

LEDGER DISPATCH

Mighty Cash Cats' tribute to Johnny Cash

By Gwen Bohdan

American music icon Johnny Cash made his mark in the world. On Aug. 4, the Mighty Cash Cats, a Johnny Cash tribute band, makes its mark on Sutter Creek.

Michael Jay, front man for the Mighty Cash Cats, has been involved in the music scene for decades. When he noticed the popularity of Cash's cover tunes he was playing in his country/rock band, Jay was inspired to devote an entire act to the top-selling recording artist.



The Mighty Cash Cats come to Sutter Creek Theater Aug. 4. Photo courtesy to the Ledger Dispatch.

"I always thought highly of him," Jay said. "Not just as a musician but what he represents as an icon — how he did songs about falling in love and heartbreak."

Whether it was the traditional ballads or original songs about Native Americans, prisoners and the down-trodden, as well as the humorous, "One Piece at a Time" and "Boy Named Sue," Jay found Cash's recordings inspirational.

"I wanted him and me to be together, but I didn't want to be an impersonator per se," Jay noted. "Although people say I look like him and sing like him, I wanted to do it right. He was more than a musician and singer."

Jay is a former history teacher who studied Cash's music for a year before putting the band together. The chronological timeline of Cash's life is reflected in the show. The Mighty Cash Cats offer a behind-the-music glance at the man in black.

“He wasn’t just the hard-living rebel with the iconic image of flipping the bird,” Jay said. “There’s more to him than that. So I decided to put a group together and try his music as accurately as possible, and put a narrative to it in a humorous way.”

The group has been fairly successful. The Ventura County resident and his band have toured throughout America, Europe, Israel and other places.

The Mighty Cash Cats show starts with Cash’s early tunes, such as, “Folsom Prison Blues,” “Ring of Fire,” and “Walk the Line,” then segues into the duets Cash recorded with his wife, June Carter. MCC bass player Leticia Blumette covers the female vocals.

“I felt that so much of what defined Johnny was June Carter,” Jay noted. “And duets are a lot of fun. Everybody loves ‘Jackson’ and ‘Long Legged Guitar Pickin’ Man,’ and ‘If I Were a Carpenter.’”

Blumette also does a few Carter solos, and a tribute to the Women of Country Music — Shania Twain, Gretchen Wilson and Patsy Cline. Toward the end of the show, MCC perform the newer material from Cash’s American Recordings, which were overseen by rock music producer Rick Rubin. Jay talks about Cash’s experience with Columbia Records, the company that fired him in 1983.

The Mighty Cash Cats take the stage Aug. 4, at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$16 in advance, \$18 the day of the show, and can be purchased online at suttercreektheater.com, or in person at the Heart and Soul Boutique next door. All ages are welcome. Sutter Creek Theater is located at 44 Main Street. For more information, call (916) 425-0077.

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