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## Emcees' experiences vary in Downtown Country

Fans of Northeastern State University's River City Players or Downtown Country may wonder who provides the narrative voices during the shows.

The emcee serves as host, introduces characters, provides information on upcoming sets and entertains the crowd during costume changes between acts.

One of the emcees at Downtown Country is Pattie Clay. Singing since age 3, Clay is a five-year veteran of Downtown Country and said she has enjoyed every minute of rehearsal and preparation for the shows.

"I was a guest artist in the show for several years and thought it was fantastic," said Clay. "I always wanted to be in the cast because it looked like so much fun, and it is."

Performances in which Clay has participated include Lonestar, Blake Shelton, Johnny Lee and Eddy Raven. Also, she recently completed her 10th year with the Cookson Jubilee.

Clay said she enjoys watching the reactions of the crowd to the performances.

"I never stop learning things from Downtown Country," said Clay. "It is such a fantastic experience and I have met some of the most amazing people while working with the show."

Before the Stars in the Summer series began in June, Justin O'Neal was singing in his second public performance for the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame promotional show. He is now one of Downtown Country's emcees and a vocalist.

He began his career of singing in high school where, trying to impress the head cheerleader, O'Neal performed in a "Back to the '80s" musical in which he sang "Never Gonna Give You Up" by Rick Astley.

O'Neal introduces the guest artist, welcomes the audience, introduces the cast and crew and entertains the audience during breaks as an emcee.

"I have always been interested in the show because I have had numerous friends involved, so I thought I should try it out myself," said O'Neal.

O'Neal said his biggest difficulty is the dancing.

"I'm not naturally a great dancer but I try to spend some time practicing, so it isn't that bad," he said.

Whether gaining performance experience or honing singing and dancing skills, Downtown Country and the River City Players showcase the area's brightest talent and are fun for the audiences.

The Stars in the Summer series runs for just one more weekend, through Aug. 7.

The River City Players perform at the Shawnee Street Theater on the northeast corner of College Avenue and Shawnee Street. Hollywood Hits is Thursday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Oldies But Goodies is Friday at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

If country music is more your style, check out Downtown Country at the University Playhouse on the northeast corner of Muskogee Avenue and Downing Street. Destination Country is Thursday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and If This Ol' Dock

Could Talk is Friday at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

Ticket prices are adults \$12, NSU alumni and employees \$10, seniors 60-over and groups of 12 or more \$8, children and NSU students \$6. For tickets or reservations call (918) 458-2075.

The Stars in the Summer series is made possible by NSU's College of Liberal Arts and sponsored by the Tahlequah Area Tourism Council.

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