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Beth Peerless, Where it's at: Getting into the holiday spirit



There's a variety of entertainment offered at First Night Monterey's New Year's Eve celebration. (Michael Troutman/www.dmtimaging.com)



By [BETH PEERLESS](#)

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Onward music, onward art, Dasher and Prancer get ready to start. And Rudolph with your nose so bright, light the stages and rock tonight. Let's keep the spirit rolling forward as we approach the pinnacle of the holiday season and the solstice turnover from fall to winter. The Old Monterey Fisherman's Wharf Christmas Festivities have been in full swing for a couple of weeks, and it's time to start thinking about First Night Monterey's New Year's Eve celebration. Both the Monterey events have become annual traditions for people around the Central Coast and beyond.

Old Fisherman's Wharf is awash with Christmas decorations for its Seventh Annual Christmas on the Wharf Celebration daily through Jan. 2 for locals and visitors alike to get that special Instagram photo with friends and family. The 23-foot Christmas tree surrounded by giant illuminated sea creatures greets folks as they enter the wharf, and tin soldiers point the way down the boardwalk where you'll find Santa Claus at his Santa House Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. There's still one more Community Caroling on the Wharf sing-along to experience this Sunday from 5-6:30 p.m. at the head of the wharf near the Christmas tree.

Live music and dance performances take place weekends, Fridays from 5-9 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m.- 9 p.m., and Sundays from 1-8 p.m. Included are the Carmel Dance Center, Peninsula Harmony Company, Jingle Jammers from U-Jam Fitness, singer/songwriter Katherine Lavin, the DiFranco Dance Project, the Monterey Peninsula Gospel Community Choir and Caroling with His Grace Ministries. Performances are ongoing until Saturday, Dec. 23. Visit www.montereywharf.com and click your way through to the schedule for the performances.



Old Fisherman's Wharf's 23-foot Christmas tree, surrounded by giant illuminated sea creatures and decorations up and down the Wharf including silhouetted lit trees, tin soldiers, holiday-themed inflatables and more. It's all part of Christmas on the Wharf, featuring holiday musical and dance performances such as choirs, bands, singer/songwriters, youth dancers and a variety of singers, weekends through Dec. 23. For more information visit www.montereywharf.com. (Courtesy photo)

There's also a Toy Drop at Santa's House for the Salvation Army/Monterey Peninsula Corps organizations, and donations are encouraged in the red Salvation Army kettle at the head of the wharf. Also, get out to enjoy each of our Peninsula's cities' beautiful Christmas trees and town center decorations. And there's also Candy Cane Lane in Pacific Grove. Morse Drive is one of the streets where you can drive through following the flow of traffic, or park the car and get out to walk through the festive wonderland in Platt Park. A local tradition for more than a half century.

First Night Monterey 2024 is on again this year with all its fabulous live entertainment, interactive art events, processions and parades, and event buttons now on sale. As usual, the early afternoon section has the Kid's Night Out activities, and a plethora of music and dance takes place throughout the event, from 3 p.m. to midnight. For a complete list of events and the stage schedules, you'll want to check out the website at www.firstnightmonterey.org.

Some of the acts to catch include the colorful opening Yaocuahtli Cultural Dance troupe, and the thunderous Shinsho Mugen Daiko traditional Japanese drumming group. More of the international culture bands include William Faulkner and Pilar Mendoza with the Triqui Dancers, Singing Wood Marimba, and Na Haumana with its Hawaiian music.

The contemporary pop, rock, blues, reggae, jazz, country, and Americana groups on tap include The Dead Cassettes, Jonah & the Whalewatchers, Wolf Jett, Black Irish, Jayson Fann Rhythm, River Voices, Shannon and the Night Divers, Red Beans and Rice, California Cowboys, Banish Misfortune, The Robert Turner & Kevin O'Neal Jazz Trio and Sunny Side of the Mountain bluegrass.

Admission buttons can be purchased at pre-event prices through Dec. 28 online and at retail locations (Safeway, Andronico's and Grove Market) through Dec. 30. On the night of the event there are several kiosks to purchase buttons. Advance prices are \$29 for 16 and up, \$18 for ages 6-15 and \$85 for a Family Pack (two adults and two youth. Children 5 and under are admitted free. Buttons purchased online (www.firstnightmonterey.org) are not shipped, so pick up at Will Call is required both Dec. 30-31. Day of button prices are \$32, \$21 and \$104 accordingly. All the details are on the website.



