, whistles, hooters and tweeters. He sometimes plays two saxophones at once. Besides playing drums and acting as band leader and banterer, Butler plays "busted-up band instruments."

The show's title is "an old nameplate they're bringing back," says Butler. There are three comics per show.

"We're already feeling regrets about it stopping on Wednesday because it feels like summer camp," said Butler. "On the other hand it will be nice to play something longer than eight seconds." □

Local band leads off fairground festivities on Friday

BY MELISSA STAGNARO
Sun Staff Writer
mstagnaro@evesun.com

NORWICH – Search as you might, you'll be hard pressed to find much information on Thistle Dew, one of the bands featured at this weekend's Chenango Blues Festival. They're not much more than a footnote on promotional materials distributed for the event, but members of the local band don't seem to mind.

In fact, they're hoping it will only add to their mystique and help draw out a crowd as they make their Blues Fest debut in a free show at 7 p.m. on Friday night at the Chenango County Fairgrounds.

For the last year, Thistle Dew has been making a name for itself playing at local venues, but each of the talented musicians has quite a story to tell. After all, how many local bands can claim to have a bass player who has toured with the likes of Carole King and opened for Foghat? How about a guitarist who has not only recorded with Joan Osborne and Chris Butler, but also made a name for himself as a studio musician, recording 28 episodes of the Comedy Central hit, *Two Drink Minimum* and a host of others for HBO?

If you're still not impressed, try topping this: a Rock and Roll Hall of Famer on drums, who has performed both on *The Dick Clark Show* and at Carnegie Hall and played with Neil Young and Crazy Horse, Joe Walsh and the Jones Gang, the Beach Boys, Deep Purple and Fifth Dimension, just to name a few.

Because Thistle Dew has all that and more with bass player Jimmy John Kolet, guitarist Eric Porter and percussionist Bob Tousignant, who earned his Hall of Fame spot with The Music Explosion for their 1967 hit "Little Bit O'Soul."

Rounding out the group is Mike O'Connor on keyboard and what the band considers to be



Thistle Dew will take the stage at 7 p.m. Friday as part of the free show kicking off the Chenango Blues Festival. The local group will feature, from left, Mike O'Connor on keyboard, bass player Jimmy John Kolet, songstress Jes Sheldon, guitarist Eric Porter and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Bob Tousignant on drums.

the true feather in their cap, the powerful voice of songstress Jes Sheldon.

"She has such a wide range," Kolet said, explaining that the band largely allows Sheldon to pick the music. Her eclectic tastes and vocal range have lead the band toward a sound they describe as "rock'n'blues r&b," with a little bit of funk thrown in.

"I vividly remember going to the library when I was 8 or 9 and getting records," Sheldon said. At that age she was already listening to jazz, big band music, blues and soul, she

explained. And she still does, along with hip hop, metal and just about anything else she can get her hands on. All of those influences have "trickled down" into her music, she says.

"I try to choose songs that are going to be challenging," said Sheldon, adding that she strives to select songs that feature the individual talents of each band member and are familiar to audiences without being overplayed.

Their repertoire features everything from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Thistle Dew opens Blues Fest –

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Motown, soul, blues, jazz and classic rock to popular music. "We can throw out Joan Jett or Blondie," Tousignant explained, if it helps them work the crowd. At a recent gig, they even introduced a little Led Zeppelin to the mix. They absolutely draw the line, however, at Bob Seeger.

"We're not a juke box," Porter laughed, as he and his bandmates recalled a partic-

ular night where one enthusiastic fan made repeated requests for the artist.

The name Thistle Dew is in part a homage to their Chenango County roots, but the band also likes the play on words. "This will do, that will do," elaborated Tousignant. "A little of this, a little of that."

One thing that is undeniable is the affable rapport between band members, each of which said they

often sit back and think or say, "I love this band."

"I feel blessed," Sheldon said. "They have given me so much. I've been able to learn from their experiences and they have more experience than I'll ever be able to get on my own. ... They stand behind me literally and figuratively and for that I am endlessly grateful."

By playing at Blues Fest, the group hopes to springboard their local success to a

higher level, Tousignant said. The next step will be writing and performing original music.

Whatever their musical fate, there is one thing for certain. When Mitch Woods and his Rocket 88's take the stage after them on Friday night, they will be a tough act to follow.

For more information on this weekend's events, visit www.chenangobluesfest.org

