# Martin, Brickell and dazzling fiddler delight fans



Steve Martin and the Steep Canyon Rangers featuring Edie Brickell played to a sold-out showroom Out. 5 in Stateline. Photo/Provided

**By Kim Wyatt**

STATELINE – A few minutes into the finale, “Auden’s Train,” I wondered if Nicky Sanders had sold his soul – the Steep Canyon Rangers’ fiddler stole the show at the MontBleu showroom Saturday night. Mashing up songs from “Norwegian Wood” to the “Nutcracker Suite March” and bluegrass is no small feat, and it’s the song I wanted to track down long after the curtain fell.

Despite the headliners being Steve and Edie (this joke almost seems intentional), the sold-out show should have been billed Steve and Nicky. Steve Martin and the Steep Canyon Rangers featuring Edie Brickell in An Evening of Comedy and Music played a tight, funny 90-minute show to an appreciative audience of fans old and new. But it was the fiddler on fire who carried the 14-song set featuring classics and freshly penned tunes alike.

Martin kicked off the night by welcoming in the crowd at MontBleu in his best Inspector Clouseau accent – MontBleu does sound better when said this way – taking note of the median age of the audience. Noting he'd first played in Tahoe 40 years ago, he said it was good to see them again. "There are lots of familiar faces in the crowd, and I'm not kidding," he joked. There was no shortage, however, of bearded young men, facial piercings and fedoras. Some came for the comedian, others for the music, and all got their money's worth at a smokin' hot show, punctuated by a cool Brickell.

After a round of jokes, Martin and the five-man bluegrass band Steep Canyon Rangers blasted into "Katie Mae," a number that allowed each band member to showcase his instrument, including a memorable mandolin jam by Mike Guggino. Rousing tunes followed in which each musician had a chance to shine: Woody Platt providing luxurious vocals and guitar, Graham Sharp on the five-string banjo, Charles R. Humphrey III on the upright bass rounding out the band.

Martin and friends ran through songs from Martin's solo Grammy-winning album "The Crow" and "Rare Bird Alert," recorded with Steep Canyon Rangers, who met at a party in North Carolina four years ago, about the same time Martin began to play the banjo professionally. The pace was raucous, broken up only by Martin's comedic banter, and it was as welcome as the tunes.

His humor was topical: Divining messages from his "banjo tuner," Martin claimed to receive an email stating, "They just turned off Niagara Falls," referring to the government shutdown. Some of the heartiest laughs of the evening came during the tune, "Atheists Don't Have No Songs" – a Martin-penned nod to the influence of gospel in bluegrass –"They'll never sing a song of faith/In their songs, they always have a rule/Their 'he' is always lowercase."

Wearing suits like accountants at a hoedown, Martin led the

Rangers in toe-tapping, hand-clapping fun. Against a line-up of banjos, guitars and seldom-used stools, these cats worked it. When Martin excused himself for a beer from the standing bass that doubled as a refrigerator, the Rangers held their own with divine vocals that got some of the biggest applause of the night.

Martin is no slouch as a musician, showing range on Scruggs-style and clawhammer tunes, and particularly worthy on a duo with Sanders, homage to banjo great Earl Scruggs called the "Fiddle and Banjo." This crowd loved this number, with many in the audience unable to take their eyes off master fiddler Sanders.

The entrance of Brickell, previously with the New Bohemians, was understated. The Texas-native's songwriting prowess is the foundation of her collaboration with Martin; the pair just released an album, "Love Has Come For You." Performed to enthusiastic audience, the title track featured a rootsy vocal that sounded straight from the holler, and the haunting "Remember Me This Way" showcased Brickell at her melancholy best.

But back to the fiddler on fire.

As the band crested "Auden's Train," – yes, homage to W.H. Auden, and to trains – band members crowded to the right of the stage opposite Sanders, seemingly in awe of his heat, building to a standing ovation, followed an encore with two numbers that brought another standing O.

