

Kirby Sewell Band bringing the blues and a lot more to Empress Theatre

Written by Richard Amery

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If you feel like a road trip this weekend to hear some blues and a lot more, Calgary's the Kirby Sewell band are playing the Empress Theatre in Fort Macleod, Nov. 19.

The poster features a black and white photograph of three band members against an orange background. The text on the poster includes:

EMPRESS THEATRE
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PRESENTS
THE KIRBY SEWELL BAND

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- Calgary He

THE KIRBY SEWELL BAND IS AN ELECTRIFYING CANADIAN BLUES ROCK EXPERIENCE. REACHING OUT WITH MODERN INTERPRETATIONS, THE 5-PIECE BAND TELLS MELODIC HEART PULLING STORIES THAT COME FROM THE DEPTHS OF AN OLD SOUL, WHILE BREATHING NEW MUSICAL LIFE INTO A GENRE.

Logos at the bottom: Fort Macleod, Alberta Government, ATCO Gas, Canada, Macleod Gazette.

While they have been playing for eight or nine years, they just took home a Maple Blues Award for Best New Artist for their third CD "The Girl With the New Tattoo."

"I think this is the first time a Maple Blues Award has come to Alberta in about 20 years,"

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observed frontman Kirby Sewell.

The band includes drummer Jim Johnston bassist Jae Cho. Producer/ guitarist Neil Gunhold is behind the scenes working on the albums and writing songs for Sewell to sing.

“He’s a great songwriter. He really knows how to write for my voice. I’ve got the chops and he’s got the songwriting ability,” he said.

They are pleased with the new CD.

“It did win a maple Blues Award, he said, noting they have sold 12,000 CDs, mostly in Alberta.

“Morgan Turk just left the band and he was a big part of the band’s guitar sound, but we have Jay Strabo with us now. So I don’t know what will be next. We might form a new project. We’ve got plans though,” he said.

While the band has played all around Lethbridge, they have never actually played Lethbridge. “We’ve played Blues at the Bow and we’ve played Medicine Hat and we just opened for Blue Rodeo in Drumheller, which was amazing,” Sewell said.

They are more than just a blues band as they incorporate a variety of influences including country, gospel, R and B, jazz and pop music into their sound.

“People call us visceral,” he said.

“I’ve got a big, bluesy voice, so people call us a blues band. The blues is more about a feeling than a chord progression. A good friend of mine calls the blues a mother of everything. There are a lot of break up songs that are so powerful because of the blues,” he continued.

{youtube}J8V7GCDUJpw{/youtube}

“We’re not a pigeonhole band. We write dark and beautiful music but also funny,” he said.

Kirby Sewell Band have shared stages with Colin James, Burton Cummings, Blue Rodeo,

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Trombone Shorty, Monkey Junk, Coco Montoya and Downchild Blues Band. and have played a variety of North American music festivals from San Jose to Salmon Arm Blues and Roots Festival. they have also played big festivals in Toronto and in Ottawa at the Parliament buildings.

Sewell is more than just a singer. He spent a month in the Indonesian island of Java building a house for Habitat for Humanity.

“ I’ve played fundraisers for them before, but never been on a build. And the reason I was there, is because we were doing a crowd funding for an Eastern Canadian tour. We were playing someone’s back yard, but the guy who won it didn’t have a back yard so he gave it to a friend who had one. And he’d been on tons of those builds. I usually feel bad as a musician asking for people for money, but if it weren’t for shaking all of those hands and meeting people, I never would have been able to go on that build,” he said, adding it changed his perspective on life.

“I came back to this election after seeing these people who had zero. People are their currency. And people here whine. I’ve whined myself. But it really changes your perception over there. Just imagine having to pay for your own hospitals and roads,” he said. Kirby Sewell band are appearing as part of the Empress’ Centre Stage Concert Series lineup for 2016 – 2017, Kirby Sewell Band tickets are \$35 each and available at www.macleodempress.com , by calling 403-553-4404 (toll-free at 1- 800-540-9229), or at the box office on Main Street. The show begins at 7:30 p.m.

— *By Richard Amery, L.A Beat Editor*