

Wilkes Community College's



MerleFest®

Music. Moments. Memories.™

ON THE CAMPUS OF WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WILKESBORO, NC

A page from the MerleFest 25 notebook:

TRADITIONAL MUSIC CONTINUES TO THRIVE AT MERLEFEST 25

"Many festivals leave traditional music out these days, or feature one act. MerleFest not only includes mountain music and dance in their lineup, they celebrate it with a participatory dance stage, a large traditional stage, jam sessions and hands-on meetings with the artists. It's a homecoming, a festival within a festival, where traditional artists gather, play, dance, perform and educate, helping to preserve the heritage for future generations by sharing it the way it's meant to be: exciting, fun and accessible."

- Carol Rifkin, performing artist, journalist and radio host

WILKESBORO, N.C. (February 21, 2012) — As people gather from all over the globe in Memphis this week for the International Folk Alliance Conference, it's obvious that traditional music – basically, music that has been passed down through generations of players and musicians mostly through performance – continues to be an important part of every region's cultural fiber. Folk music, world music, Zydeco, Celtic, old time, Klezmer - all these genres of music and many more fall under the broad category of "traditional music." As Carol Rifkin notes, traditional music not only has a home at MerleFest, it continues to thrive.

MerleFest 25, presented by Lowe's and slated for **April 26-29**, is an annual homecoming of musicians and music fans, gathering to celebrate the memory of musician Eddy Merle Watson, beloved son of American music icon – and traditional music performer – **Doc Watson**. With over 90 artists performing on 14 stages during the course of the event, MerleFest 25 offers an excellent opportunity for music fans to learn more about the roots of their favorite musical styles. A complete list of confirmed performers is available at www.merlefest.org – and it includes a healthy dose of traditional artists, including [Jim Lauderdale](#), [Sierra Hull](#), [the Honeycutters](#) and [The Kickin Grass Band](#), who are also performing at this week's Folk Alliance conference.

Diane Bowen of MerleFest performers [Zephyr Lightning Bolts](#) can testify to the importance of this festival for traditional musicians: "Playing at MerleFest is tantamount to our band performing at the Grand Old Opry. Living in Wilkes County ourselves, it makes us so proud to be part of an event that is known throughout the nation and to realize that it is right here in our back door—truly amazing! We are deeply humbled and honored to be able to perform on stages

where our heroes have played, and to see them and perhaps talk to them in person makes us want to pinch ourselves to make sure it's real. Thanks, MerleFest, for making our music accessible to so many who may not ever have the opportunity to hear old time music in person anywhere else."

Nick Marshal, a member of [Blind Boy Chocolate & The Milk Sheiks](#), agrees: "BBC & TMS are honored to play the dance stage again this year. The energy was just fantastic last year!"

Beloved North Carolina traditional musician [David Holt](#) – who performs frequently with Doc Watson – offers the following advice to festival fans looking for a traditional music fix: "One of the best places to see a concert at MerleFest is the Traditional Tent. It is an intimate setting filled with an eager, knowledgeable audience. For Doc and me, it is like sitting on the front porch with friends and family and playing our favorite songs."

Over the years, MerleFest's spontaneous moments, collaborations and last-minute performance have become legendary. To keep up with any additional changes and additions to this year's lineup – even during the festival – MerleFest encourages fans to sign up for the e-newsletter and to follow the festival through Facebook and Twitter. Links are available at www.merlefest.org.

Ticket purchases for MerleFest 25 can be made on the web at www.merlefest.org or by calling 1-800-343-7857. An **early bird ticket discount** is available through **March 12, 2012**.

MerleFest, considered one of the premier music festivals in the country, is held on the campus of Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. MerleFest was founded in 1988 in memory of Eddy Merle Watson and is a celebration of what Doc Watson calls "traditional plus" music, meaning the traditional music of the Appalachian regional plus whatever other styles we were in the mood to play." The annual festival has become the primary fundraiser for the WCC Endowment Corporation, funding scholarships, capital projects and other educational needs.

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