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## SummerTide presents production of "Ring of Fire" in Gulf Shores

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Special to Tusk

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### GULF SHORES

In Alabama, summer starts before the calendar makes it official, as 90-plus-degree days attest. At the beach, it's already kicked into high gear with the Johnny Cash musical "Ring of Fire."

For the past dozen years, SummerTide has brought professional theatrical performances to the George C. Meyer Performing Arts Center in Gulf Shores, from "Pump Boys and Dinettes" to "Anything Goes," "Grease," "Little Shop of Horrors," "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," "Godspell," "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," "Dames at Sea," "Smokey Joe's Cafe," a newly created all-



Photo provided by Molly Page

The cast of SummerTide's "Ring of Fire" plays and sings the music of Johnny Cash live on stage at the George C. Meyer Performing Arts Center in Gulf Shores. Every year since 2004, the University of Alabama Department of Theatre and Dance has created a professional theater experience for its students and recent graduates, performing for a little more than a month in the beach town, reaching tourists and locals alike.

Alabama-show for its 10th anniversary and, in 2014, the Elvis musical "All Shook Up."

SummerTide is the University of Alabama Department of Theatre and Dance's summer program, traveling to the coast for 12 years now, offering a full professional experience for UA students and recent graduates. This year's show rolls on until July 3.

"Ring Of Fire" is a revue by Richard Maltby Jr. and Bill Meade, inspired by the life and lyrics of Johnny Cash and bringing universal stories of love, home and family to the stage. It's also known as a "jukebox musical," which uses existing music for its score. Although the term dates back to the early '60s, jukebox musicals have seen a revival in the late 20th and early 21st century, with hits such as "Mamma Mia!" (ABBA), "Jersey Boys" (Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons) and "American Idiot" (Green Day).

"Ring of Fire" isn't a biography in the sense of the 2005 film "Walk the Line" but is structured around the life of Cash and, of course, his wife June Carter Cash, as told through music. Many of Cash's biggest hits are included, among them "I Walk the Line," "A Boy Named Sue," "Folsom Prison Blues" and, of course, the title song "Ring Of Fire."

Stacy Alley is director and choreographer of this year's SummerTide show and has

been part of this team since its early days, performing in and choreographing the inaugural 2004 “Pump Boys and Dinettes,” choreographing “Smokey Joe’s Cafe” and directing and choreographing last summer’s “All Shook Up.”

“After a long day at the beach and a lovely dinner, people want to be entertained, and that is our goal,” Alley said. “The show brings in a lot of (tourists) and locals who have been here since the first show.

“We have had a great reaction this year; nothing but great feedback. We have had a lot of sold-out shows.”

Multiple cast members play and sing; there’s no one Johnny or June. As in professional settings, the cast rehearses eight or so hours for two weeks at the end of the school year, instead of the more extravagant two to three hours per night over four or more weeks for a typical UA show. Performances run six shows a week, with cast members performing other duties, including promotional and educational, while at SummerTide.

Kaylee MacKnight, a “Ring of Fire” cast member and spring 2015 UA graduate, confirms the joy the show has brought to audiences this year.

“They love ‘Jackson,’ ‘Ring Of Fire’ and ‘I’ve Been Everywhere,’ ” MacKnight said. “The audience has been singing and clapping along with us.

“I have really enjoyed the whole process. It has been hard, but it’s so much fun and very rewarding. It’s amazing being in a cast like this one.

“Just come on down and see it! It’s a fun show, and you are guaranteed to have a good time. Plus, who wouldn’t want to go to the beach?”

#### Outside the ‘Ring’

Before and after the show, there’s a bit more to do in the Gulf Shores-Orange Beach area.

#### FOOD AND DRINK

Scoops Olde Fashion Ice Cream Parlor, a longtime staple, is great for hot summer evenings. 601 Gulf Shores Pkwy, Gulf Shores. 251-948-4800.

Papa Rocco’s is known for its pizza and cold beer. 101 W. Sixth Ave., Gulf Shores. 251-948-7262.

Lulu’s is owned by Lucy Buffett, Jimmy Buffett’s sister, and features live music daily. It’s known for casual atmosphere and yes, an actual Cheeseburger in Paradise on the menu. 200 E. 25th Ave., Gulf Shores. 251-967-5858.

Original Oyster House is known for its oyster bar and seafood. 701 Gulf Shores Parkway, Gulf Shores. 251-948-2445.

Pink Pony World Famous Restaurant and Bar has karaoke night every night starting at 9 p.m. 137 E. Gulf Plaza, Gulf Shores. 251-948-6371.

#### ACTIVITIES

Zeke's Landing Marina is the Gulf's largest charter fishing fleet. Boat rentals are available daily. 26619 Perdido Beach Blvd. Orange Beach. 251-981-4044.

Blue Reef Watersports offers parasailing, jet ski rentals, guided jet ski tours and dolphin tours. 27075 Marina Road, Orange Beach. 251-504-7411.  
www.bluerewatersports.com.

The Adventure Center at Gulf State Park includes six ziplines, paddle boards and kayaks. 21101 State Highway 135, Gulf Shores. 251-948-9494.

Flyboarding is the newest water sport on the Gulf Coast presented by Flyboard Bama. A flyboard is a foot mounted board with two jets on the bottom. It is connected to a waverunner by a hose, and can lift the board. 26189 Canal Road Orange Beach. 251-981-7673.

Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo is home to more than 500 animals. Tickets \$11 for adults, \$9 seniors, \$8 kids ages 3-12 and kids age 2 and under are free. 1204 Gulf Shores Parkway, Gulf Shores. 251-968-5732.

#### UPCOMING ENTERTAINMENT

June 28: Elsa & Anna, from Disney movie "Frozen," visit Waterville USA water park from 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 906 Gulf Shores Parkway, Gulf Shores. 251-948-2106.

June 28: Flora-Bama Fishing Rodeo. Tickets \$40 for the adult division and \$20 for kids 12 and under competing in the youth division. 850-492-0611.

July 4: Fireworks show on Gulf Shores public beach begins at 9 p.m.; free. Carnival-like activities for kids begins at 6 p.m.

July 7: Blue Marlin Grand Championship of the Gulf, also known as the "Greatest Show in Sportfishing,"

will be held in The Wharf Marina. 4673 Wharf Parkway, Orange Beach. 251-224-1900.

For more, visit [www.gulfshores.com](http://www.gulfshores.com).

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