

The Oklahoman

'Full circle'

By Brandy McDonnell
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Cody Canada recognizes the fire when he sees it, whether it's burning in his own sons or in a young face in the crowd at one of his shows.

"We were in Colorado the other night and Widespread Panic has a bar there, and we were just having some beers and eating some food. And the guy up there singing didn't know anybody in the room, and he looked at Dierks and goes, 'Hey, you look like a shredder. You wanna get up and sing a song, play a song?' He just has it. He has that look,

and he got up and played and I told (my wife) Shannon, I said, 'Man, when I was 13 years old, I was in Yukon with a cowboy hat on standing on the side of the stage begging the band to let me get up and play a Bob Wills song.' He's doing exactly what I was doing at the exact same time," said Canada, whose two sons, Dierks, 13, and Willy, 11, are budding musicians.

The red dirt singer, songwriter and guitarist and his band, The Departed, will return to their home state to headline the latest installment of the COOP Ale Works Beats & Bites Festival, a free, outdoor event for families,

Cody Canada returns to his home state to play family-friendly Beats & Bites Festival

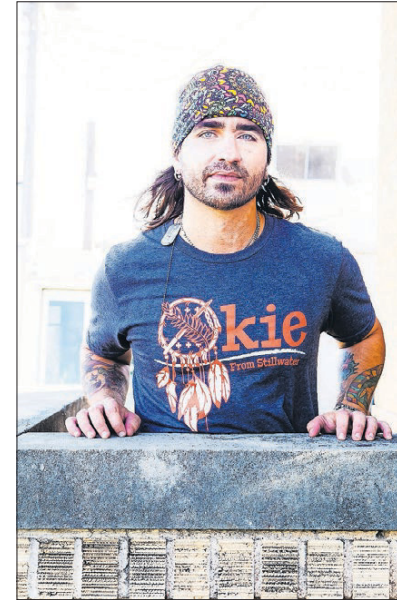
Saturday night in [Riverwind](#) Casino's west parking lot.

Rock school

It's telling that Canada, the former frontman of the seminal red dirt band Cross Canadian Ragweed, sounds like a man at peace, even when he's driving a vanload of adolescents to the airport.

Just a few years ago, Canada said he was losing his voice and dealing with upheaval in his post-Ragweed band The Departed. With their two sons so interested in learning music, his wife and manager,

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Cody Canada [PHOTO PROVIDED]

COOP Ale Works Beats & Bites Festival

With: Live music by Banana Seat and Cody Canada & The Departed, food trucks, children's activities and fireworks.

When: 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday.

Where: West parking lot of Riverwind Casino, 1544 State Highway 9, Norman.

Admission: Free.
Information: www.riverwind.com/entertain/beans-bites-stage.

CODY

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Shannon Canada, suggested they open a School of Rock musical school in their adopted hometown of New Braunfels, Texas.

"Before we got the green light, we kicked it around for about two years. ... Got the go-ahead from the corporate office and here we are, 117 kids later," he said.

While his wife was working to open their music school, Canada quit smoking cigarettes to save his voice and reworked The Departed as a power trio with bassist/singer Jeremy Plato, his bandmate since Ragweed recorded its first album back in the 1990s, and drummer Eric "Waldo" Hansen, a long-time pal from Stillwater. He reunited with long-time pal Mike McClure, who produced The Departed's 2018 album "3," and hit the road with renewed enthusiasm.

Circle of life

His dates with The Departed aren't the only shows on Canada's calendar these days. He recently accompanied the New Braunfels School of Rock Haus Band to gigs in Chicago and at Milwaukee's massive Summerfest.

"There's three kids in the van right now ... all exactly the age that I was whenever got started, and it's crazy to think about it in that perspective," Canada said while driving the group to the San Antonio Airport. "Either you burn out or you become the old man, and I would rather become the old man."

In the words of some music fans, Canada won the internet recently when he celebrated the release of rising Texas country star Koe Wetzel's new album with a "Lion King" "Circle of Life" meme featuring Wetzel as baby Simba and himself as Rafiki.

"It just feels like everything is coming full circle, and I'm very, very at peace with it," he said.

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