

Dave Russell and band at Cascade Theatre Jan. 5

Dave Russell is a winner of Sacramento radio station KNCI's "Nashville Star" competition, along with his entire band winning Best New Country Act in the True Value Country Showdown California Championships.

Fern Mountain Productions presents Dave Russell and his band in concert at the Cascade Theatre on Jan. 5 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 to \$18 and are available at the Cascade box office by calling (530) 243-8877 or online at www.cascadetheatre.org. A portion of the proceeds from the concert to benefit St. Joseph's School.

"Takes the stage like Elvis Presley in 1968 for his comeback special," is what a judge for the show "Nashville Star" said about Russell after seeing his audition.

Russell said he has spent most of his life working on being not only a singer, but a country music entertainer.

"There will always be fantastic singers in the world," Russell said. "And a lot of times when you see them that is all they have to offer, a great vocal talent.

"I want to try and be the total package of singers - fun, energetic, accessible and relatable. To have people see one of my shows and come away saying how much fun they had, that is, and always will be, my goal. That is not easy to do as a singer but I sure work as hard as I can to make it happen."

Russell grew up in rural North Carolina, right outside of the tobacco town of Winston-Salem. The youngest of seven, he always had a love for music. His older siblings all had tried their hand at musical instruments but after tiring of them, Russell got to play around with them.

"I never was able to really learn the instruments, but I was able to pick out melodies and short songs," he said.

Unfortunately Dave's parents were not in a position to pay for lessons,

he said, so that was pretty much the extent of his endeavors with playing an instrument.

But he still was able to sing. His father allowed him to play with a tape recorder and Russell would record himself singing and trying to sound like the singers he would listen to on the radio. It was this type of thing that helped forge Russell's ability to impersonate many singers, as he often does in his shows today.

"My brothers and sisters listened to anything from Jim Croce, Bread, The Who, Queen, BTO, and even down to David Cassidy," Russell said.

But of all of them, it was Johnny Cash, Hank Williams, George Jones, and others that Russell said really influenced him the most.

After a severe motorcycle accident put Russell out of work, he really started looking at what he wanted to do with his life.

He was working at UPS as a supervisor but he still longed to be on stage. The chances to do so in Winston-Salem were very few and far between, he said. But he started singing in local talent contests and even dreamed of being on the show "Star Search."

A friend of his sent in a tape that Russell had made and sure enough, the show called and asked Russell to be part of the televised talent competition. Russell won two championships that season.

He packed up, auditioned for Opryland, and was asked to do the show that they had in San Antonio. From there it was off to Nashville, Branson, Biloxi, and Reno.

For more on Russell you can check out his Web site www.daverussell.com as well as his MySpace site at www.myspace.com/daverussellonline. There's also a link to a YouTube promo video of Russell and his band in concert.