



▼ **SPECIAL**
You won't find many ferns at Ferndale's third annual Fern Fest and Arts and Crafts Fair. But lots of crafts, country music and food will be available in the year's first Whatcom County warm-season festival. Details: Page C3.



Harmonic convergence

BY MARGARET BIKMAN
THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

For the past few years, Andy Koch has staged blues harmonica workshops for mouth-organ enthusiasts in his Bellingham living room.

But this year, he decided to blow the lid off the annual workshop with a Harmonica Blow-off on Tuesday at Speedy O'Tubbs' Rhythmic Underground.

▼ If you go

EVENT: The Harmonica Blow-off starts with a lesson from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday at Speedy O'Tubbs' Rhythmic Underground, 1305 11th Ave., with champion player Jim McLaughlin. Bring a "C" harp. Competition begins at 9:30 p.m., with McLaughlin and Andy Koch judging. The lesson fee is \$10. To sign up, call Koch at 733-7464. For the show, cover charge is \$2.

plaques from Speedy O'Tubbs'.

Koch had heard about successful harmonica contests in Seattle and thought the same success could occur in Whatcom County. He met McLaughlin a few years ago at a blues gig at the Conway Tavern in Skagit County.

McLaughlin, who lives on Ebey Island northeast of Everett, was eager to participate. He's traveled as far as Australia and Europe to compete in championships.

Koch's new blues band, Bad Dog Blues, will debut at the competition. Of the jam, he says, "It'll either be harmonica heaven or harmonica hell."



MELISSA MARTENY PHOTO

BLOW HARD: Harmonica player Andy Koch has decided to blow the lid off his annual workshop by including a contest.



Badd Dog Blues Society
featuring Andy Koch
Howlin'



Badd Dog Blues Society

(360) 733-7464 P.O. Box 4072, Bellingham, WA 98227 www.baddogbluessociety.com

“I never know where the Blues is going to take me; dancing on the bar, singing in the streets, or just walkin’ the Dog.”

Andy Koch

General Information:

Tapping the wealth of abundant talent in the Bellingham blues scene, Andy Koch has brought together an up-tempo ensemble sure to please blues lovers everywhere. You’ll be in for an evening to remember as Andy and his band wind their way through the back alleys of the blues; dancing, singing and howling the night away.

The Badd Dog Blues Society — an independent band formed in 1995 — tours steadily, working three to four nights a week from the mountains to the islands. The band travels as a four to five piece, drawing from a growing dog pound orchestra of more than 40 top-notch players, spreading the word of the blues throughout the Northwest and up and down the West Coast from Baja to Alaska. They maintain a mailing list of 500-plus dedicated fans, a website and publicize themselves heavily. *The Badd Dog Blues Society* has built a strong following through professionalism, showmanship and tons of fun!

Andy Koch (harmonica, vocals, guitar and keyboard) was born in Salt Lake City in 1955, raised in Seattle’s inner city and now resides in Bellingham. He has been a showman since an early age and plays a variety of instruments, but is now focusing on vocals and harmonica. Koch is the host of regular “open mics” in Bellingham and a guest artist with numerous local and national artists. A sampling of Koch’s other credits include: Three years as a street musician, roaming from New York City to San Francisco to Seattle; *Merlin, The Rubber Band, Dream Suite, The Blues Bandits* and *The Blues Tornados*. He has studied with Lee Oskar, Howard Levey (of *Bela Fleck & the Flecktones*), First Place National Harmonica Champion Jim McLaughlin, Phil Wiggins, Bud Spires, Mark Graham, Grant Dermodey and Gary Primich, among many others.

Koch has hosted the *Harmonica Showcase* at Wild Buffalo for the last two years and appeared in the ’97, ’98, ’99, 2000, ’01 & ’02 *Harmonica Blast* hosted by *Incognito* at the Yale in Vancouver, B.C. His harp playing can be heard on *Jumbalassy’s* 1994 CD *Live Jumbies*, and of course, on his own CD, *Howlin’*, released in 1999. He is a member of the Bellingham Independent Musician’s Association, Allied Arts and the Washington Blues Society, He is also a perpetrator of live music in and around Bellingham and a talent-buyer and musical director for *Wild Buffalo*, Bellingham’s premier live music venue. Koch’s exciting interpretation of the harmonica puts new definitions in the dictionary of music for this amazingly diverse instrument. His gutsy vocals make blues aficionados scream and his fun-loving stage presence is contagious — bringing his fans back time and time again.

For more information regarding the Badd Dog Blues Society and Andy Koch, please call (360) 733-7464, write to P.O. Box 4072, Bellingham, WA 98227 or visit our website at <http://www.baddogbluessociety.com>

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Blues

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sure that an adult Whatcom County audience is eager to hear blues.

"Anything like this that can happen for blues in Whatcom County is a great thing," McFarland says.

Kock encourages audiences to bring lawn chairs and blankets for seating and a tent for overnight sleeping. Camping is free. Hiking trails and Nooksack River swimming are available nearby.

