

TBAC Guitar Summit coming up

By **DIANE SPEER**
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It's a delicate question and probably one with no right answer.

Who is the best guitarist to ever play at Alpena's Guitar Summit?

Greg Adamus, the event's creator and producer, can't narrow it down either, but he does have some ideas on some of the standout talent that has graced this popular event about to celebrate its seventh installment.

"Certainly, the most technique belongs to Nate Montgomery. The guy who knew every tune backwards, if necessary, was Wayne Kendziorski. The most spirited was Ethan O'Brien," Adamus said. "When you asked the guys together, they all agreed Pete VanVlerah was the master 'old man.' But, when it came down to

crankin', spankin', down-with-it, dirty dog rock guitar, I give the trophy unquestionable to Larry Daoust. That guy could make his guitar cry and his amp melt."

Starring all locally grown talent, the Guitar Summit is sponsored by Thunder Bay Arts Council. First started in 1999 and held only every two years or so, the next summit will take place this Saturday at 7:30 p.m. at the APlex. Doors open at 6 p.m., with locally famous Tony Burgers being sold.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and free for students. The tickets are available at Neiman's Family Market, LeFave Pharmacy, Alpena, Alcona Area Credit Union and at the door.

Adamus was the impetus for starting the Guitar Summit because he saw a need to provide a venue for local

musicians to be heard.

"When I arrived in Alpena in the late '80s, local musicians weren't fairing too well," he said. "There were lots of great players who weren't getting heard, unless they played gratis for fundraisers. TBAC developed a new mission statement that included a focused support of hosting live shows featuring local musical talent."

Decades before this, Alpena had a Red Stocking Review and then an In Concert for local talent, but Adamus said it got to be repetitious, dated and predictable.

"Nobody was presenting pure, unfettered rock 'n' roll as a staged concert anywhere in Northeast Michigan," he said. "I asked TBAC to take a great risk and fill that void."

He admits it was not a unanimous vote at the time and now jokes that he threatened to put on an Accordion Summit if he didn't get the necessary support. Looking back, he credits Duane and Judy Beyer, Midge Connon, Jerry and Maggie Lamb, Nat Szczukowski and Pat Buck, who as TBAC board members helped to make the event happen.

According to Adamus, the event has been gauged as successful for three reasons:

1. All six previous Guitar Summits have earned standing ovations from the audience.
2. All six have ended up in the black in terms of ticket sales versus production costs.
3. All the local talent have substantially increased their fan base as a result of the Guitar Summit appearances.

Over the years, the duo of Dr. Jim Weeks and Dr. Dave Larkin, known as House Call, have been the only act to play all six previous Guitar Summits. They are scheduled to return again this year.

As Adamus considers the event's history, he remembers a lot of outstanding talent coming to play.

"Certainly the Frost alumni were a huge presence at most of the Guitar Summits," Adamus said. "Donny Hartman, Larry Daoust, Dick Wagner, Dale Eubanks always rocked the house. Pete VanVlerah was a Guitar Summit veteran who played originals and audience requests. Wayne Kendziorski thrilled every musician lucky enough to jam with him on

the GS stage. All these guys are top-shelf, professional players who can hold their own with the best anywhere."

Adamus also singled out several father and son acts, including Randy and Jim Bouchard, Larry and James

Daoust, and Dave and Conor Larkin. Homegrown talent brought in off the road from downstate included Nate Montgomery and Melissa Behring.

"I also remember a stomping Catholic priest who blew the house down

on blues harmonica - Father Patrick Mahar," Adamus said. "Last but not least, Bobbing Pirahnas simply killed on their featured set, with Ethan O'Brien ably trading licks with the old guard as well as teaching them new tricks."

This year's featured musicians



Bobbing for Pirahnas: Conor Larkin on bass and vocals, Ethan O'Brien on guitar and vocals, and James Daoust on drums and vocals.



Randy Bouchard



Dave Larkin and Jim Weeks



Last Shot: Gary Irving and Don Smigelski on guitar, Ron Cadarette on drums, Larry Lafleure on vocals, Kevin Stepanski on bass and Kat Tomaszewski on sax.



Steve Rea and Tim LaFleche

Guitar Summit VII
Saturday,
January 28
7:30 p.m.
APlex

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folks - For me, this is my final hurrah, the big finish, the last edition. I have officially resigned from the Arts Council and will have relinquished all duties and obligations after Saturday night. It's been a heck of a 21 year run for me, and the Summits have been my lifelong highlight and contribution. For the last five summits, my only thought during the standing ovation last bows was always "Damn, how am I ever gonna top this?" Well, I know we're gonna. This is the best lineup ever, and all we have to do is remember to relax and have fun. The music will take care of itself. From the bottom of my heart, thanks to every one of you for letting a shmuck like me mix it up with talents like you. I am both lucky and grateful.

Greg