Even though the jokes were polished to a fine grain, Martin delivered them as if for the first time, making it feel like an intimate jam session. The blend of stellar musicianship and comedy made this a show to remember, and not to be missed if this train passes through again.

Martin, upon bidding adieu to MontBleu as Inspector Clouseau, agreed, as the group claimed the International Bluegrass

Association Entertainer of the Year Award in 2011.

“If you didn’t enjoy the show tonight, you’re wrong.”

He was right. I’ve never seen such a happy crowd file out of the MontBleu showroom. When asked of what could have made this show better, one concert attendee said, “A dance floor!”

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# Opinion: Calif. GOP congressmen fine with shutdown

**By Dan Morain, Sacramento Bee**

Rep. Paul Cook, a first-term congressman from San Bernardino County, is not crazy, and he’s not radical.

But along with 79 of the wackiest conservatives in the House, Cook signed the letter that helped bring about the partial shutdown of the most powerful government the world has ever known.

“What a mess,” Cook said by phone from Washington, shortly before heading to the floor to cast more votes in the Republicans’ futile and probably self-defeating attempt to defund the Affordable Care Act.

Rep. Mark Meadows, a freshman from North Carolina, wrote the letter in August to Speaker John Boehner. FreedomWorks, the slick and heavily funded tea party group, helped line up support for it.

Most of the signatories to Meadows’ letter are from Southern

and Midwestern states. No members from Oregon, Washington or Nevada signed it. But three members from this bluest of states – Cook, Rep. Tom McClintock of Elk Grove and Rep. Doug LaMalfa of Richvale – aligned themselves with Meadows. They knew exactly what they were doing.

Meadows, who represents the heaviest Republican district in North Carolina, won his seat last year with support from the banks, Koch Industries, the National Rifle Association and others including Boehner and House Whip Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield.

In the letter, Meadows and his gang of 79 Republicans sought to link appropriations for Obamacare to Congress' obligation to approve a continuing resolution to keep the government afloat after Oct. 1.

"Since most of the citizens we represent believe that Obamacare should never go into effect," the letter to Boehner says, "we urge you to affirmatively defund the implementation and enforcement of Obamacare in any relevant appropriates bill brought to the House floor in the 113th Congress, including any continuing appropriations bill."

Conservative commentator Charles Krauthammer called shutdown supporters the "suicide caucus." Rep. Devin Nunes, a San Joaquin Valley Republican, likened shutdown backers to lemmings wearing suicide vests.

But the pressure to leap lemminglike into the abyss is considerable. FreedomWorks, which spends millions on campaigns, has included signing Meadows' letter as part of its litmus test.

"Republicans in both chambers of Congress must all be committed to absolutely refusing to vote for any spending bill that contains funding for Obamacare," FreedomWorks wrote recently.

FreedomWorks has named McClintock one of only five congressional members who have perfect scores on the issues it considers most important this year. Although LaMalfa and Cook signed the Meadows letter, they have strayed on other issues important to FreedomWorks, perhaps opening them to a primary challenge from the right.

Sacramento political consultant Sal Russo makes a tidy living as the man behind Tea Party Express, a political action committee that contributed $5,000 to Meadows' campaign last year. In the past week, Russo has been busy sending out fundraising appeals revolving around the shutdown, including one attacking four House Republicans and one Republican senator for "giving in" to Obama.

"Once again," a Russo fundraising pitch said, "we need your immediate support to put pressure on the weak Republicans to pass a sensible solution that allows America to avoid the Obamacare train-wreck, while fully funding the federal government." Consider it a cautionary note to other Republicans thinking of "giving in."

McClintock, who didn't respond to my request for comment, also is using the shutdown as a fundraising vehicle, for himself, sending out an email pitch last week saying: "Defunding Obamacare is absolutely essential if people are going to continue to have access to affordable, quality health care. And for that matter, be able to keep their jobs or the hours that they're working."

