

Bend Up Close: Jerry Leach Makes Most of Music, Managing Ticket Mill

by K_Guice

When Jerry Leach went on vacation to Mexico, he had no idea it would lead to him living in Bend and managing the Ticket Mill in the Shops in the Old Mill District.

The 29-year-old native Oregonian was passing through Northern California when it struck him that it was time to move to Central Oregon, the place where he had spent many of his childhood summers.

“Before I even crossed back into the state line, I knew I was going to move,” Jerry said. “I got back into Eugene, quit my job, packed up my little truck and moved over.”

The Ticket Mill, 425 Powerhouse Drive, Old Mill District Jerry Leach and Allison at The Ticket Mill
Jerry didn’t have much of a plan or a job, “My cousin and his wife live in Sunriver and they had been bugging me about coming over and playing some music with him,” he said.

So, that was Jerry’s original plan. “We were going to live in the same place and later move up to Portland and work on our music; that’s what led to where I am now,” he said.

Now that Jerry is where he is, there are no immediate plans of going anywhere. “Things really changed for me,” he said.

When I first got here, I put in resumÃ©s everywhere," he said. "I ended up working at the D&D Bar and Grill waiting tables but I couldn't stay doing that kind of work."

So, he took this gig temporarily at the Ticket Mill. Jerry was told he could work three days or three weeks, whatever worked for him. Then he took a job in Sunriver closer to where he originally lived.

"Then I was asked to come back to the Ticket Mill to fill in for a few days," he said. "They asked me how I was liking my job! I told them that I hated it," he laughed.

It was news the management was happy to hear and they immediately offered Jerry a job managing the Ticket Mill.

"After learning a lot more about the Old Mill District and the Les Schwab Amphitheater, I really enjoy the work I do," he said. "I get to talk to lots of different people."

Interacting with people about concert events is right up his alley. Jerry has played a wide variety of venues and is a true insider to the music scene, which has helped him communicate better with customers.

“I think it helps immensely,” he said. “When you play a lot of shows, especially a relatively unknown, you talk to a lot of strangers.”

“You get good at talking to a lot of people and figuring out what they need, so you can cater to what they want,” he explained.

“It also helps if you can throw a little lingo around,” he said. “It helps them feel more comfortable when they are putting that cash down on a ticket.”

Jerry says he is not the big sale maker at the Ticket Mill; those are kudos he saves for his sidekick, Allison.

“She is responsible for most of the ticket sales,” he said. “She really does most of the work. She is the PR person.” Allison is Jerry’s two-year-old whippet and the most popular dog around.

“She has her own Myspace page at www.myspace.com/ticketmill,” he laughed. “Old Mill is a very dog-friendly place. She comes to work with me everyday and really does help.”

So, what does Allison get out of it? "I wish she got a paycheck," Jerry joked. "I think she likes it. She gets a lot of attention, she has her own work food and water dish and we keep treats on hand."

Allison also helps Jerry with his volunteer work with the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon. "It's an organization that is important to me and a nice organization to work with," he said.

However, Jerry doesn't feel like he deserves any accolades. "It's so much fun and I get an excuse to do a bunch of things I would not otherwise be able to go out and do," he said.

They play video games, go bowling, joke around and have lots of fun. "Those who are able to volunteer can really make a difference in a child's life who doesn't have a positive male role model."

When Jerry isn't working or helping improve a child's future, he is working on his own. "I'm also in a band called Ego Maniac," he said.

Like Allison, his band has a Myspace page at www.Myspace.com/egomachine. Most of his band mates live

in the valley.

“Since moving here we have been playing a lot less,” Jerry said. However, he has been working towards his own solo career.

“I am working on an album of my own,” he said. “Hopefully, we will see how Bend responds to my solo music.”

So, Jerry says everyone should keep an eye out for him. However, there is no rushing perfection. “I’m taking my time,” he said. “I’m in a new city, I want to do it right.”

“I don’t want to do what I did in Eugene, bouncing all over the place,” he admitted. “I want to publicize the show and have an album to sell for people who like the music.”

Is that something he learned working behind the music scenes at the Ticket Mill? “It would be ridiculous to say I haven’t been learning,” he said. “I have been learning quite a bit about the business.”

“I try to ask as many questions as I can and hopefully use it down the road,” he added.

In the meantime, Jerry is enjoying the perks of getting to know the people and side benefits like seeing all the fantastic concerts that come through town.

Some of the upcoming events he is looking forward to include the Bend Brew Fest this weekend that is free.

“Then there is the Bonnie Raitt and Keb Mo concert on September 7th,” he said. “It is going to be an awesome show.”

Another event he recommends is geared towards a younger audience, AFI with Tiger Army on September 3. “It’s nice to see bands that are more youth oriented,” he said.

Jerry hopes the wide variety of concert choices will continue to help increase attendance and he is trying to help spread the word about the great venue.

“I really want people in Bend and in Central Oregon to see what a beautiful amphitheater this is,” he said.

It is the very beauty of both his work environment and of the city that he is most content with. “You don’t feel the same kind of despair in the morning,” he said. “I wake up in the morning excited to come to work.”

The simple fact of the matter, according to Jerry, is that it is hard to be frustrated when you are walking to work in the sunshine, down the river with your dog.

“It’s great,” he said. “Ultimately, there is a nice sense of community and you couldn’t ask for anything more.”

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