

Wilkes Community College's



MerleFest®

Music. Moments. Memories.™

ON THE CAMPUS OF WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WILKESBORO, NC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MERLEFEST 25, PRESENTED BY LOWE'S, A JAMMIN' GOOD TIME

WILKESBORO, N.C. (April 29, 2012)—**MerleFest 25**, presented by Lowe's, has come to a close for another year. Early estimates show that, from its start on Thursday, April 26, to its close on Sunday, April 29, aggregate participation over the festival's four days was at 76,000 participants, keeping pace with last year's numbers. The festival noted that MerleFest 25 experienced a big boost in advance sales of multi-day tickets, as well as an increase in the number of patron packages and reserved seats. MerleFest, held on the campus of Wilkes Community College, has become the primary fundraiser for the WCC Endowment Corporation, funding scholarships, capital projects and other educational needs.

Performers who turned in riveting performances at MerleFest 25 include Doc and Richard Watson, Vince Gill, Alison Krauss and Union Station featuring Jerry Douglas, Tedeschi Trucks Band, Los Lobos, Béla Fleck and the Flecktones, Punch Brothers featuring Chris Thile, Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives, Dailey & Vincent, Sam Bush, the trio of John Cowan, Patrick Simmons and Darrell Scott, The Boxcars, Steep Canyon Rangers, Donna the Buffalo, Dougie MacLean, Nashville Bluegrass Band, Tony Rice Unit, Peter Rowan, Sierra Hull & Highway 11, The Gibson Brothers, Lost Bayou Ramblers, The Deep Dark Woods, Scythian, Roy Book Binder, The Kruger Brothers and many more.



Figure 1 - Derek Trucks, Susan Tedeschi, Béla Fleck, John Cowan and other musicians joined Sam Bush for a super jam on Friday night at the Watson Stage. Photo by Dr. Gordon Burns.

“As much as I can ever remember about past festivals, this year offered some of the most incredible MerleFest moments ever,” exclaimed festival director Ted Hagaman.

Every year, music fans at the festival experience what has become known as “MerleFest Moments” – special groupings of artists, jam sessions and events that get the whole festival talking, and become legendary in the festival’s rich history. MerleFest Moments this year include the Friday night super jam during Sam Bush’s set, where Derek Trucks, Susan Tedeschi, Bela Fleck and John Cowan ignited the crowd with such rock classics as “Up On Cripple Creek,” “Bell Bottom Blues” and “Gimme Shelter,” as well as the many artist tributes to the recently departed musical giants Earl Scruggs and Leon Helm – both of whom have graced the stages of MerleFest. Other jams happened during Los Lobos and Scythian.

On the big screens at the Watson Stage, fans were treated to videos interviews with artists who have been a part of MerleFest over these past 25 years, as well as vintage footage of festivals past. And since MerleFest has often served as a launching pad for rising talent, fans spread the word about new “buzz bands” like Deep Dark Woods, Jubal’s Kin and The Steel Wheels.

The highly anticipated Hillside Album Hour on Saturday evening, hosted by The Waybacks with special guests Sarah Dugas, Susan Tedeschi, Sam Bush, John Cowan, Jim Lauderdale and many others, featured the album *Are You Experienced* by The Jimi Hendrix Experience, the 1967 rock classic. A huge crowd filled the hillside to find out what album would be featured, which is always a closely held secret until the show begins. **Figure 2 - Hillside Album Hour at MerleFest 25. Photo by Dr. Gordon Burns.**



The legendary Doc Watson performed throughout the weekend, including a special set of old-time music from Doc Watson and David Holt in the Traditional Tent, Saturday evening’s “Doc Watson and Friends” jam session and – a fan favorite – Sunday morning’s gospel set with the Nashville Bluegrass Band. **Figure 3 - T. Michael Coleman (left) performs with Doc Watson. Photo by Jim Gavenus.**

The Midnight Jam on Saturday, hosted by Casey Driessen with the opening act Jonathan Scales Fourchestra, featured a wide array of guest artists – including an all-banjo tribute to the late Earl Scruggs – for audience members who stayed up late to enjoy the Jam.

In addition to promoting "traditional-plus" music, a term coined by Doc Watson to describe the wide variety of musical genres and styles celebrated at MerleFest, the festival also featured heritage crafts

demonstrations, instrument picking lessons and jam sessions, dancing, instrument contests, music education workshops, and the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest.

The Shoppes at MerleFest, located in the center of the festival grounds, was a popular area filled with merchandise vendors, the official MerleFest Gift Shop, concessions and valuable services including an information tent, lost and found, overnight storage and more. There was also an R&R tent for festival-goers who needed to take a break and escape the heat.



Figure 4 - Having fun at MerleFest 25. Photo by Jim Gavenus.

MerleFest is known for its warm, inviting family atmosphere. A key part of that effort is the Little Pickers area, sponsored by Charlotte and Greensboro area BURGER KING Restaurants®. Designed with kids in mind, the area offers activities and crafts to enhance children's experiences at MerleFest - including their own chance to perform at the MerleFest Youth Showcase. Also, children 12 years of age and younger were admitted free to the festival when accompanied by an adult with paid admission.

A significant part of MerleFest's mission is to give back to the community. In that spirit, the Outreach Program took place on Thursday, with more than 20 of the artists from MerleFest 25 giving performances for over 10,000 children at local schools. In addition, on Friday morning nearly 3,000 school children from Wilkes and surrounding counties were invited to attend the festival and flooded the event ground.

Volunteers are integral to the success of MerleFest. Over 600 individual volunteers, over 100 volunteer stagehands, and over 70 volunteer groups, including college and community organizations, helped to make the festival a success. Also, each food vendor at MerleFest supports a local non-profit, with proceeds going to further their work and mission. "Quite simply, MerleFest would not be possible without the support of our 4,000+ volunteers," says festival director Ted Hagaman. "Some of these individuals and organizations have given of their time since the festival began, and we are so grateful to them."

MerleFest 25 was presented by Lowe's. MerleFest is grateful to 85+ sponsors for their support in making the event possible, including: Charlotte and Greensboro area Burger King restaurants, G&B Energy, Pepsi, RaysWeather.com, Smoky Mountain Living, Tyson, WBRF 98.1 Classic Country, WBT AM/FM Charlotte's News/Talk, Wilkesboro Tourism Development Authority, Winston-Salem Journal, WKRR Rock 92, WLNK 107.9 The Link, WNCW 88.7 Public Radio, WPAQ 740 AM, WSMW 98.7 Simon, WTQR Q104-1 New Country, WXII 12, and Yes! Weekly. A complete listing of all MerleFest sponsors and additional information about all aspects of the festival can be found at <http://www.merlefest.org>.

Please join us next year for MerleFest: April 25–28, 2013.

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, a unique mix of music based on the traditional, roots-oriented sounds of the Appalachian region, including bluegrass and old-time music, and expanded to include Americana, country, blues, rock and many other styles. 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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