

SHOWCASE

EMERALD COAST'S ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

NORTHWEST FLORIDA

Daily News

OCTOBER 5, 2007

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TALKS ABOUT
MUSIC, KATRINA**

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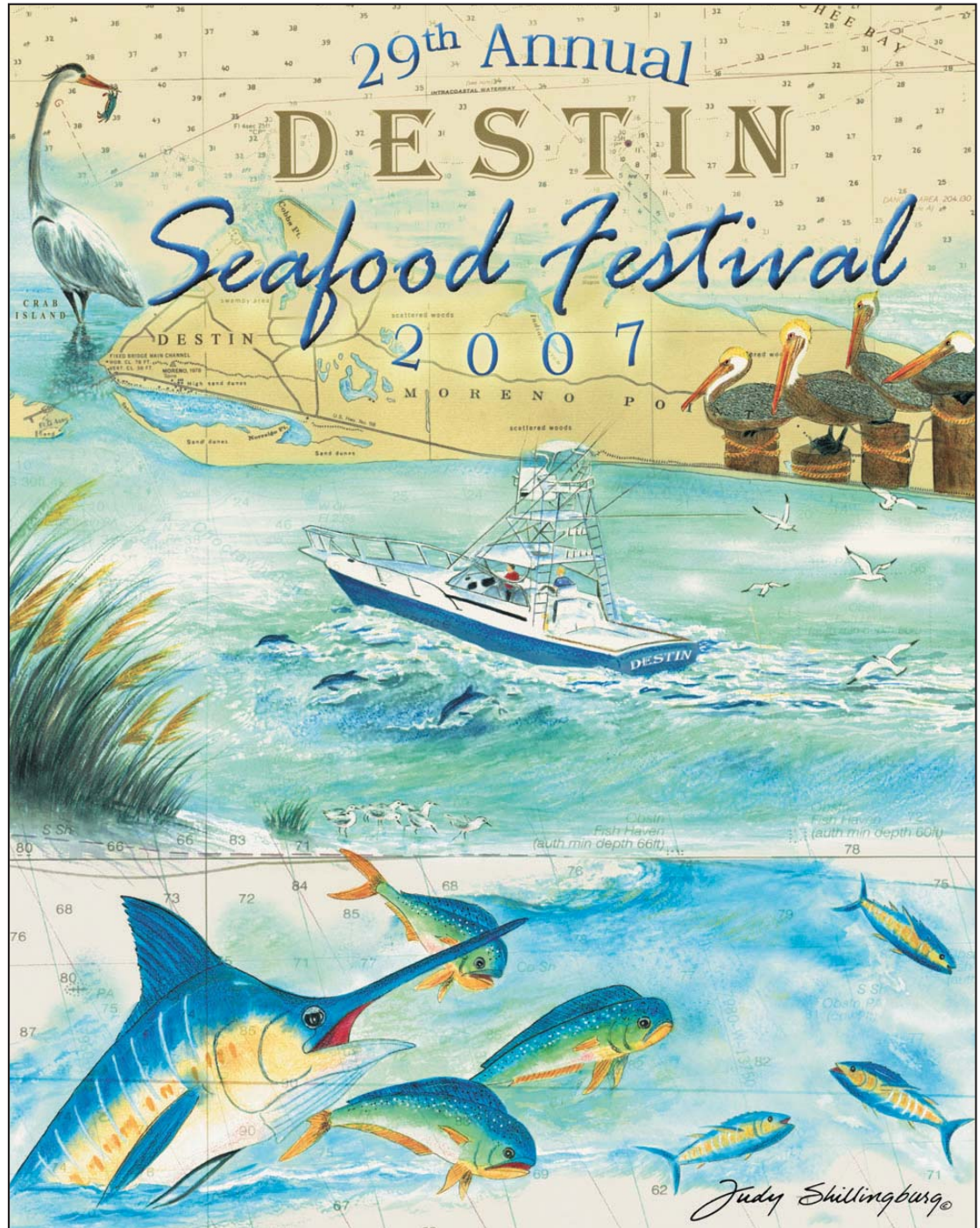


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COVER STORY

29th Destin Seafood Festival boasts full plate

From staff reports

DESTIN – The 29th Annual Destin Seafood Festival at the Morgan Sports Complex today through Sunday includes four headlining acts and 10 local seafood restaurants.

Admission is \$5 per day or \$10 for the entire weekend. Children under 12 are admitted free. Stop by the Destin Area Chamber of Commerce to pick up admission passes or get them at the gate.

Hours are 4-10 tonight, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday. Morgan Sports Complex is behind City Hall at 4200 Two Trees Road. Bring lawn chairs for seating.

Tonight's headliner is Telarc recording artist Tab Benoit at 8 p.m. Saturday features a headliner triple shot with Ambrosia at 4 p.m., Atlanta Rhythm Section at 6 p.m., and Mark Farner, formerly of Grand Funk Railroad, at 8 p.m.

