

Music festival season is in full swing

By David Milton
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This summer's local area music and arts festival lineup began last weekend with MerleFest 2009, a festival to commemorate the loss of Doc Watson's son, on the campus of Wilkes Community College, in Wilkesboro, N.C.

"The magic of MerleFest is the unique, eclectic mixture of all the artists who're there over the course of the weekend," said Karen Byrd, media relations spokesperson for MerleFest. "There are performances and collaborations here you just can't see anywhere else."

MerleFest ran from April 23 to April 26. This year the festival featured 95 artists over the four-day festival, Byrd said. The lineup of artists included guitarist Doc Watson, who's receiving an honorary degree from UNCA during commencement, among others, combined with the seasonal weather, made conditions for a successful festival, Byrd said.

"People are out in force and enjoying the nice weather, which really helps atten-

dance," Byrd said. Before the first day of the festival, the musicians branched out to the community, Byrd said.

"Yesterday was the outreach program where several of the performing artists did performances at local schools, churches and community centers as a way of exposing the music of MerleFest to other members of the community," Byrd said.

Another area festival, Lake Eden Arts Festival kicks off May 7 and continues until May 10. The weekend festival is held twice annually, in the spring and in the fall, at Camp Rockmount in Black Mountain.

In past festivals LEAF attracted Toubab Krewe, Les Nubians, Billy Jonas and Michael Franti. This year, guitarist Martin Sexton is among the headliners, according to LEAF officials.

LEAF is more than music. The festival offers an array of culinary attractions, including a booth run by Barley's Taproom and Pizzeria. The festival also holds a poetry contest and handicraft booths.

"I've been to LEAF twice," said Adam Kelly, 23, a literature major at UNC Asheville. "Other festivals always advertise themselves as family-oriented, but aren't really geared towards family or children. LEAF really is family oriented."

Location is a crucial aspect to any festival, and LEAF's location makes it particularly attractive, Kelly said.

Emily Nolan, 20, an Asheville native who currently attends Johnson and Wales University, started going to LEAF as a child, she said.

"I have been going to LEAF since it was called Black Mountain Festival," Nolan said. "LEAF is my favorite, just because I have been going for so long."

Nolan will maintain tradition, and attend the arts and music festival this spring, she said.

Tickets for LEAF vary in price. A three-day, two-night adult festival ticket costs \$139. A three-and-a-half day, three-night adult ticket, which allows festival-goers to arrive Thursday afternoon, costs \$161. LEAF offers discounts for those buying two tickets.

Just across the stateline in Manchester, Tenn., Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival kicks off Thursday, June 11 on a 700-acre farm.

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Three festival options

Lollapalooza

Date: Aug. 7-9

Location: Chicago

Price: 3 day pass, \$190

Headliners: Depeche Mode, Tool, The Killers, Jane's Addiction, Beastie Boys, Kings of Leon, Lou Reed, Ben Harper and Relentless7, Thievery Corporation, Snoop Dogg, Rise Against, Andrew Bird, TV on the Radio, Vampire Weekend and many more

Austin City Limits

Date: Oct. 2-4

Location: Austin, TX

Price: 3 day pass, \$185

Headliners: Pearl Jam, Dave Matthews Band, Beastie Boys, Kings of Leon, Ben Harper and Relentless7, Thievery Corporation, John Legend, The Dead Weather, The Levon Helm Band, Ghostland Observatory, Flogging Molly, The B-52s and many more

All Good Music Festival

Date: July 9-12

Location: Masontown, WV

Price: Weekend pass, \$125

Headliners: Ben Harper and Relentless7, Bob Weir & Rat Dog, Moe, STS9, Umphrey's McGee, Dark Star Orchestra, Yonder Mountain String Band, Keller Williams, Galatic, Lotus and many more

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