

Folk Musician to Perform Locally

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Local folk singer Mac Johnson will be appearing at Bear Mountain Coffee House and Gallery in Magdalena between 6 and 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 4, in a performance to benefit The Grizz Project.

Johnson, who plays both a six-string and 12-string guitar, said he became interested in music at about the age of five.

Of course, music is in his genes. His grandfather and great-grandfather played at the Grand Ole Opry.

His great grandfather was Mazy Todd. Todd played fiddle with Uncle Dave Macon, and was a fiddler on many other records. Mazy Todd recorded 28 tracks in 1927 with Uncle Dave Macon and Sam and Kirk McGee.

"I would sit on the floor and listen to my grandfather play," said Johnson.

That was all the inspiration he needed. It wouldn't be long after that before he was performing in public.

"My first time singing in front of people was for the Cub Scouts when I was seven," said Johnson. "It was a song about space travel to the tune of 'I've Been Working On The Railroad.'"

Five years later Johnson acquired his first guitar for \$20 in Houston, Miss.

Through the ensuing years, Johnson improved his skills at the guitar and began performing songs made popular by his favorite folk singers.

"I learned a lot of John Denver songs," said Johnson. "Jimmie Rodgers, Don Williams – I like cowboy songs, even some Ann Murray and Peter, Paul and Mary. But I would have to say my greatest influence has been John Denver."

He hasn't kept a heavy schedule over the years, "mostly just playing for tips and friends," he said, but he did perform at the National Sweet Potato Festival in Jackson, Miss., a few years ago.



Mac Johnson will perform at Bear Mountain Coffe House and Gallery in Magdalena between 6 and 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 4.

Courtesy photo

Johnson also sang at the Socorro County Farm Bureau meeting last month.

Johnson prefers to perform acoustic sets as a single, as opposed to having a band.

"I prefer performing solo," said Johnson. "It gives you an opportunity to express yourself honestly. I like the intimacy with the crowd. Folk music, in general, works best that way. I get a special feeling relating with audiences in small venues like Bear Mountain."

Besides his upcoming performance in Magdalena, Johnson recently recorded four songs for a demo CD.

Johnson recently concluded a session at George Murrillo's studio in Hop Canyon. There are two covers and two songs on it that he wrote, "Mississippi Highway" and "The Stick Horse," which he says are the ones everybody seems to enjoy.

"George is amazing," said

Johnson. "He not only produced the tracks, he did backup on the keyboard. Hopefully we can get together to do a whole CD's worth next year."

The demo CD will be for sale at the Dec. 4 show.

"I want to do more of a holiday show this time," said Johnson. "Some familiar songs and some things they haven't heard in a long time."

The Grizz Project is non-profit organization based in Magdalena dedicated to helping people find solutions to problems of unwanted, abused or neglected animals through a spay/neuter program.

Tickets for the dinner and concert are \$10, while tickets for concert are \$3. Advance tickets for dinner and show are available at Bear Mountain Coffee House, located on Highway 60 in Magdalena, and at the Mountain Mail, 413 California St. in Socorro.