



The Haints • Rafe Stefanini photo

round in most every community you could name, emphatically including the Oceanside region. I say 'emphatically,' as we really are spoiled for choice in this respect.

One such night, set rolling by Celtic Chaos' Joyce Beaton, is the brand new 'Qualicum Acoustic Café'. Beaton promises: "an event committed to the sharing of community, acoustic music, poetry, storytelling and more." Held from hereon in at The Rotary House, on Fern Road in Qualicum Beach, on the first Friday of the month, October's launch night was a great success, with close to a full house.

"We opened with a fabulous open stage," Beaton enthuses, "with a variety of music and spoken word from performers from Courtenay, Nanaimo, Bowser, Nanoose, Errington, Hilliers, Cumberland and Ladysmith!" Blimey O'Riley – it's a wonder there was enough space for an audience!

At just \$5 cover (under 12's attend free), it's obviously a bargain night out. "Open stage performers are given complimentary dessert and coffee or tea," continues Qualicum Acoustic Café's esteemed host, "with Creekmore Coffee donating the coffee." Future presentations promise much, with local blues legend, Gerry Barnum (Nov. 7), and the superb old-time string band, The Haints (Dec. 5), booked to cap 2008. Anticipation is especially high for the latter act, bringing together as it does the extraordinary fiddling skills of Gibsons' Erynn Marshall; Pharis Romero of Victoria's bluegrass wonders, Old Social, and her master banjoist husband, Jason.

Andrea and Adam MacKinnon's Courtyard Café (at 673 Memorial Ave., Qualicum Beach), meantime, provides the venue for an all-inclusive experience where, for a snip \$30, dinner with coffee, tea or selected

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## COFFEE HOUSE CONCERTS: MUSIC + COFFEE = A HEADY BREW

BY DAVID MORRISON

I'm really big on quotes. With each passing day, I hope to collect at least one more nugget to add to my sparkling collection. From the extremely silly to the intensely profound, I've many favourites. I mention this because two compatible blinders readily spring to mind in respect of this look at Oceanside's Coffee House Concerts scene.

Firstly, more or less embodying my *raison d'être*, a Nietzsche classic: "Without music, life would be a mistake." Then, encapsulating my singular vision upon bumblung kitchenwards each morning: "Bring me a bowl of coffee before I turn into a goat." Johann Sebastian Bach apparently

said that. He was obviously as dryly droll as he was nifty at fugues and stuff.

So it may be apparent that I view both music and the coffee bean with reverence. This would indeed be true. Moreover, a combination of the two induces in me paroxysms of ecstasy. A Coffee House Concert, therefore, is theoretically not far short of my idea of Utopia: if the talent on show is as rich as the roast, life in those moments is as good as it gets.

Associated mostly – though not exclusively – with folk music culture, Coffee House Concerts by their very nature are usually delightfully intimate affairs. This social concept is extremely popular on Vancouver Island, with regular events staged year-

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refreshments and all musical refreshment come as a bumper package. December's (12) featured performer is the ever-popular blues-rock hottie, Layla Zoe, but November (28) brings a swift return for The Rockin' Rebels. An accomplished retro covers band, their September appearance prompted local reporter John Roberts to gush: "Wow! What a performance! Next time they're in town, book a seat! Fast!" I would heed his words, if I were you.

Held on the first Saturday of every month, Errington War Memorial Hall's Coffee House Concerts take the open mic approach. "The artists who want to perform show up at the door and it's basically first-come, first-served," explains EWMH Association President, Raechel Drew. "Each person gets about twelve minutes, which works out to about three songs," she continues. Performers get in free, otherwise it's only five bucks for what is a legendary evening. First staged in the seventies, this night attracts such a generally high standard of local acts that a series of CDs called A Taste of Errington has been issued. Capturing excerpts of some particularly memorable performances, there have been three volumes to date. Karma Coffee donates the coffee for the Errington Hall events.

Coffee House Concerts are great. With an emphasis on interaction, participation and the simple pleasure of gathering in a cozy space with members of your community to enjoy music, food and drink, they could hardly be anything but. Inexpensive, excellent value and culturally vital, these seemingly simple affairs run deeper than you may consider, as genuine examples of the glue that holds our society together. You can quote me on that. ~

For more information:

*Qualicum Acoustic Café - Joyce Beaton: [jbeaton@shaw.ca](mailto:jbeaton@shaw.ca)*

*Courtyard Café - Andrea & Adam MacKinnon: 250-752-4152*

*Errington War Memorial Hall: [www.erringtonhall.bc.ca](http://www.erringtonhall.bc.ca)*