The 26th annual Moab Arts Festival returns May 26-27

by By Sharon Sullivan Moab Sun News
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Artwork by more than 100 regional artists, cultural performers and live musicians is what you’ll find at the 26th annual Moab Arts Festival at Swanny City Park during Memorial Day weekend. And, it’s free to attend.

Fine art, jewelry, pottery, body and bath art, fiber and textile art, wood sculptures, glasswork and other creative arts will be on display and for sale by the artists. Additionally, arts organizations, such as the Grassroots Shakespeare Company, Moab Taiko Dan, and Native American hoop dancers
will give performances at either Swanny City Park or the Moab Valley Multicultural Center.

“We’re getting recognition,” as a vibrant arts community, said Moab Arts Festival founder and executive director Theresa King. “Come hang out; it should be nice. A good couple of days to relax, listen to music, be artistic. It’s one of my favorite events.”

The family-friendly festival includes lots of creative kids’ activities throughout the day. There’s story-telling and poetry, activities to make tye-dye, newspaper art, and sock puppets, pony rides courtesy of Canyonlands Rodeo, and more. Kids of all ages will also have an opportunity to help paint a special Arts Festival mural with artist Tony Savarese.

Magician Rick Boretti, of Moab Backyard Theater, will perform his magic at Swanny City Park, and at the Moab Valley Multicultural Center where activities will be happening in conjunction with the festival from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

Native American hoop dancers, led by Joseph Secody, will perform a traditional dance at noon Saturday at the multicultural center. The hoop dancers perform again on Sunday at the park.

The Grassroots Shakespeare Company will build a stage in a corner of Swanny City Park where members will perform Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer’s Night Dream” on Saturday, and “The Two Noble Kinsmen” on Sunday.

And, as if all of that creativity wasn’t enough reason to visit Swanny City Park, there’s more: Music coordinator Melissa Schmaedick has ensured a memorable lineup of musical acts for both Saturday and Sunday.

The David Steward Jazz Quartet will open up the weekend music at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, followed by a performance at noon from Moab Taiko Dan, a percussion group that combines Japanese-style drumming and inspiration from the Utah desert.
At 1:30 p.m., the Salt Lake City duo Oskar and Julia will perform what they call their “sauce rock” music. The Cass Clayton Band (Clayton and Taylor Scott) will then perform starting at 3 p.m. Clayton is “known for her smoky, 3-octave vocal range and slide guitar playing.”

“She was Colorado Blues Society members’ choice award winner for 2017,” Schmaedick said. “She’s predominantly blues style, combined with a little jazz and gospel.”

Scott, a national and International touring guitarist and singer-songwriter whose latest CD was co-produced by Los Lobos member Steve Berlin, and Henry Garza, of Los Lonely Boys, will perform with his own band at 4:30 p.m.

Tony Holiday and the Velvetones, a group Schmaedick noted for its “widely acclaimed harmonica player,” will close out the music Saturday with a performance starting at 6 p.m.

The music resumes Sunday at 10:30 a.m. with Quicksand Soup, a four-member local band featuring Sand Sheff, Tamara Freida, David Steward, and 19-year old upright bass player Alan Snow.

“It’s very old-timey, and original acoustic western music,” Schmaedick said.

Sunday also includes musical performances by JT Draper, Pixie and the Partygrass Boys, and A.J. Fullerton.

There will be a wine and beer garden at the park, as well as an array of food vendors, including Yummy Town Food Truck, Yia Yia Concessions, Sweetwater Gypsies, and more. Barbee Sonnet Cotton Candy will also be for sale as it has been for 25 of the past 26 years of the festival.

Popular Memorial Day weekend event continues to foster vibrant arts scene

When: Saturday and Sunday, May 26-27
Where: Swanny City Park, 156 N. 100 West

Cost: Free

Info: moabartsfestival.org