There is a measure of irony in the line about jobs. LaMalfa, McClintock and Cook occupy districts that include national parks, which were closed as a result of the shutdown, leaving workers without hours or jobs, and businesses that depend on them without sources of income. McClintock represents the Yosemite area, where tourism is suffering because of the massive Rom Fire.

“We got burned by the recession. We got burned by the fire. Now we are getting burned by the shutdown,” said Lauren Nickell, who along with her husband, Bill, owns Sunset Inn, two miles outside Yosemite National Park.

Unable to fill her rooms because of the shutdown, Nickell, registered as a decline-to-state voter, is angry at the whole bunch in Washington. “In the real world, we have to compromise. So why doesn’t government? They need to work together. Otherwise, they’re all fired.”

Nickell’s view, alas, probably is not shared by the majority of the voters in McClintock’s district, or in LaMalfa’s or Cook’s. Congressional districts 1, 4 and 8 occupied by LaMalfa, McClintock and Cook run from the Oregon border, past Mount Lassen, down the Sierra past Tahoe, Yosemite and south to the Mojave Desert.

Their California is far removed from Berkeley, Marin and Santa Monica. Their districts are far whiter, grayer and more Republican than the rest of the state, according to data supplied by Paul Mitchell of Political Data Inc., and UC Davis political scientist Mindy Romero.

McClintock’s district of 411,100 voters includes 66,000 more Republicans than Democrats. Only 9 percent of the voters are Latino, Asian or African American. The vast majority, 371,500, were born in the United States. Almost half, 202,100, are 55 or older.

LaMalfa’s district of 390,000 voters has 45,480 more Republicans than Democrats. Voters in his district are even older than McClintock’s; 205,800 are 55 or older, and 15 percent are ethnic minorities.

Cook’s district is only slightly more diverse. But even there, only 24.5 percent of the 303,600 voters are nonwhite; 41 percent are 55 and older.

Cook, a well-read and thoughtful politician, by most measures is a centrist. A decorated Vietnam veteran, he taught history at California State University, San Bernardino, and served six years in the Assembly. He dislikes the Affordable Care Act, calling it a radical change, and said most voters in his district oppose it.

He also understands certain political realities. One is that Republicans don't control the Senate or the White House. Democrats "are not going to defund Obamacare, and they are not going to wait on it."

"I'm not going to be stupid, but I am more pragmatic than some of my colleagues," Cook said. "You have only so many cards to play."

He also knows that he will face a primary challenge. One candidate who has set up a website describes himself as "100 percent pro-life," claims the right to bear arms is God-given and opposes any amnesty for illegal immigrants.

Smart Republican pundits understand that if the shutdown goes on for long, the Republican Party will suffer nationally. But Cook, McClintock and LaMalfa know the nature of their districts. The mess that is Washington aside, they could see clearly that there was great advantage to aligning themselves with Mark Meadows of North Carolina.

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# Caltrans completes massive

# I-80 road project

It no longer seems scary to drive on Interstate 80 between Auburn and the Nevada state line. Caltrans has finished the $821 million project.

This 90-mile upgrade was completed over a 15-year period.



Workers form new concrete on a segment of Interstate 80 near Emigrant Gap and Cisco Grove. Photo/Caltrans

Infrastructure improvements included rebuilding seven bridges, improving lighting and drainage and adding new traffic monitoring systems.

Interstate 80 is one of three continuous coast-to-coast highways, and it has served motorists since the 1960s.

The massive construction venture consisted of 15 projects featuring a wide range of improvements. In addition to rebuilding the highway:

· Caltrans rebuilt seven bridges and the Donner Summit and Gold Run rest areas.

· Several chain on/off areas were upgraded.

· New freeway cameras were installed, which Caltrans will use to monitor traffic incidents and weather conditions.

· New electronic highway message signs on I-80 will provide motorists real-time traffic and weather information.

