Music, Sam Bush concert to mark Kentucky Museum exhibition

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An extensive, nine-years-in-the-making exhibition on southcentral Kentucky's musical legacy will open Sept. 6 at the Kentucky Museum — to be celebrated by an inaugural Sonic Music Fest and concert headlined by Sam Bush.

The exhibition, "Sonic Landscape: The Musical Legacy of Southcentral Kentucky," entailed 90 interviews with musicians, record store owners, recording studio owners, engineers and other music insiders across the regional soundscape, according to museum Director Brent Björkman.

Folklorists and students as well as Björkman interviewed these past and current community members on their insights and feelings about musicianship and life in southcentral Kentucky — coming together through the exhibit's sights and sounds. Excerpts from a portion of the interviews will form a thread of a story driving the project, complemented by artifacts, memorabilia and visuals; a museum-built recording studio will honor studios across the region. Following the opening, the museum will create a website for the exhibition that'll include the full interviews; the in-museum exhibit will remain through December 2030.

"It's a yeoman's chore, but it's been one of love," Björkman said.

"There's a regional essence here, and that's one of the reasons we chose the 'Sonic Landscape' — because it's southcentral Kentucky and the rolling hills. What *is* the essence of this place?"

The museum opens at 9 a.m., and the exhibition will be laid across the first floor; at noon, performers will begin performing small, mostly acoustic sets on a small sound system upstairs. These are The Songfarmers; Jane Pearl with Sam Lock; Jonell Mosser; Eddie Pennington, Alonzo Pennington and Cabel Coots; Michael Gough and John Martin; Bill Lloyd; and Kyle Frederick.

Mellow Matts' Matt Pfefferkorn will DJ southcentral Kentucky tunes outside. Family-friendly activities and food trucks will also be part of the festivities.

The festivities will wrap up around 4 to 4:30 p.m., and at 7 p.m., the internationally recognized Bush — a Bowling Green native with an honorary degree from Western — will return to the hill 10 years after his last concert here.

His performance will be sponsored by the the Western Kentucky University Cultural Enhancement Series as well as Tom Pennington and Portia Pennington.

“My hope is that it inspires both the people that are in the exhibit and also visitors that come here,” Björkman said. “An innovator like that from here (is) so widely recognized, and people do have such an admiration for him … He (…) loves his hometown, so it’s great to bring him back, and that’s always nice to have as a way to celebrate the entirety.”

The events are free and open to the public, with the concert open on a first-come, first-served basis.

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