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**JOHN COWAN & FRIENDS, JOAN OSBORNE TO PERFORM AT MERLEFEST 2011**

WILKESBORO, N.C. (February 23, 2011) — **John Cowan & Friends** and **Joan Osborne** are scheduled to perform at **MerleFest 2011**, presented by Lowe's and slated for April 28-May 1.

In addition to his performance as part of The Doobie Brothers Friday evening on the Watson stage, vocalist John Cowan will be fronting John Cowan & Friends—comprised of Cowan, Jeff Autry (guitar), Tom Britt (bass) and Billy Thomas (drums)—for a special performance at the Hillside Stage on Friday afternoon. Cowan, member of the seminal New Grass Revival and a frequent performer at MerleFest over the festival's 24-year history, was lauded by entertainment site *PopMatters* with the claim “from high-lonesome bluegrass to banshee wails that no one (except maybe Adam Lambert) can touch, Cowan manipulates his diamond-clean skyrocket of a voice with enormous control, timing, and taste.”

At MerleFest 2011, Joan Osborne will be a guest vocalist with The Waybacks during the popular “Hillside Album Hour” on Saturday afternoon at the Hillside Stage. Osborne first burst onto the music scene with *Relish*, a tremendous commercial and critical success that earned seven Grammy® nominations. With each subsequent project - whether a collection of soul and R&B classics, a Nashville-recorded country album or tours as a vocalist for the Grateful Dead—Osborne continues to follow her own musical muse, to the delight of her extensive worldwide fan base. Her most recent project, *Little Wild One*, described by *The New York Times* as “gospel-infused pop anthems and hymns,” is an homage to Osborne's adopted home of New York City.

John Cowan & Friends, Joan Osborne and the [complete lineup of performers](#) will join host Doc Watson on the campus of Wilkes Community College for a celebration of “traditional plus” music—a term Doc coined to describe the unique mix of traditional, roots-oriented sounds of the Appalachian region, including bluegrass and old-time music and expanded to include Americana, country, “plus whatever other styles we were in the mood to play,” Doc explained.

With over 90 artists performing on 14 stages during the course of the event, MerleFest is a great

entertainment value. Ticket purchases can be made on the web at [www.merlefest.org](http://www.merlefest.org) or by calling 1-800-343-7857. **An early bird ticket discount is available through March 13, 2011.** Additionally, up-to-the-minute information about the festival can be obtained through the festival's e-newsletter and through Facebook and Twitter.

MerleFest was founded in 1988 in memory of Eddy Merle Watson as a fundraiser for Wilkes Community College Endowment Corporation and a celebration of "traditional plus" music. Scheduled for April 28 – May 1, 2011, the event is held on the campus of Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina.

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