Truckee looking to help needy during holidays

The Truckee Community Christmas nonprofit organization is beginning its annual collection.

The group for more than 25 years has provided help in the form of a large box of food items, grocery store gift cards, toys and coats to individuals and families identified as the most in need during the holiday season.

This program, which vets recipients and depends on the generosity of locals, will benefit several hundred Truckee families, teenage moms and their children and low-income or homebound seniors.

Here are ways to help:

- Look for food collection barrels placed at Safeway and Save Mart beginning the Saturday after Thanksgiving and donate non-perishable food items.
- Collection bins for new, unwrapped toys can be found at banks, real estate offices, schools, homeowners' association clubhouses, and businesses around town.
- Warm, clean, gently used winter coats can be dropped off at Church of the Mountains in downtown Truckee and Tahoe Forest Church on Hirschdale Road.
- Donors can also provide necessities for seniors. Gratitudes in downtown Truckee is coordinating senior gift donations.

In addition to goods and services, help is needed to sort and pack donated items at the SELS school gym on Donner Pass Road on Dec. 21 and 22. Toys will not be wrapped this year. The food drive needs assistance from volunteers too.

For those who prefer to give a tax-deductible contribution,

checks may be mailed to Truckee Community Christmas, PO Box 2955, Truckee, CA 96160 or go **online** to donate or for more info.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Mr. T

Mr. T is a 3-year-old Boston terrier mix who has huge ears. He is a bit shy in his kennel, but take him for a walk and his true bouncy happy personality comes out.

Since he is a bit shy he would probably be best in an adult-only home, but he would love to have a dog companion to play with.

Mr. T is neutered, microchipped, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

– Karen Kuentz

Trumpeter Botti takes audience's breath away



Caroline Campbell's violin complements Chris Botti's trumpet on Oct. 28 at Harrah's Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – It was nothing short of phenomenal.

Armed with an all-star ensemble of accomplished musicians who could seize the stage on their own, Chris Botti showed an enthusiastic Harrah's South Shore Room crowd that live jazz is anything but dead.

Botti is a rock star on the trumpet, taking the audience on a journey Saturday night through his compilations including his landmark "Night Sessions" 2001 album, signature jazz collection of 2003's "A Thousand Kisses Deep" and his latest "Impressions" assortment from 2013.

"It's so nice to be back," Botti told the crowd Oct. 28, while referring to the trip from New York as a "planes, trains and automobiles" exercise.

"It makes all the long mornings and layovers go away," he said in appreciation as he launched into an unforgettable evening of music composition.



The intimacy of the South Shore Room is ideal for Chris Botti and his jazz ensemble. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The jazz musician has played at Lake Tahoe before. Once he

collaborated with jazz great Diana Krall on the piano in the Harveys Outdoor Concert Series. And years ago, he was one of saxophonist Dave Koz's friends at the Hyatt in Incline Village.

Hands down, the intimate South Shore Room has turned out to be the best venue.

For it was not only Botti doing his magnificent renditions of jazz classics on the trumpet that made the event, it was what he didn't do.

He often stepped back and let his stand-alone musicians demonstrate their undaunted dedication to their craft. To that, the crowd screamed and lunged to its feet on several occasions – a somewhat uncharacteristic reaction to either classical concerts or jazz music performances.

Caroline Campbell's heart-stopping solo evolution from classical violin to country fiddle and onto Led Zeppelin's classic "Kashmir" rock fantasy dropped jaws.

In his introduction, Botti referred to her medley as an "opus jam." Then he stepped aside as Campbell transitioned from a soft sway with her violin to bouncing with an upbeat blue grass number.

Campbell, who's collaborated with the likes of opera great Andrea Bocelli, even interrupted her own performance to address the cheering enthusiasts who rose to their feet. One man in front imitated a cowboy roping when she broke into a fiddle sound. She scurried to the microphone and declared that "classical audiences don't usually whoop," adding: It's nice," she said, smiling.