· Caltrans enhanced safety for motorists by boosting the lighting around key interchanges.

· Drainage systems were improved and highway shoulders were widened to modern standards.

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# House in Incline sells for more than $19 mil.



This Incline house sold for $19.75 million. Photo/Eric Jarvis

A house in Incline Village just sold for $19.75 million.

Known as the StoneGate estate, it had been listed by Chase International. The name is from the exterior granite stonework.

For that price tag, the buyer gets a private pier, 100 feet of sandy beach and more than 10,000 square feet of living space – including five bedrooms and 10 bathrooms, an exercise room and

wine cellar.

The interior was designed by Michael S. Smith. Smith is known for his work with Hollywood celebrities, but most notable is his work on the White House for the Obama family.

The house was built in 2006.

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# Federal shutdown took months of GOP planning

**By Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Mike McIntire, New York Times**

WASHINGTON – Shortly after President Obama started his second term, a loose-knit coalition of conservative activists led by former Attorney General Edwin Meese III gathered in the capital to plot strategy. Their push to repeal Obama's health care law was going nowhere, and they desperately needed a new plan.

Out of that session, held one morning in a location the members insist on keeping secret, came a little-noticed "blueprint to defunding Obamacare," signed by Meese and leaders of more than three dozen conservative groups.

It articulated a take-no-prisoners legislative strategy that had long percolated in conservative circles: that Republicans could derail the health care overhaul if conservative lawmakers were willing to push fellow Republicans – including their cautious leaders – into cutting off financing for the entire federal government.

“We felt very strongly at the start of this year that the House needed to use the power of the purse,” said one coalition member, Michael A. Needham, who runs Heritage Action for America, the political arm of the Heritage Foundation. “At least at Heritage Action, we felt very strongly from the start that this was a fight that we were going to pick.”

Last week the country witnessed the fallout from that strategy: a standoff that has shuttered much of the federal bureaucracy and unsettled the nation.

To many Americans, the shutdown came out of nowhere. But interviews with a wide array of conservatives show that the confrontation that precipitated the crisis was the outgrowth of a long-running effort to undo the law, the Affordable Care Act, since its passage in 2010 — waged by a galaxy of conservative groups with more money, organized tactics and interconnections than is commonly known.

With polls showing Americans deeply divided over the law, conservatives believe that the public is behind them. Although the law’s opponents say that shutting down the government was not their objective, the activists anticipated that a shutdown could occur — and worked with members of the Tea Party caucus in Congress who were excited about drawing a red line against a law they despise.

A defunding “tool kit” created in early September included talking points for the question, “What happens when you shut down the government and you are blamed for it?” The suggested answer was the one House Republicans give today: “We are simply calling to fund the entire government except for the Affordable Care Act/Obamacare.”

The current budget brinkmanship is just the latest development in a well-financed, broad-based assault on the health law, Obama’s signature legislative initiative. Groups like Tea Party Patriots, Americans for Prosperity and FreedomWorks are

all immersed in the fight, as is Club for Growth, a business-backed nonprofit organization. Some, like Generation Opportunity and Young Americans for Liberty, both aimed at young adults, are upstarts. Heritage Action is new, too, founded in 2010 to advance the policy prescriptions of its sister group, the Heritage Foundation.

The billionaire Koch brothers, Charles and David, have been deeply involved with financing the overall effort. A group linked to the Kochs, Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce, disbursed more than $200 million last year to nonprofit organizations involved in the fight. Included was $5 million to Generation Opportunity, which created a buzz last month with an Internet advertisement showing a menacing Uncle Sam figure popping up between a woman's legs during a gynecological exam.

**Read the whole story**

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# Letter: Chevys makes fundraiser a success

**To the community,**

Saint Joseph Community Land Trust extends a big "thank you" to Chevys Fresh Mex Restaurant in South Lake Tahoe for generously hosting our first "taco bar buffet" fundraiser.

