

Split Lip Rayfield lands at home

„ The band returns to its hometown for a concert that will benefit the Kansas Aviation Museum.

BY STEPHANIE BARNARD

Eagle correspondent

The Kansas Aviation Museum wouldn't mind if people saw it not only as a place to absorb aviation history but also as a place to "have fun and participate in exciting events," says director Lon Smith.

To that end, and to help out the museum financially, a benefit concert featuring Split Lip Rayfield and Carrie Nation will take place on the museum grounds Saturday night.

The bands and audience will be flanked by several planes on display, including a 737, a KC-135 and a B-52.

The concert will be a homecoming of sorts for Split Lip Rayfield, a bluegrass group that began in Wichita but has gained a large national following. It's been a while since the band played in its hometown, said vocalist and mandolin player Wayne Gottstine.

The band just finished up a West Coast tour with another group, The Railroaders, and has several shows in Nebraska and a stop at a Colorado festival planned after this weekend.

"We're always on a constant state of touring," Gottstine said. The band has also been writing and plans to begin work on a new album within the next six months.

The trio of Gottstine, bassist/vocalist Jeff Eaton and vocalist/banjo player Eric Mardis has continued to thrive after the death of guitarist and co-founder Kirk Rundstrom of cancer in February 2007. Gottstine said concert tickets and band merchandise — including the first post-Rundstrom album, "I'll Be Around" — are selling well, despite the economy.

The band, he said, just keeps "chugging along."

"Same old everyday work grind," he said. "We're a band, just playing lots of shows, writing a lot of stuff and .æ.æ. trying to keep it rolling."

Smith said he hopes to attract about 2,000 people to Saturday's concert. Proceeds will be split with ROK ICT, a local arts promotion group that is acting as management for the event.

Smith, who has a background in the entertainment business, wanted to involve ROK ICT in his event to show his support for the burgeoning local music scene.

"It's apparent to everyone that if you go downtown on Fridays and Saturdays, there's a lot more happening now than there was even two or three years ago," he said. "We wanted to do our part to help build that energy."

He promises concertgoers a diverse experience, including seeing the planes on display and a chance to tour the museum before the show. Opening act Carrie Nation takes the stage at 7:30 p.m., followed by Split Lip Rayfield at 9, but doors open at 5:30.

"This is one of those bands that has a very broad appeal," Smith said of Split Lip Rayfield. "Young people like them, but an older crowd would probably enjoy them as well."

For his part, "I'm looking quite forward to playing on the tarmac," Gottstine said. "Hope it's not too warm."



Courtesy photo

Eric Mardis, Wayne Gottstine and Jeff Eaton make up Split Lip Rayfield, which is taking a break from touring to play at the Kansas Aviation Museum Saturday night.

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