And with a few flips of her long blonde hair, a steely look came over her face. From there, the predominantly baby boomer crowd instantly identified the legendary tune from one of America's greatest rock bands. It was like she was channeling

Jimmy Page and Robert Plant.

“Way to bring it,” Botti said, acknowledging Campbell’s greatness.

Up to that point, the accomplished violinist had graced the showroom early alongside Botti’s trumpet with sentimental jazz classics such as “When I Fall in Love,” onto his signature “The Look of Love” and adding on Roberta Flack’s well known “For All We Know.” The melancholy of the sound based on the band’s harmonious beauty was tear-welling. The performance represented dinner party meets sleepy jazz club meets billboard rock stage.

By captivating the stage with Botti, pianist Taylor Eigsti, guitarist Leonardo Amuedo, bassist Richie Goods, keyboardist Rachel Eckroth and drummer Lee Pearson, Campbell was in good company that night.

Pearson also put on a nimble show of his own, tucking a drumstick under his armpit as he played and taking his superior percussion skills to the floor. He even played his drum set with his hands in a performance that could have competed with Iron Butterfly’s most famous solo.

Botti had warned the crowd of the risk taking when he described his drummer’s skills as capable of taking him “over a cliff” because of the degree of difficulty.

“It depends how he’s feeling,” Botti said. The audience laughed, and Pearson reaffirmed that attendees should brace themselves.



Sy Smith’s vocal range is off the charts. Photo/Kathryn Reed

In what Botti referred to as his “Rubik’s Cube of all-star” band members, guitarist Amuedo competed with Campbell and the quick-fingered Eigsti on the piano for solos that provided an emotional crescendo.

Amuedo accomplished such a task with his stirring rendition of the late Leonard Cohen’s classic “Hallelujah.” The trumpet-guitar-piano combo continued with the jazzy “Venice” off the “Impressions” album, compiled as an international testament to romantic melodies.

And as if all this wasn’t take-your-breath-away enough, the music morphed into vocals when singer Sy Smith walked down the aisle for a few sets. Her vocal range appeared unbelievably

angelic at times.

She had the audience roaring with her singing and dancing to “Let’s Stay Together,” the blockbuster rhythm and blues hit recorded by Al Green and then Tina Turner.

The seemingly quick one and a half hours quieted down with Botti’s encore fave – “My Funny Valentine,” the legendary 1954 jazz classic performed by Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald that the trumpeter remade famous on his brass instrument almost a half century later.

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1 act play winner creates full-length show

The winner of the 2016 Word Wave One-Act Play Competition, now expanded to a full-length production, is coming to Lake Tahoe Community College.

“Joint Chiefs” is the story of four veterans, one from each branch of service, who meet regularly at the The Joint, a local diner owned by one of their own, Mike Riggio, a former Navy cook. Everyday, they tell stories, share jokes, and give each other grief, until one day Mike seems to be acting strangely. The other three suspect he might have to sell “The Joint.”

The play will be performed Nov. 9-12 and Nov. 16-19, 7:30pm each night in the Duke Theatre.

The $20 tickets are available **online**.

Author to talk about Donner Party mysteries

George R. Scott, author of “An Archeology of Desperation: Exploring the Donner Party’s Alder Creek Camp,” will share his insights on the many long-unsolved mysteries of the Donner Party on Nov. 18.

Doors open at 5pm at the Donner Memorial State Park Visitor Center, and the program begins at 5:30pm and ends at 6:30pm.

His book will be available for sale, with signing after the program.

There is no cost to attend and parking is free. There will be light snacks, and wine available for a small donation.

Music event all about military veterans

Lake Tahoe Unified School District Performing Arts Department’s Presents: A Veteran’s Musical Tribute will be Nov. 8 at 6:30pm.

The free concert will be in the multipurpose room at South Tahoe Middle School.

This concert is a tribute to the men and women who have served or are currently serving in the various branches of the

military.

Performers include: South Tahoe Middle School and South Tahoe High School bands, orchestras, and LTUSD choirs, as well as the South Lake Tahoe Children's Choral Society's Tahoe Intermediate Honor Choir and the Blue Ribbon Choir.