Everyone who attended had fun, the food was delicious, and Chevy's staff went out of their way to provide excellent service. Managers George West and Audie Leonard saw to it that everything was in place for an enjoyable and successful evening. We look forward to repeating this event in years to

come and are grateful for Chevy’s support of our mission to provide decent affordable housing for Lake Tahoe residents.

Thank you,

**Charlotte Rosburg, Saint Joseph Community Trust**

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# El Dorado County wants input in mental health plan

The El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency, Mental Health Division is looking for public comment on the 2013-14 Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Plan.

The draft plan is online or a copy may be obtained by contacting Stephanie Carlson at (530) 621.6315.

The plan provides information on current and new MHSA programs and budgets for fiscal years 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16).

A public hearing hosted by the El Dorado County Mental Health Commission will be on Oct. 30 at 5pm. The hearing will be conducted at two locations:

El Dorado County, Health and Human Services Agency, 1360 Johnson Boulevard, No. 103, South Lake Tahoe via videoconference and live at the El Dorado County, Health and Human Services Agency, EMS Conference Room, 415 Placerville Drive, Suite K, Placerville.

Public comment may also be submitted through Oct. 30 at 5pm via email to MHSA@edcgov.us or via postal mail to: Health and Human Services Agency, Mental Health Division, MHSA Project Team, 3057 Briw Road, Placerville, CA 95667.

# Water rights war trickling into Calif. vineyards

**By W. Blake Gray, Wine-Searcher**

Two large harvests in a row are masking a scramble for vineyards in California that is only going to intensify in the next five years.

America's thirst for wines – and premium wines – continues to grow, while the prime areas in Napa and Sonoma counties are basically already planted out. Water rights in other areas of California are a huge issue, says vineyard appraiser Tony Correia.

"Water is the greatest limitation to the growth of our industry," Correia said last week at the Wine Industry Financial Symposium in Napa. "I think we'll see state control or at least state monitoring of groundwater use in the next few years."

Paso Robles, one of the hottest areas on California's coast both figuratively and literally, has seen its water level drop 70 feet in some areas. Local residents are complaining as their wells have run dry. And Paso is no isolated case.

"The city of Cambria just passed a law making it illegal to use district water for anything but human consumption," Correia said. "If you water your azaleas with it four times, the city cuts off your water." Cambria is in wine-producing San Luis Obispo County.

**Read the whole story**

# Casino boss has tips for winning

**By Stephen Magagnini, Sacramento Bee**

Do you ever wonder about your chances of winning on the slot machines at Red Hawk, Thunder Valley, Cache Creek, Jackson or other area Indian casinos?

California's more than 50 Indian casinos earn around $7 billion a year, according to industry economist Alan Meister. About 70 percent of that – $4.9 billion – comes from slot machines, invented in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1891.

California's Indian casinos are run by sovereign Indian nations that set their payout at whatever they think the market will bear. Paul Cornish, director of casino operations for Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino. The site at Coarsegold, north of Fresno, boasts 1,750 slot machines. Cornish, a 25-year veteran of the gambling industry, started on the Las Vegas Strip and has worked at casinos in Detroit, Indiana and California.

**Read the whole story**

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# Soroptimist wine tasting

# tickets for sale

Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe’s 43rd annual wine tasting is Nov. 15 at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe from 6-9:30pm.

About 25 wineries from Northern California and 20 South Shore restaurants will be featured.

Proceeds go directed back into the community through educational scholarships, youth activity sponsorships and grants to organizations such as the Live Violence Free, Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Lake Tahoe Boys and Girls Club, and numerous projects that enhance services and quality of life.

This year the Soroptimist are going retro with high school prom type events where people can have a professional photo taken plus a “Dress to Impress Contest” with the winning woman and the winning man to receive two tickets to next year’s event.

There will also be a silent auction and raffle.

Tickets for the event are $65. They may be purchased from a SISLT member or online.