

Lake Tahoe music scene changes with the season

By Susan Wood

If there were any doubt Lake Tahoe tourism through the generations is as much about the synergy between its beauty and recreation as its leisure activities and nightlife, consider this: even the bands who play here want to take part in its splendor.

Hence, New Zealand's Sola Rosa band leader Andrew Spraggon telling *Lake Tahoe News* before his recent late-night performance at MontBleu's Blu Nightclub that as a first-timer to Tahoe he was just as interested in playing on his snowboard as he was his multi-track techno keyboard. The band, which stands for "sun and rose" in Spanish, brings out a vibrant following of young dancers enjoying what Spraggon calls a "groove music rally." The "winter welcome" party for ski resort employees was no exception.



It's not unusual for music at Blu inside MontBleu to start close to midnight.

Photo/LTN

“I can’t think of a place to have three free days between dates than Lake Tahoe. I’ve always wanted to come here,” Spraggon said. A change in schedule cut the visit short, but he pledged to return – with his board.

Tahoe offers that perfect mix of daytime sport and after-hours frolic. And as summer’s distant past gives way to winter’s promise, some of the South Shore’s largest players in activities, and specifically the music scene, are hosting a huge lineup of bands and acts.

Warning: If you’re older than 40, you may not recognize the band names.

During the three days leading up to the new year, South Lake Tahoe’s city officials have teamed up with Lake Tahoe Community College to bring to campus the inaugural SnowGlobe festival, which city spokeswoman Nancy Kerry says is “definitely targeting a younger crowd.” Billed as a “mix of mountains and music,” the featured bands include: Bassnectar, Pretty Lights, Thievery Corporation, Glitch Mob and Childish. (Note: Doctor P won’t make it.)

There’s no secret here in Marketing 101. The casinos and the ski resorts – working hand in hand – have noticed the consistent double-digit growth of the snowboarder market, which brings a younger demographic of millennials and Gen Xers from November to April. In line with the U.S. Census’ 9.7 percent population growth, sports participation went up 6.9 percent in the last decade, the National Ski Areas Association reported last year.

Baby boomers had their day, or season, with Delta Blues singer Keb Mo at Harrah’s South Shore Room and Florida-based disco group K.C. and the Sunshine Band at MontBleu this year.

In winter, the young rule. The Cataracs play Dec. 30 at MontBleu. Others include The Expendable Winter Blackout Tour 2012, Iration/Trevor Hall/Thrive and 311/Dirty Heads.

“There is definitely a seasonal strategy when promoting shows in Tahoe. I like to bring in acts that will cater to the majority of visitors in the market, so during ski-snowboard season it just makes sense to present headliners that would cater to a younger demographic. Acts like 311, Whitney Cummins and Iration definitely will hit that core group of young people who are here for the snow activity,” said Paul Reder of PREpresents, a longtime entertainment booking agent on the South Shore.

Even young families will find something in it for them. Magician Tony Clark will return to Tahoe at the Horizon for a show called Illusion Fusion.

Still, you’ll need to be 21 or older for a few shows down the street at Harrah’s this winter. Fitz and the Tantrums and G. Love & Special Sauce for example are expected to bring out large crowds numbering more than 1,000 for the weekend Winter Snow Blast events, so the casino would like more control on alcohol consumption.

Come Jan. 21, Young the Giant is expected to bring out the younger set at Harrah’s as the main event for Tahoe Snowcial, a coordinated effort with Heavenly Mountain Resort. The ski resort is focusing its marketing on the deemed “trendsetters” – those who want “to pack as much into their vacation as possible,” Heavenly spokesman Russ Pecoraro explained.

“This type of music is more like alternative or even college bands,” Harrah’s entertainment guru John Packer said.

With what the show Rain did with the Beatles music, Harrah’s is continuing a legacy of mixing generations. The Hollywood Stones tribute show to the Rolling Stones slated for Jan. 7 will kick off an exuberant lineup to the casino’s South Shore Room.

The South Shore Room does include acts for the boomers. Expect Kenny Loggins to continue going footloose Feb. 18. And one may

only hope rocker George Thorogood, slated for March 17, can still play his guitar behind his head.