

BLUEGRASS TOUR

Canadian trio shows its roots in Raton, La Junta

By **Tim Keller**
Correspondent
The Chronicle-News

RATON – The Abrams Brothers traveled south from their homes in Canada to begin a month-long American tour that began on March 15. Having started in the Dakotas, the group is continuing south as far as Raton, before turning back north via La Junta, playing 21 concerts in four weeks. They perform at Raton's Shuler Theater on Monday night, March 31, then at the Ed Stafford Theater at Otero Junior College in La Junta on Tuesday night, April 1. Both shows begin at 7:00 p.m.

Born into a four-generation touring bluegrass music family, John and James Abrams joined the family business when they were 7 and 10 years old, respectively. Five years later they became the youngest Canadians to play Nashville's famed Grand Ole Opry. Now 19 and 22, they've been playing as The Abrams Brothers for 10 years, winning the 2005 Emerging Artist of the Year prize from the Canadian Bluegrass Music Awards.

The spring tour is designed to support the release of their first album of original music, "Northern Redemption," which includes nine of their own songs augmented by their bluegrass arrangement of Coldplay's "Viva La Vida." They recorded the album on Wolfe Island, Ontario, where, John Abrams says, "Chris Brown's studio is like what 'Big Pink' was to The Band: a rustic, cedar-shingle-covered cabin, secluded from any sense of haste brought about by an urban setting. This was exactly the environment we needed to create this project. If you listen closely enough, you can almost hear someone stoking the woodstove behind a

vocal take, or an ax splitting wood behind a violin solo."

John sings and plays guitar, mandolin, keyboard and percussion. Brother James sings and plays violin. Their cousin Elijah Abrams accompanies the brothers on acoustic and electric bass. They describe their sound as "somewhere between Americana, country and roots music." Influences range from the Louvin Brothers and Tony Rice to the Beach Boys and Neil Young.

Lyrical, their original songs draw upon the landscapes of the Canadian wilderness, merging those images with themes of love, loneliness and restless ambition. "The album is a bit of a paradox," John says. "There's a retrospective view of our decade-long touring career, combined with the fact that we are still very young and feel like our career is only just beginning."

Their youth is revealed in the band's Facebook page, where the young men post notes from the road and pictures of themselves on a day off high on a rock-climbing wall, or posing with their hockey heroes.

Monday night's Shuler Theater concert is the second-to-last show in Raton Arts & Humanities Council's 2013-2014 Performing Arts Series. The closing show, high-energy fiddlers Everything Fitz, will arrive on April 11.

Reserved seat tickets to Monday's show are available in advance at Old Pass Gallery, located at 145 S. 1st St., in Raton. The phone number for the Old Pass is 575-445-2052. Tickets will also be available at the Shuler Theater before Monday's show. Adult tickets are \$20, seniors \$15 and students \$10.

Information on Tuesday night's show in La Junta is available by calling Otero Junior College at 719-384-6831.



Photo courtesy of The Abrams Brothers

Young Canadian trio The Abrams Brothers will bring its mix of bluegrass, country and Americana music to Raton's Shuler Theater on Monday night, then to the Ed Stafford Theater at Otero Junior College in La Junta on Tuesday night. Both shows start at 7 p.m.

Aronofsky's 'Noah' is everything — except boring

By **JOCELYN NOVECK**
AP National Writer

What to make of Darren Aronofsky's "Noah"? Perhaps that's the wrong question. Indeed, what NOT to make of "Noah"? Because it is so many things.

It is, of course, a biblical blockbuster, a 21st-century answer to Cecil B. DeMille. It's also a disaster movie — the original disaster, you might say. It's an intense family drama. Part sci-fi film. An action flick?

Definitely, along the lines of "The Lord of the Rings." At times you might also think of "Transformers," and at one point, even "The Shining."

But there's one thing "Noah" is not, for a moment: Dull. So, what to make of "Noah"? It's a movie that, with all its occasional excess, is utterly worth your time — 138 minutes of it.

Although the real star of the film is its visual ingenuity, particularly in a few stunning sequences, one must give ample credit to Russell Crowe, who lends Noah the moral heft and groundedness we need to believe everything that ends up happening to him. Noah's near-descent into madness would not be nearly as effective had Crowe not already convinced us of his essential decency. At the same time, the actor is believable when pondering the most heinous crime imaginable. It's one of Crowe's more effective performances.

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Las Animas County clicks

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