"It's a magical setting," Koch says.

A percentage of proceeds will go to the River Farm Land Trust, an 85-acre nonprofit cooperative farm. Six families live in separate houses on the farm but share some common property, including a house and barn.

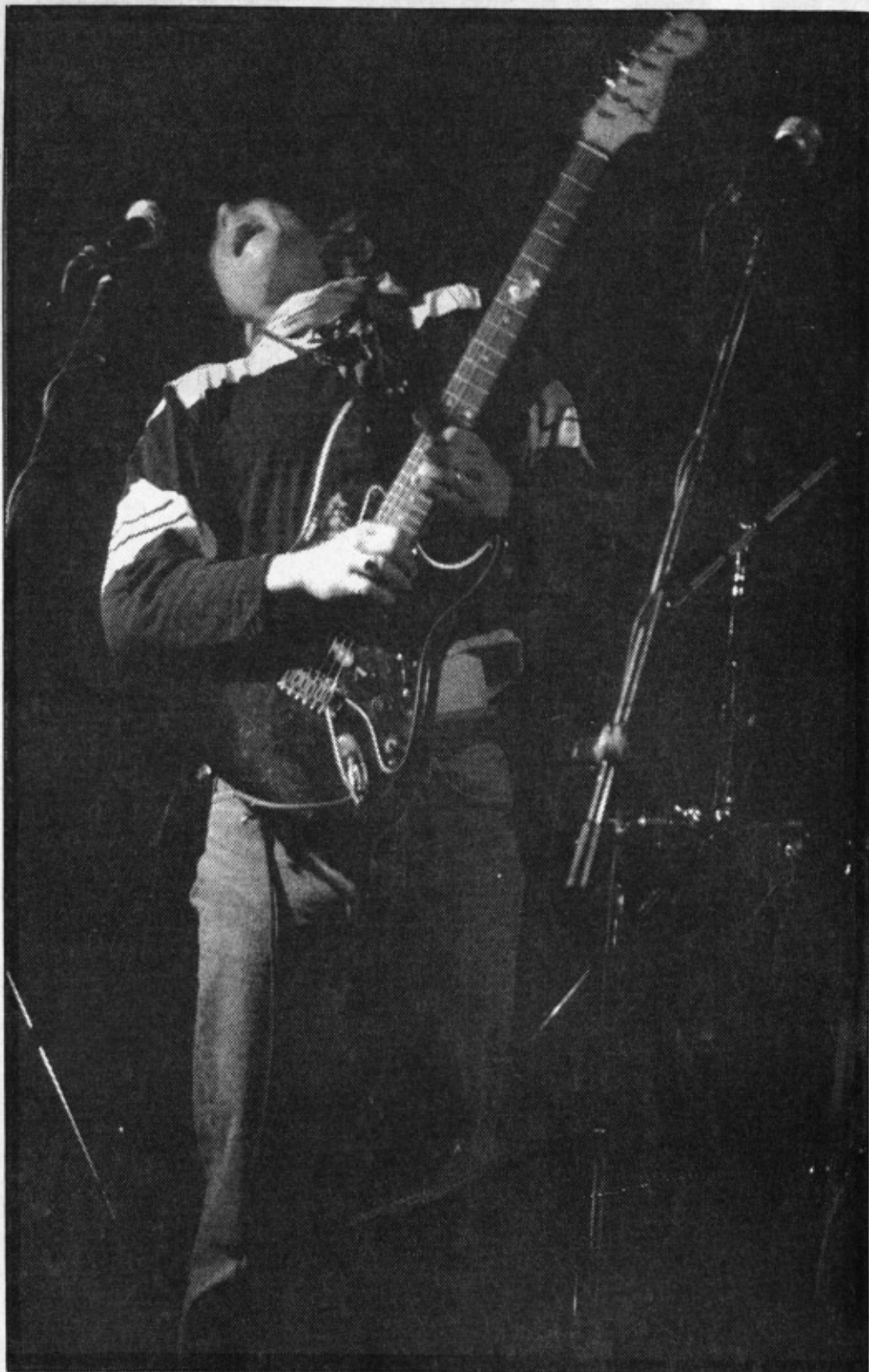
Festival organizers also hope to educate the audience on sustainable agriculture, alternative energy sources and animal husbandry.

For the past 11 years, Koch has helped run the River Farm Solstice and Equinox Music festivals in June and September. This year, the farm will hold monthly music festivals throughout the summer. A new music festival, featuring Whatcom County bands performing original music, is planned for Aug. 19.

Koch's strong support for the River Farm's philosophy is not the only reason for his involvement with music festivals.

"I love music, and there's so much talent in this area that I don't want to see it go to waste," he says.

"If I can give people a creative outlet, a way to vent their energy in a positive way, then there's less negative energy for crime and hatred in the world."



JOHN BREWER
Bad Dogs Blues Society guitarist