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Posted August 10, 2006

Premier Cafe hosts singer/songwriters

By Benjamin Wideman Herald Times Reporter

They come from all corners of the world — one from Singapore, one from England and one from Michigan.

But Dawn Xiana Moon, Thomas Boles and Dan Vaillancourt have more in common than you might think.

The three talented solo artists, all of whom are in their 20s, share a love for singing, songwriting and playing the guitar, not to mention sharing the same stage every so often.

In fact, they'll do exactly that Friday night, when they perform at Premier Cafe, 316 N. Eighth St., Manitowoc. The show, which will feature their three solo acts, begins at 7 p.m., and there's a \$1 cover charge for the night.

"There are definitely some similarities with us," Moon told the Herald Times Reporter via telephone recently while attending an outdoor concert in Chicago, where she lives.

"I think we all have a lot of respect for the different kinds of music we play. We feed off of that and pick up new things every time we hear each other. We're constantly growing as musicians."

Added Vaillancourt: "We all bring something different to the table, and I think that's great."

Here's a look at each of the them.

*

Dan Vaillancourt

If not for the 25-year-old Vaillancourt, these three performers might not have struck up a friendship.

Vaillancourt met Moon at one of his performances in Ann Arbor, Mich., a few years ago.

Then, last year, at another one of his shows, Vaillancourt met Boles. A friendship between Boles and Moon grew from that, and the trio has been supporting each other's endeavors ever since.

"Both were chance meetings, but I'm glad they happened," Vaillancourt told the HTR via telephone while resting during a rare summer stop at his Michigan home.

Playing a one-of-a-kind style of music he calls "funkified folk," Vaillancourt's catchy songs draw listeners in and keep them entranced.

"It's spawned from the same tradition as people like Paul Simon and Bob Dylan, but I spice it up with jazz and funk influence," Vaillancourt said.

Vaillancourt played in Manitowoc two times last year, and initiated contact with the management at Premier Cafe, letting them know he wanted to return this summer and bring along two friends.

"People really enjoyed Dan the last time he was here, so we think it'll be fun," said Kym Peronto, 23, of Premier Cafe.

Vaillancourt said the feeling is mutual.

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Coming up

Who: Singer/songwriters Dawn Xiana Moon, Thomas Boles and Dan Vaillancourt. When: 7 p.m. Friday. Where: Premier Cafe, 316 N. Eighth St., Manitowoc. Cost: \$1 for the night. On the Web: Dawn Xiana Moon at www.dawnxianamoon.com; Thomas Boles at www.waypastfrown.com; and Dan Vaillancourt at www.danvaillancourt.com.

"I love playing places like that," he said. "They're a little smaller, so you feel more connected. You can talk with people. They're close enough to see your every move. It's more of a cozy setting. It's a great place to play."

His latest album is "Melodic Snapshots."

*

Dawn Xiana Moon

The 24-year-old Moon was born in Singapore and began studying classical piano at the age 5, when her family moved to the United States.

Throughout high school, she earned recognition at regional competitions for her piano, flute and singing skills. But it wasn't until her freshman year at the University of Michigan that Moon changed gears and started playing guitar.

"It was like anarchy," Moon says in her biography. "For the first time in my life, I wasn't taking lessons or reading music."

Two months later, she was writing songs, and continues doing so today. Her melodic folk pop songs are popular at venues across the Midwest, especially with college-age crowds.

Moon said anyone coming to Premier Cafe can expect an energetic performance. This will be only her second show in Wisconsin; she performed once in Oshkosh.

"I usually have a lot of audience interaction," Moon told the HTR. "I like to improvise songs on the spot. It just kind of depends what instrument, that kind of determines the music a little bit.

"On the guitar, I tend to be upbeat and funny, like my Star Trek song. Piano songs are more melancholy. Piano is really an instrument where if I'm playing sad or upset, I'll lock myself in a room and play the piano for hours and get my feelings out."

Moon is working on her first full-length album.

*

Thomas Boles

Boles, 29, was born in England but calls San Francisco home these days.

Boles, who performs what he calls "folk pop," said he appreciates playing intimate venues like Premier Cafe.

"I really like the smaller places in the Midwest," Boles told the HTR during a break between shows. "One thing that's definitely here that I don't see at home, there's overwhelming support for new music in the Midwest.

"When I've played New York before, it was always a downer because there's a thousand things for people to do and they may just leave. In the Midwest, I've had a lot of success with people and their eagerness to hear new music and see what it's all about. That's why I'm excited about coming there."

Boles has been performing in the Bay Area for nearly 10 years, as part of a trio, a duo and now as a solo artist.

Under the moniker "waypastfrown," Boles is tackling his most ambitious project yet.

"Waypastfrown" is a collection of his sweeter pop songs rearranged for the acoustic guitar.

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