Preparations are being made for First Night Monterey's New Year's Eve celebration. (Michael Troutman/www.dmtimaging.com)

While I didn't spend a lot of time at the How Original local band showcase last Sunday, I did get to see what a nice turnout there was, and how good the bands sounded with a polished professional sound system. It was fun to visit with friends and get to know more of the musicians who ply their trade on our local stages. And there's more of that going on this week.

The annual Marotta Family Holiday Jam is Sunday, 5-8 p.m. at MidiCi Neapolitan Pizza Company at 467 Alvarado St. in downtown Monterey. As most in the area know, the Marotta family has a plethora of family members who are musicians, all descended from the legendary Papa Mike Marotta, who is immortalized with his accordion in statue form at the corner of Alvarado and Franklin streets. There is live jazz with all the best local jazz players at the restaurant every Thursday and Sunday, but this is one event that you won't want to miss. And arriving early is suggested because the place fills up quickly with friends, family and fans.

The House Band has drummer Jamey DeMaria, bassist Dennis Murphy and keyboardist Bill Spencer. Performers confirmed to appear are Mike Marotta, Jr. and grandkids, Rachel Marotta-Halim, Kristi Marotta, Zoe Alexander, Dave Marzetti, Orracio Aiello, Paul Tarantino, Miranda Perl, Adam Astrup and Janice Perl. Surely there will be some add-ons. There is no cover charge, but do enjoy something to eat and drink and make an evening of it.

Mike Beck and the Bohemian Saints are back in town Saturday, 7 p.m. at the American Legion in Carmel, Dolores and 8th. It's another one of the holiday traditions we have around here almost every year. Beck, with guitarist Tom Ayres, bassist Marty Lydon and drummer Joe Wedlake, can rock the house. Cover is \$20 at the door. They usually draw a strong local audience so be sure to arrive on the early side. Doors open at 6 p.m.

Beck is a native of the Monterey Bay Area transplanted to Montana who was taken by his experience at the Monterey International Pop Festival as a youngster in 1967. It propelled him into a career as a musician. Because of his history as a horseman and trainer, he became focused on the cowboy singer/songwriter side of his persona, of which he can claim legitimacy. But he's also a great rock 'n' roll guitarist, and together with the smokin' hot guitarist Ayres, they are one cosmic cowboy band that can play the pants off of music by The Byrds, Flying Burrito Brothers, Grateful Dead and Rolling Stones, as well as Beck's originals that have garnered lots of rotations on numerous radio stations and have become a staple of KPIG's playlists.

Another of our fine alt cowboy/rock singer/songwriters is Casey Frazier, a Colorado/Tennessee transplant to our town where he can be counted among the top artists on the scene. Thursday, 7 p.m. at Wendi Kirby Music located at 550 Hartnell St., Suite F, Monterey, the Casey Frazier Band, with Doug Fearnside, Zach McDaniel and Rory Glass, will perform his original music that has a unique blend of Americana, country, folk and '70s rock that tell the tales of adventures, heartache, home and family. Many of the songs will provide a sneak peek into his upcoming album release, "Transitions," slated for release in 2024.

The venue is a new addition to the scene, one not used publicly prior to this performance as far as I know. It's described as having beautiful acoustics, natural light (daytime, that is), and a beautiful deck with a view of the ocean (once again, during the day, which this concert is not). Tickets for the all-ages show are \$40, available through Eventbrite. Type in Frazier's name to locate the page.

Our performing arts venues both have some quality acts on their stages this week. At Monterey's Golden State Theatre Friday, 8 p.m., is the new wave/synth pop band from the '80s A Flock of Seagulls. Original member Mike Score, is joined by current members Kevin Rankin, Pando and Gord Deppe. Some of their big hits are "I Ran (So

Far Away),” “Modern Love is Automatic,” and “Space Age Love Song.” Tickets range from \$48-\$78.

And Saturday, 8 p.m. is the band X, a Los Angeles-based punk rock band who came to prominence in the '80s with members John Doe, Exene Cervenka, Zoom and D.J. Bonebrake. Hey! It's Xmas Time Again is their annual Xmas tour and they'll hit the stage at 8 p.m. Tickets for the general admission floor section are \$38, and for balcony reserved seats it's \$35-\$50. Both concerts have tickets available online at www.goldenstatetheatre.com through Etix. Convenience fees apply.

I hesitate to include Carmel's Sunset Cultural Center because both shows are technically sold out, although they do allow for a waitlist, and you may want to do that. On Friday a (((folkYEAH!))) -produced event with Father John Misty starts at 7 p.m., and Sunday, 7:30 p.m., Hawaiian ukulele virtuoso Jake Shimabukuro does his Christmas in Hawaii show. Visit www.sunsetcenter.org to see what might be available.