

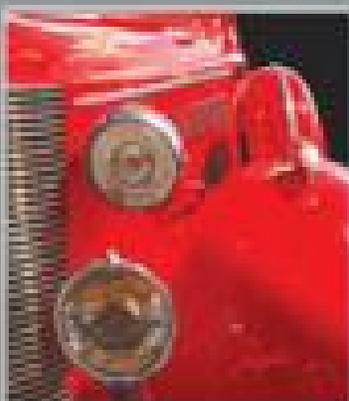
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MUSIC, ART & MEDITATION

By Wendy Thompson, Staff Writer

Emmy-award winning artist Chris Spheeris of Sedona, Ariz., will present three totally different performances in the Santa Ynez Valley this week.

Interior designer Shannon Scott will host the event at her studio in Los Olivos, where Spheeris will speak candidly about his art, life and music, on Aug. 22, from 7 to 10 p.m.

“Several years ago, I bought one of Chris’s CDs on a total whim in Kauai, and listened to it the whole way home,” Scott said.

“It spoke to me directly ... Six weeks later, I flew to Sedona for the first time to hear Chris play live. I made contact with him during that visit and we became friends,” she said.

“I am very excited about finally bringing him here to the Santa Ynez Valley,” she said.

The evening will include an exhibition of Spheeris’ photography, gourmet vegan food, local wines and a musical performance. Tickets are \$45 and include his new CD, food, wine and a gift bag. Spheeris has selected approximately 50 pieces of his work to display and sell.

“I will be talking about the photos, the perspective of my photography and performing a mini-concert,” he said. He just finished his first month-long exhibit at Zelo Cosi in Sedona this summer.

Spheeris said that he has always made photographs but just began sharing it with the public about three months ago. The photography selections will range in price from \$125 to \$700-800, he said, and a portion of the sales will be donated to the local humane society.

Spheeris also will perform live at Kalyra Winery at 343 North Refugio Road on Aug. 23 in concert with special guest percussionist Eric Zang.

Tickets are available from the winery at (805) 693-8864 or at the Book Loft, 1680 Mission



Drive in Solvang, (805) 688-6010. Picnics are encouraged and wine will be available for sale. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$10 for children age 5-12, and free to children under age 5. He is looking forward to his first visit to Santa Ynez. About the Aug. 23 event, he said, it will be “nice to sit on the lawn and hang out. There will be lots of humor. I like to amuse people, giggle. I like to laugh at myself and to do it in front of people,” he said candidly. Percussionist Eric Zang of Phoenix also will perform on a number of Middle Eastern instruments — a lute called an oud, and a nay, a type of flute — and also will sing extended solos. “He has a beautiful voice. He is totally fascinated by Arabic music and all things Arabic. He’s multi-talented,” said Spheeris. They have been playing together for approximately nine years. “My music is one way of encoding information ... It’s not about the song, but it’s the feeling or the inspiration behind it. I am not religious, no, not at all, but I am quite spiritual,” said the artist. “In one moment, if the audience feels a sense of connection, then I have done my job. It is not about how great I perform, but how much we can forget about how separate we are and how much we can remember how much we are connected,” he said.

“People tell me the experiences they have had while playing the music. There are a lot of artists that paint to my music ... They sculpt, they write, they dance.” He said that often they send him pieces they have created or share their writing. His music is very familiar, and for several

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reasons. There are few people in the United States and in over 30 countries who have not heard his music on TV, documentary films, Olympic competitions, Miss Universe pageants, commercials, NPR radio, satellite and syndicated programs and pop songs, states his bio.

“I memorized every Beatle song since I was a child; that was my musical training, I would buy every single Beatles album,” he said.

He began performing at “about 13” and signed with Columbia Records, which produced two of his albums, in 1986.

“I was one of the first new-age artist mid 1980s with ‘Desires of the Heart,’” he said. His second album, “Pathway to Surrender,” was released two years later. “‘Pathways to Surrender’ was quite different, a deeper learning experience; there were only two vocals on that. I went until 2006 before I had vocals on any of my CDs,” he said.

In 1990 Spheeris teamed up with Paul Voudouris to produce “Enchantment” — an instrumental recording that eventually sold more than half a million copies, went platinum in Spain, and increased his distribution worldwide.

He also was inspired by his family. He listened as his sister, Calli, played Chopin on the piano, and a cousin was a popular singer-songwriter.

“My cousin, Jimmie Spheeris, was on Columbia records in the ’70s. He had quite a following — he recorded three records before he was killed on a motorcycle, before I was a recording artist.”

Spheeris’s mother also is an artist, and his father plays flamenco guitar, an influence also heard in Spheeris’s compositions.

Spheeris said that he only started performing again about five years ago.

He has Greek roots and spent his childhood summers in Greece. “My grandfather is from the villa called Nemea, and was the original exporter of Greek wine into the United States. My family migrated to the Chicago area,” he said.

Spheeris grew up in Milwaukee. When asked if

he liked to perform, he said that he was “kind of shy by nature, but I feel it is important thing to do. Once I am on stage I do. It’s a lot of work. I have to prepare emotionally, psychologically and technically. I like to talk about things in perspective to things in my life and to write universal.”

Spheeris also will give a guided meditation at Sol Dance in Solvang on Aug. 24; telephone Sol Dance, (805) 686-9642, for tickets, which cost \$20.

Spheeris said the mediations are “A new fascination — my new favorite thing to do. I compose long-format music, free and open,” he said. “Robert Cory and I just finished the one-hour piece that I will be playing on a CD in the background. I have been writing a distillation of my spiritual beliefs into a series of meditations whose themes are on the themes of ‘Identity.’ I like that one very much — forgiveness, transcending rationality ... getting beyond our conventional beliefs ... beliefs about everyone else, beliefs about our relationships in the environment, very fundamental things, and that from where I am looking at things, it doesn’t matter.”

For more information on Spheeris, visit his website at <http://www.chrisspheeris.com> and for ticket information, phone (805) 688-6286 or email

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