



JONNY WAKEFIELD PHOTO

**Organizers Jason Pratt, Karl Mattson, Emilie Mattson and Kit Fast are ready for the 10th annual Sweetwater 905 Festival.**

**ROLLA**

# One sweet festival

## Sweetwater 905 returns for its tenth year

Jonny Wakefield  
*Staff Writer*

If it's weird and happens in the Peace, it's probably somehow connected to Sweetwater 905.

Sweetwater, the region's best-

known music and arts festival, kicks off on Friday with more than a dozen bands and artists slated to perform over three days.

The festival, which is celebrating its tenth year this summer, is the brainchild of rancher Emilie

Mattson, who organized the first iteration of Sweetwater in the 1990s. Mattson and co-organizer Donna Kane had attended a similar festival in the Cariboo artists community of Wells, B.C.

*See FESTIVAL on A3*

# of the P

Nov 11, 2014



**Photo Credit** *Bronwyn Scott*  
Local artist Judy Templeton presents the Peace River Regional District with a piece of art for the board office at a Nov. 13 PRRD meeting.

# Sweetwater 905

# @ a glance

## Art and farm collide

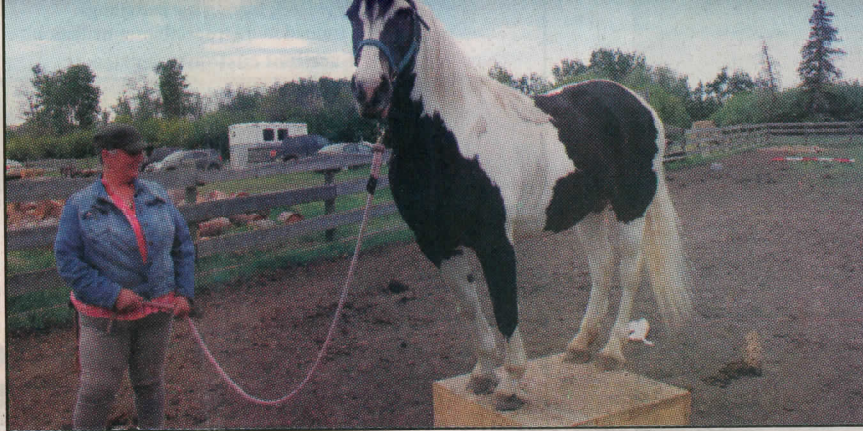


Jonny Wakefield  
Staff Writer

Hannah, a 16-year-old mare, was feeling skittish.

A music festival is typically not a great place for a horse, explained Joyce Lee, as she led Hannah around an enclosure on the Mattson Family Farm in Rolla. There are all sorts of stimuli that a horse from a quiet farm in the Peace Country would have never encountered – including crowds, bright lights, and strange noises.

But the 10th annual Sweetwater



Hannah, a 16-year-old mare, was feeling skittish.

A music festival is typically not a great place for a horse, explained Joyce Lee, as she led Hannah around an enclosure on the Mattson Family Farm in Rolla. There are all sorts of stimuli that a horse from a quiet farm in the Peace Country would have never encountered – including crowds, bright lights, and strange noises.

But the 10th annual Sweetwater 905 was no typical music festival.

For one, Hannah the horse was one of the performers – though Lee insists that her horse training demonstrations at Sweetwater were not about "tricks."

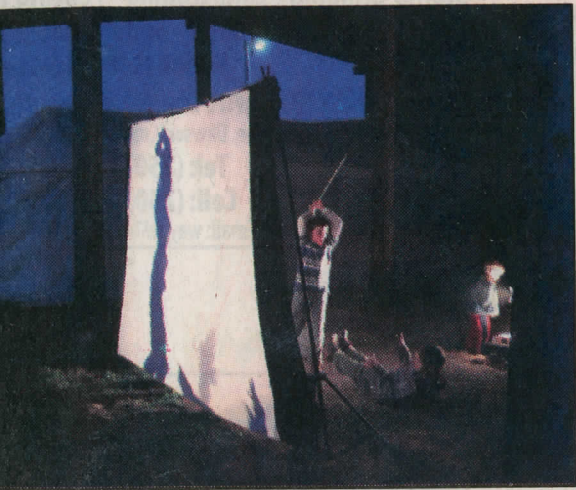
"It's putting the foundation on a horse," she explained as she led Hannah onto a teeter totter and made her practice shifting her weight. "I really enjoy this quiet time with horses – it's quite meditative."

Lee performed these exercises for a small crowd at Sweetwater, one of the festival's many demonstrations of life on a working farm. The exercises are aimed at making a trail horse sure on its feet and more comfortable in unfamiliar situations.

When it comes to unfamiliar situations, Sweetwater has them in droves. The festival, also held right on the Mattson farm, attracted several hundred people last weekend.

