



From left, Josh Lease of Borndead Productions and Adrian Mills of Whiskey Dick's, who both aim to strengthen the music scene in South Lake Tahoe. PHOTO/MARK EARNEST

Back from the dead

Borndead Productions

South Lake Tahoe's music scene is like many others: full of ups and downs as you trace it over the decades. At the moment, it looks like it's on an up, and one of the reasons is Josh Lease.

Lease is the mainstay of Borndead Productions, promoting live music in the ski/snow resort town. He's known for bringing big names in metal to the clubs, but Borndead goes beyond that style. He's also booked hip-hop and country shows at Whiskey Dick's and the American Legion, an unlikely but ridiculously fun venue that also hosted its share of metal under Lease's watch.

Lease also currently books punk and hip-hop artists at the Skatehouse Skate Park, and these shows clearly have a special place in his heart.

"My whole MO behind that is, with me being into the snowboard culture for 30 years or so, South Lake Tahoe is where it all started," Lease said. "It seems like we kind of lost the shred/music combo life, so the reason why I'm helping the Skatehouse is because we need that, to incorporate the alternative sports with the alternative music when it comes to metal and hip-hop and punk, and just rock and roll in general."

Lease is planning to feature more music at Whiskey Dick's, the longtime Tahoe venue that's under new management.

"I grew up playing music in this venue for the last 15 years," said Adrian Mills, who owns Whiskey Dick's and plays in the local metal band Black Plague Wolves. "Josh has given us some of our biggest

shows, so when I got the opportunity to buy the place, I wanted to bring Josh back on board to come in here and really put on a cool-ass music scene again."

Although Mills believes that the Tahoe music scene is "growing and getting stronger," there's also a lot of work to do. There aren't as many bands as its peak when Lease was first playing music decades ago; Lease's own band, Purification by Fire, is one of the few that has Tahoe ties.

But both Lease and Mills agree that having a consistent venue for live music will help bring bands out of the woodwork. Plus, they both aim to bring diverse sounds from Reno and California to the venue, beyond just the big headline names.

"It was stagnant for a long time in Tahoe," Lease said. "We had a lot of the same acts coming through, the same DJs, and it just reached a low point. But now the momentum is rolling, and with [Mills] taking over this place, to use a motorcycle term, it's time to dump the clutch and let it rip."

The rev-up to a better scene is starting with the latest version of Spring Meltdown, which Lease started 13 years ago at the defunct Tahoe Underground on Kingsbury Grade. From that show with eight bands, it blossomed over the years to include 60-plus bands at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino last year.

It's also moved around from Tahoe to Reno and back. For this year, the event is back at Whiskey Dick's, who hosted it for many years, with 25-plus bands ready to play this weekend. Highlights on the bill include Shark in the Water and Wastewater on May 17 and Cyborg Octopus, Earth Crawler and Four Stroke Baron on May 18.

Spring Meltdown 2019 takes place May 17 and 18 at Whiskey Dick's Saloon. Learn more at facebook.com/borndeadproductions530.

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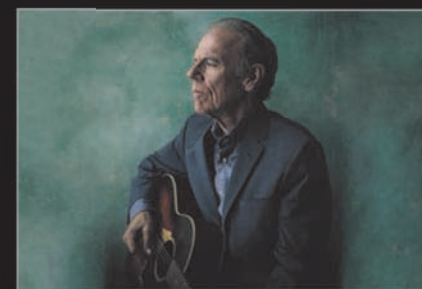
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