Local favorites, including Dread Clampitt, Chuck Lawson and the Coconut Crew, Sal Salaz Project, and Jones and Company, also join the line up.

Benoit's 2006 release "Brother to the Blues" received a Grammy nomination for Best Traditional Blues Album. (Also see separate interview story)

Ambrosia has earned five Grammy nominations and multi-platinum status. Past hits

By **BRENDA SHOFFNER**
Entertainment Editor

Even though he has a lot to say, Louisiana blues guitarist Tab Benoit hasn't written many songs in the last couple of years.

His new album, "Power of the Ponchartrain" on Telarc, includes only one tune by him, "Sac-au-lait Fishing."

"That's the only song I've written since (Hurricane) Katrina," Benoit said in a telephone interview last week. It's an uptempo number about a freshwater fish that most people call a "crappy."

"I have to get away from everything to write. I gotta spend some time in the swamp and the woods.

"The hurricane destroyed my camp where I did a lot of my writing."

Benoit grew up and still lives in Huoma, which is southwest of New Orleans. He's familiar with Northwest Florida and returns to the Destin Seafood Festival tonight at 8 to perform after playing at the event last year.

"I love it," he said. "I spent summers working there. That's our beaches."

In 2006, Benoit received the Blues Music Association Award for Contemporary Blues Album of the Year. This year, the Blues Music Association named him Contemporary

include "Biggest Part of Me," "How Much I Feel," "You're the Only Woman," and "Holdin' on to

Yesterday." After its release of 15 albums and more than 30 years of live

Benoit puts feeling for Louisiana into music



Blues Artist of the Year and B.B. King Entertainer of the Year.

Even so, Benoit says he doesn't really have a plan when he

records an album or performs, often with Louisiana's LeRoux who will be with him tonight.

"I just try to keep it in the moment," he said. "We start going through songs, and what's going on in my life right now is what's going to come out.

"I don't really think of myself so much as a guitar player as I do an artist. A guitar just happens to be my paintbrush.

"I actually learned to play drums first, so I tend to play from a drummer's approach. Feelings are the most important thing. You have to create a feeling first."

A feeling that is important to Benoit is honesty. "If it feels honest, then I can deal with it. If it feels forced, then I don't want to deal with it.

"Performing live you're gonna have an audience to help you through it. They can take a little of the pressure off. In the studio, you have to do it all yourself, and you

keep trying to do it better."

Benoit's roots in the swamp run deep, and his concern for it prompted him to found the non-profit conservation organization Voice of the Wetlands in 2003. He also contributed musically to "Hurricane on the Bayou," a documentary by McGilivray Freeman that is playing in IMAX theaters in North America and Europe.

Benoit thinks people already have forgotten the devastation wrought by Katrina and blames the media and slow-moving government bureaucracy.

"I just want to encourage people to go visit New Orleans and Southwest Louisiana. There are so many things that need to be done.

"Take a little a trip there. See what the 9th Ward looks like," he said. "E-mail Congress. We've got to put some of our money and time into keeping up our country."

He's glad for the attention other celebrities, such as Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, have brought to the area but, he says, "We're not fixing the foundation."

"They're rebuilding houses that are just going to flood again. New Orleans flooded because of levee failure, not because of the hurricane, and that hasn't been fixed. A tropical storm would flood it again.

"Next time it floods, no one will come back."

shows, the Atlanta Rhythm Section is a major player in the Southern Rock movement. Its biggest hits include "So Into You," "Champagne Jam," "Imaginary Lover," and "Spooky."

Farner is the former voice, guitarist, and songwriter of one of the 1970s biggest bands, Grand Funk Railroad, which earned 12 platinum and 15 gold albums. Hits include "We're an American Band," "Foot-Stompin' Music," and "I'm your Captain (Closer to Home)." Farner also has released albums as a solo artist.

The Southern Restaurant Group's five local restaurants, The Back Porch, Café Grazie, Fisherman's Wharf, Louisiana Lagniappe and Pompano Joe's, will return this year.

They will be joined by three of Legendary Inc.'s local restaurants, Grande Vista Bar & Grill, Rutherford's 465, and Tony's Ristorante.

Hammerhead Fred's and Landry's Seafood House also will serve favorite dishes.

Legendary is the festival's corporate sponsor.

In addition to live entertainment and local seafood, attendees may enjoy more than 60 booths in the arts and crafts area, fun activities in Tadpole Town sponsored by The Emerald Coast's Family Magazine On the Coast, Live Bait for Life's cast net contest, and more.

The Destin Seafood Festival was recently named a Top 20 Event for October by the Southeast Tourism Society. More than 25,000 people attended in 2006.

Event parking is available at The Track Recreation Center, Emerald Coast Centre, and Grace Lutheran Church. Parking is available at the church today, Saturday, and Sunday after 12:30 p.m.

Call 837-2711 or visit DestinSeafoodFestival.org.

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