Why Nevada Day is better than your state holiday

By Garrett Hylton, Reno Gazette-Journal

All due respect to Casimir Pulaski and Harry S Truman (nobody's complaining about a three-day weekend), but the Silver State's holiday sets the standard by celebrating Nevadan staples like imbibing, cavorting and gambling, often in costume.

Nevada Day is here, which means it's that special time of year where folks statewide celebrate an undeniable, irrefutable, indefatigable reality: our state holiday (and state in general, for that matter) is better than yours.

You may not understand if you're not local – odds are your state doesn't even find itself cool enough to celebrate (more on that in a second) – but here are a few reasons why Nevada Day is a state holiday unlike any other.

Read the whole story

Tahoe well represented in Warren Miller film



Errol Kerr and JT Holmes overlook Lake Tahoe during production of the latest edition of the Warren Miller film series. Photo/Warren Miller Productions

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

The 68th edition of the iconic Warren Miller ski film series will feature epic skiing and snowboarding in locations such as Norway, New Zealand and the French Alps.

But viewers will notice plenty of shots with Lake Tahoe ties, too.

“Line of Descent” features several athletes with Tahoe ties and an entire segment shot at Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts.

Read the whole story

Truckee Chamber honors businesses, individuals

The Truckee Chamber's annual awards dinner at the Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe celebrated the people, businesses, and organizations of the community.

A special recognition award went to 13-year-old Johan Sotelo. Johan received numerous nominations touting his exemplary volunteer service and work ethic from many Truckee organizations.

Other winners include:

Small Business of the Year (1-10 employees): Quality Automotive & Smog

Small Business of the Year (11-49 employees): Molsby & Bordner – MOBO Law

Large Business of the Year: Northstar California

New Business of the Year: Old Town Tap

Revitalization Award: Dave Wilderotter, Tahoe Dave's Skis and Boards

Hospitality Award: Paul Spencer, Truckee Fire Protection District

Excellence in Government Award: Truckee Donner Public Utility District

Nonprofit Organization of the Year: Project MANA

Volunteer of the Year: Andy & Alicia Barr

Special Recognition for Volunteer: Johan Sotelo.

Road Beat: 2017 Lexus ES350, entry level luxury



The 2017 Lexus ES350 is a good entry into the luxury market. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Lexus is one of the dominate luxury brands, beginning with the 1990 model year with the first midsize ES starting life as its second generation in 1991. Now in its sixth generation, it moved solidly in the midsize category when it switched from the Camry chassis to the stretched Avalon chassis that has a

111-inch wheelbase.

To completely distinguish the ES from its Toyota counterpart, ES receives an entirely unrelated and different body and look. Lexus build quality and finishes, and a real Lexus interior. It has the signature Lexus front end, of which I am not exactly a fan favorite, but the rest of the design is understated and pretty, nothing to detract from its luxurious, otherwise conservative lines. It is slick to the wind with a co-efficient of drag of 0.27.

As this Lexus is built around the Avalon platform, the powertrain is identical as well, except for a small change in the higher final drive ratio of about 5 percent. The 3.5L, DOHC, 24 valve V-6still churns out 268 very smooth horse at 6,200 rpm and 248 pounds of twist at 4,700 rpm. These numbers haven’t changed in at least five years. Power is sent to the front wheels via a six speed super smooth auto cog-swapper.

Performance is world class and considering its rated horse power and “only” six-speed tranny, this Lexus is a world class performer. Zero to 60 mph arrives in 5.96 seconds. And its passing performance is even better with a 50-70 mph simulated pass requiring just 2.81 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade expands that time by only a second to 3.84 seconds. That’s rockin’. Part of the reason for the super quick passing times is the sweet spot in the tranny ratios hitting third gear at peak torque and accelerating from there. This Lexus is no fuddy-duddy, it’s a world class performer. Those numbers are almost identical to my last ES go-round as they should be as the engine/tranny remain the same. It just demonstrates Lexus incredibly consistent, high build quality.



