

Mixer of musical styles

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Special to the Monitor

Patrick Sweany will be playing at 7 p.m. Friday in the Los Alamos National Bank parking lot as part of the Gordons' Productions and Los Alamos County's Summer Concert Series.

I caught Sweany on the phone just as he was cruising down I-80 in the middle of Nebraska. Since his gig in Omaha, he'd been pulled over a couple of times by the cops. He figured they saw a long haired guy driving a beat up van and wanted to check things out. The cops didn't find any drugs. No sex either. Just three guys listening to rock and roll.

Sweany, Brad Porter, drums; and Taylor Belling, bass; have been touring to promote their newest CD, "Every Hour is a Dollar Gone." Sweany wrote all the songs and the Black Keys produced it.

"It shows the direction I'm going," he said. "It's a blend of blues, country and rock, but it's the overlaying honesty - earthiness - that I'm most proud of."

Sweany has carved his own niche in the musical world by mixing styles. He learned the guitar by listening to his father's extensive

record collection and playing thousands of songs by ear. When he talks, his sentences are peppered with names of musicians from every style and genre in the past century. It's impossible to keep up, but his energy is infectious. How can anybody be so saturated with music? He said, "First and foremost, I'm a music fan."

His first recording was impressive enough to get him a teaching position at the Fur Peace Ranch, a guitar camp in southern Ohio owned by Jorma Kaukonen, founder of Jefferson Airplane.

He has taught at the camp for four years. It's the kind of place where there's no cell phone reception, no Internet and no TV. Campers play guitar all day and well into the night, completely immersing themselves and learning new things.

"It's great to see a business guy in his mid-fifties learn something new on the guitar," Sweany said. "To be the reason that he got it."

He can't wait to pull his beat up van into the LANB and put on a high-energy show. "I love music," he said. "It's my whole life."

The concert is free and open to the public.

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