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Section: Art

German Beer, Americana Music at Rocktoberfest

Rich Freedman / Times-Herald

Funny thing about a collapsed lung. Well, funny after surgery repairs the problem. Seems singing is the perfect rehab exercise. And that was perfect for Lucas Ohio. As the front man for Lucas Ohio & The Shamblers, singing is what the man does.

"After I was released from the hospital, I had a gig within three days," Ohio said. "The doctors said 'keep singing, it strengthens your lungs.'"

Roughly two years later, "all is well," said Ohio, a 27-year-old whose Americana music parallels his family's American roots as pioneers in the early 19th century.

Ohio -- born Lucas Ohio Pattie -- takes the Shamblers that include Vallejo's Don Bassey to the Masonic Lodge tonight for a "Rocktoberfest" celebration. Proceeds from the 6 to 11 p.m. festivities help fund the Vallejo Rotary Club's community project.



From Left to Right: Don Bassey, Don Fox, Lucas Ohio Pattie, Steve Trovao

Patrons can expect "some high energy, original material and some really awesome

classic covers," Ohio said. "A little bit of this, little bit of that appealing to all ages."

Not unlike most musicians, Ohio performs nights whenever possible while working the bill-paying job in the day. For almost two years, he's worked the coffee and tea area for Whole Foods in San Ramon. And, actually, has performed a handful of gigs at the store, including a free Nov. 4 appearance.

"It's a cool gig," he said. "I never thought I'd play a grocery store."

Working around food isn't new for Ohio, who earned a degree from the College of Agriculture at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. He moved to the East Bay two years ago, surrounding himself with Bassey on bass, Don Fox on guitar, and Steve Trovao on drums.

Actually, Ohio planned on moving to Nashville when he met Bassey at a home concert in Pleasanton. "I wasn't sure I was going to be sticking around and Don said, 'If you don't go, look me up,'" to play some music, Ohio said. "I called him up and we started playing at his home in Vallejo. He recruited a couple of players he played with in the 1980s and we started working on songs."

Ohio figures the band's repertoire is up to "30 or 40" tunes, several which get unveiled tonight for Ohio's first Oktoberfest appearance. "And I'm excited about that," he said. "It's a good thing."

Ohio said Americana -- and his own mix of rock, folk blues and country -- "is picking up steam more and more" across the land. "It's a good genre to be in," he said.

The more Lucas Ohio & The Shamblers play, the more Whole Foods customers recognize the guy working the coffee.

"A guy came in yesterday, 'Hey brother, you still rockin' and rollin'," said Ohio.

No matter what, the musician said, a performer can't get lazy.

"Nobody knows who you are unless you're really out and working it no matter how good you are," Ohio said. "If you don't get out there and put the time in, it doesn't matter what you do or what you play."

Ohio said his regular gym work-outs pay off, not just for the sake of his formerly damaged lung but his overall health.

"I've played some four-hour gigs. Those are just intense," he said. "Talk about a work-out. And I have a tendency to sweat when I play, so I try and make it a habit to keep towels with me so I don't look like I'm on a treadmill up on stage. You're moving around, dancing and singing, putting it all out there."

Formerly employed in the wine industry and landscaping business, Ohio still has that dream of operating his own microbrew, even growing the hops on his grandpa's farm in the Santa Cruz mountains.

"It's one of those dreams where you're all in or all out," Ohio said. Right now, his music is the focus. Not that he couldn't play, work in the grocery store and keep an eye on a microbrewery. After all, he comes from stock that ventured to the Southwest and Southern California in the 1820s.

"It's kind of cool to come from an adventurous family," Ohio said. There is one gig he hopes to play some day: The tiny town of Lucas, Ohio, population around 700. "I'm thinking about getting in touch with someone over there," Ohio said.

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