Specifications

Price (base including transportation) SE $24,115 to over $30 large for a loaded V-6

Engines

3.5L DOHC, 24 valve V-6 268 hp @ 6,200 rpm
248 lbs.-ft. of torque @ 4,700 rpm

Transmissions

Six speed torque converter automatic

Configuration

Transverse front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 111.0 inches
Length 193.3 inches
Width 71.7 inches
Height 57.1 inches
Track (f/r) 62.6/62.0 inches
Ground clearance 5.5 inches
Weight 3,571 pounds
GVWR 4,696 pounds
Weight distribution (f/r) 61/39 percent
Passenger volume 100.1 cubic feet

Trunk capacity 15.2 cubic feet
Fuel capacity 17.2
Steering lock to lock 2.85 turns
Turning circle 37.4 feet
Wheel sizes 7.5X18 inches alloy
Tires 225/45X18
Co efficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 5.96 seconds
50-70 mph 2.81 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 3.84 seconds
Top speed Electronically limited at 130 mph
Fuel economy EPA rated at 21/30/24 mpg city/highway/combined.
Expect to achieve 25 mpg in overall driving and 32 mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

Fuel economy is also quite good. EPA says expect 21/30/24 mpg city/highway/combined. In my first 200 miles driving extremely aggressively including all performance testing, the ES averaged 24.1 mpg. Think about it. Here is a vehicle that outperforms just about every muscle car from the ’50s and ’60s and gets three times the fuel economy. I call that miraculous progress. Seventy mph on the highway will delivered 32 mpg in a two-way run. My round trip to Carson City in very aggressive driving averaged 28.8 mpg.

If I were to use that same 1950-60’s analogy with respect to handling, the ES lap times would embarrass the muscle car.

Sure, it has the same advance underpinnings again of the Avalon, but hey the Avalon is a great car to begin with. Steering is 2.9 turns lock to lock, albeit a bit numb and too easy for my tastes, but accurate just the same. it has attractive 18 x 7.5-inch alloys shod with 225/45 rubber so needless to say the ES has good cornering power. Sure, its sprung a bit soft for my tastes, but my tastes might be a little firm for your backside anyway. But the ES keeps the body roll in reasonable check and holds down reasonably well the bobbing and weaving when undulations are incurred in cornering.

ES is about ride quality, quiet, smooth and absorbing. And it delivers with a ten score. In the ES, comfort is king. Not much float mind you, motions are well control as is the road, itself. The engine spins a modest 1,900 rpm at 70 mph. And with the reasonably large 17.2-gallon fuel tank, 500 miles non-stop would be a piece of cake as this Lexus is made for non-fatiguing long distance cruising. And with the superb sound system, you will not go to sleep.

Not to be outdone with respect to safety, the ES has it all including lane departure warning and steering assist. But safety foremost always resides in the driver. Brakes a terrific and the headlights are fantastic and the auto high beam system works perfectly, better than any driver. Leave it in high beam “auto” and your safety will be enhanced. Also standard are ten airbags.

Inside is a sumptuous interior as my tester had the optional Ultra Luxury Package ($3,500) which if mentioned would be book length. Steering wheel is real wood and leather and costs $450.

Seating is very comfortable, but in my aggressive driving more side bolstering would be nice. While this may be a luxo ride, it can generate some good “g’s” in the corners. Rear seating is also copious and luxurious. Good for three.

Instrumentation is complete, big tach and speedo front and center, great trip computer and a fairly easy to use center stack. Still not a fan of the mouse system, but after a few days it becomes second nature.

Pricing for this entry level, real luxo ride begins at $38,900 plus $975 for the train from its Georgetown, Ky., assembly plant. We here in America can also build them to Lexus's super high quality standards. My tester had the packages above plus the concert hall Mark Levinson sound system and NAV for another $2,500 and with a few other items like the wheel package, LED headlights and $500 for the blind spot detection brought to total damages to $49,210. Go drive one, but you might want to bring your checkbook.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.