

ON THE CAMPUS OF WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WILKESBORO, NC

MerleFest's Hillside Album Hour and Midnight Jam will continue to delight in 2013

Two of the festival's most anticipated events have plenty in store for attendees this year

WILKESBORO, N.C. (April 9, 2013) — Regular attendees of MerleFest - presented by Lowe's and slated for April 25-28, 2013 – know that the four-day festival offers myriad performances and activities. In fact, the annual homecoming of musicians and music fans, that will once again take place on the campus of Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, is known for its diverse array of music and happenings, which has helped MerleFest build its international reputation as a "must attend" festival.

However, two events that occur on Saturday – the **Hillside Album Hour** and the Midnight Jam – have become so anticipated every year that many fans build their festival schedules around both . . . and this year will be no exception!

The **Hillside Album Hour** – where a revered or iconic album is performed live from start to finish – had its official start in 2008, when festival favorites **The Waybacks** were asked to host a Saturday afternoon jam at the Hillside Stage.

"Rather than opt for a standard approach, we decided we wanted to do something a bit more adventurous," said Michael Nash, manager of the Waybacks and the man who helps organize the annual event. "The band's guitar player, James Nash, came up with the idea of playing a classic rock album in its entirety, filtered through bluegrass instrumentation, and giving roles to all the players involved. The result was Led Zeppelin II, performed on fiddle, mandolin, banjo, Dobro, acoustic guitar, upright bass, harmonica and drums.

"In effect, that was the first Hillside Album Hour; it was so fresh, so much fun, and so well received that MerleFest asked us to do it again the following year."

James Nash added, "On the one hand, that first Album Hour was a whimsical, what-theheck-are-we-thinking off-the-wall thing to do... but on the other hand, every musician on that stage poured heart and soul into that show. And MerleFest attracts the kind of music

lovers who pick up on that, who recognize when the folks on stage are really feeling it, really putting themselves out there. I think that's what lit people up about that first Album Hour, and I think that's why people keep coming back to support this event year after year."

Since that time, the Hillside Album Hour has showcased the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers*, the Beatles' *Abbey Road*, the Allman Brothers' *Eat a Peach* and *Are You Experienced* by Jimi Hendrix. The Waybacks have also recruited the talents of such performers as Emmylou Harris, Sam Bush, Rob Ickes, John Cowan, Jerry Douglas, Jim Lauderdale, Elvis Costello, Joan Osborne, Susan Tedeschi and many, many others.

Each year, the crowds for this event have grown substantially. The hillside is packed with delighted music fans who gather to find out what album will be featured, always a closely held secret until the show begins.

"Selecting an album each year is always both a fun and challenging process," Michael Nash says. "Once we do decide on something, we begin to drop hints in regular intervals leading up to the show. As the years have gone by, we've found that we've had to make those harder and harder, as there are a lot of pretty sharp Album Hour fans out there. Seeing the creativity of their responses based on some pretty cryptic clues is a blast. We love how people have taken to the adventure."

So far, three clues have been given for the 2013 Hillside Album Hour: "This fabled recording studio is no stranger to the Album Hour," "Two lost orphans find their way home," and "Check out our post in the Earth Sciences forum." Think you know what it is? Leave your guess – or join the discussion – at the "2013 Hillside Album Hour Guess-A-Thon" Facebook page.

As for the **Midnight Jam**, MerleFest fans will be thrilled to learn that the hosts of this year's Jam is festival favorite **Scythian**, who continue to make waves every year, during the course of the festival, with the band's delightfully eclectic, high-energy performances.

Scythian has played the Midnight Jam before, says band member Danylo Fedoryka: "A few years ago, when artist Casey Driessen was hosting, he invited us to join the show. To be jammed backstage with a Library of Congress worth of musical talent was really a thing to experience. I recall standing two feet from artist Zac Brown, working out a piece with a conglomerate of musicians from random bands, and I was like, 'Wow - this is something you just don't get to see every day!"

"The spirit of openness backstage is really encouraging; there is a sense that every musician wants to give the fans something unique and special," he added.

When asked about what Scythian has planned for the Midnight Jam this year, Fedoryka said, "This year's Jam will be special - no doubt. We feel honored to have been chosen to host, and will be harnessing the jitters to present an energy-filled Jam. We're excited about the lineup so far and will be mixing and matching players from bands such as **The**

Waybacks, John Cowan, Jim Lauderdale, The Black Lillies, The Honeycutters, Pokey LaFarge and a whole slew of other artists.

"Our theory behind the show is basically 'think quick on your feet' and 'improvise," Fedoryka continued. "We're hoping to do some mixing and matching that will stretch some people and give the audience some laughs and moments to remember. Once you assemble such a mass of talent under one roof, ideas are sure to pop up. So we have a basic idea of how we want the night to go. But, of course, we are also trying to leave some wiggle room to see if the night will take on a life of its own. That being said, you may hear one or two wacky cover songs or a soulful 'murder ballad.' One thing is for sure, we'll make the Midnight Jam worth the price of admission!"

This year's Midnight Jam will continue to take place in the Walker Center. As always, a separate ticket is required and available for purchase by four-day ticket holders and Saturday-only ticket holders.

Tickets for MerleFest 2013 can be purchased at www.merlefest.org or by calling 1-800-343-7857. Additional details about this year's festival lineup and other MerleFest information can also be found at the website.

MerleFest, considered one of the premier music festivals in the country, is an annual homecoming of musicians and music fans held on the campus of Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. MerleFest was founded in 1988 in memory of the late Eddy Merle Watson, son of American music legend Doc Watson who passed away May 29, 2012. MerleFest is a celebration of "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 festival hosts over 90 artists, performing on 14 stages during the course of the four-day event. The annual event has become the primary fundraiser for the WCC Endowment Corporation, funding scholarships, capital projects and other educational needs.

PHOTOS:



Caption: Hillside Album Hour crowd. Photo by Jacob Rogers



Caption: The Waybacks



Caption: Scythian

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