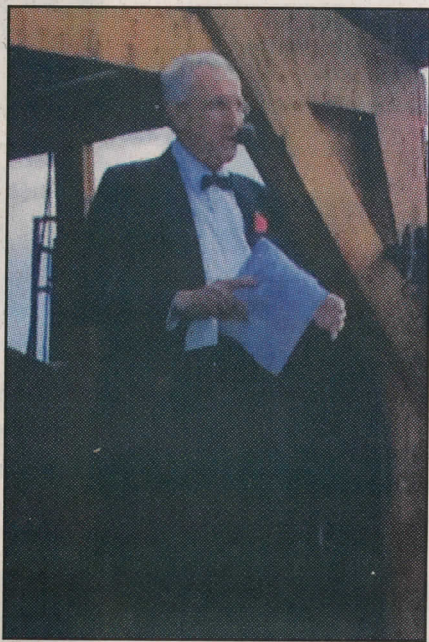
The crowd was a fascinating mix of everything that's odd about the Peace. People from the "no pipeline" crowd mingled with guys who look like they just got off a shift on the rigs, while beloved children's entertainer Al Simmons – decked out in a tuxedo and an array of funny hats – introduced bands with names like Apocalyptic Sex Folk.

A bearded gentleman in a full



JONNY WAKEFIELD PHOTOS

clockwise from top left: Folkly Strum Strum takes the stage Friday night; Hannah, the 16-year-old mare, surveys the farm from her perch; Twin Peaks, a band from Fort St. John, returned to Sweetwater on Friday after their near-win in CBC's Searchlight competition; Karl Mattson, right, looks relieved after many months of readying his family's farm for a music festival; Kids swordfight behind a projector screen for a light puppet show.



JONNY WAKEFIELD PHOTOS

**Top: Al Simmons, a children's performer, delighted audiences of all ages as the zany MC of Sweetwater. Middle: Misery Mountain Boys, hailing from Peace River, Alta., played a funkied-up bluegrass set Friday night. Above: Festivalgoers huddle under a rare Honey Moon – a full moon when the sun is on its highest path through the sky and the moon its lowest.**

DUCKSKIN suit walked around the grounds on Saturday, holding audiences and chomping on a large cigar.

While farm demonstrations, poetry and visual arts were all part of Sweetwater, it is primarily a music festival, one that fortunately bears no resemblance to mega fests like Sasquatch and Bonnaroo.

Occasionally, an organizer would step onto the stage to introduce an act and politely remind the crowd to please, if they hadn't already, go on up to the front and grab a ticket so they can pay their artists.

The VIP area was barely used, as performers mingled among the crowd. Security was minimal, and the program, instead of being plastered with Bud Light and Red Bull sponsorships, was a simple piece of letter sized paper.

Lee performed several rounds of ground exercises with Hannah during the festival. She explained that when a horse is calm, it will lower its head – as it contains its flight impulses and becomes familiar with its surroundings.

I may have been imagining things, but towards the end of Sweetwater, Hannah seemed to have lowered her head ever so slightly.

# Local mixed media festival celebrates 10 years

**JILL EARL**

news@northeastnews.ca

ROLLA - The beginning of summer marks the start of the festival season, though for organizers, like those of the Sweetwater 905 Arts and Music Festival, planning starts much, much sooner.

Celebrating its 10th year, Sweetwater 905 organizers said that the festival has gotten easier to coordinate, however, that doesn't mean there is less work involved.

"It's been a learning curve as to how to keep going and expanding, and it's easier every year. We're still spending a lot of time setting up, but at least we know what we're doing now," said Dean Mattson, co-organizer.

For the last eight weekends, volunteers have been hard at work at the Mattson family ranch, helping to set up for the three-day event, scheduled for June 13-15. Work has included moving the mainstage (for the third time), renovating and expanding the hospitality kitchen, building a tearoom out of hay bails and updating the merchandise building.

Manual labour started in the Spring, but co-organizer (and Dean's brother) Karl Mattson, said he starts receiving inquiries about the festival as early as October. Mattson is responsible for booking musical acts and visual artists. He said he received approximately 100 applications this year from interested performers.

"We're not searching anymore," Dean said.

He said when planning the first festival 10 years ago, their only intention was to bring art and music to the community.

"The intention was to bring artists to us, in-

stead of us to having to go to major centres, and that was the beginning of it. [Also] showcase local talent and all our talent, instead of having to go sell ourselves to them," said Dean.

This year, attendees can look forward to hearing performances by C.R. Avery, Scott Dunbar, Dave Soroka, B.A. Johnston, Party on High Street, High Society, the Stray Crows, Chris Culgin, Two Bears North, Misery Mountain Boys, Ted Russell Kamp and Al Simmons. The lineup of regional performers includes Twin Peaks, Samantha Scott, Fleas from Bears, Folky Strum Strum and the Sweetwater Ramblers.

"We like to keep it fairly diverse," Karl said.

The festival also features visual and literary artists, as well as agricultural demonstrations. Poets Kim Goodlife and Ivan Coyote will be featured this year and visual artists will include Peter von Tiesenhausen, Karl Mattson, Nora Curiston and others who will be creating work during the festival.

Agricultural demonstrations will include horse dressage, trick ponies, hot shoeing, butter making, saddle making, pack horses and oxen.

Childrens entertainers like Emma Cooper and the Lost & Found Puppet Co. will also be performing as well as other volunteers, like fire eaters and stiltwalkers, who are expected to bring their talents to the festival grounds.

"There is a really good cross section of each one of those mediums, our arts have increased a lot this year," said Fran Haughian, another organizer.

"I think that 99 per cent of the people that

come here think that it's just a music festival, but we've got a lot of other stuff going on," Dean said.

Organizers attribute a lot of the event's

success to the many volunteers that make the festival possible. Those interested in attending or helping can get more information at [www.sweetwater905.com](http://www.sweetwater905.com).