

THE DURANGO HERALD

Folk Fest continues tradition in Pagosa

Sam Bush, Ricky Skaggs headline 15th annual concert weekend

by Bryant Liggett

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Newcomers, including the Black Lillies and Caravan of Thieves join stalwarts, such as headliner Ricky Skaggs for the 15th annual Four Corners Folk Festival this weekend in Pagosa Springs.

Now in its 15th year, the Four Corners Folk Festival has grown into a huge festival. Not huge in numbers, but huge in names.

This year is no different; headlining the Folk Fest this weekend will be Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, The Sam Bush Band and the Infamous Stringdusters. Skaggs and Bush are national superstars, with the Stringdusters (a perennial Folk Fest favorite) on their way to national superstardom as well.

Aside from the recognizable big names, the Folk Fest always has prided itself on bringing in some lesser-known names on their rise to stardom. In 1996, an unknown band named Nickel Creek was booked, and the band soon became national stars. Playing a festival perhaps is the best way for a band to get known; music fans who are there to see one favorite act likely will discover a new favorite by the festival's end. Some of the sleepers to look for this year are Milk Drive, an Austin-based "Newgrass" band featuring former members of the South Austin Jug Band, as well as Caravan of Thieves. The Caravan is a Django Reinhardt gypsy-jazz-swing band based out of southern Connecticut, which is as much of a vaudeville act as it is a band.

Let's not forget about the late-night acts, which come this year with a twist. Anyone who's attended the Folk Fest in the past likely has dealt with a bit of rain followed by brief periods of cold. That's fine and part of the festival experience if it comes during the day, but at night when the temperature dips below 50 degrees, playing an instrument is difficult at best. Late-night shows now will take place in town at the Pagosa Community Center. That gives fans and musicians a chance to stay warm and dry and ultimately offers a more comfortable setting that allows the festival organizers the chance to accomplish something they've aimed for since day one - to provide more music. Today's late-night acts are the John Jorgenson Quintet (one of the hottest gypsy jazz guitar players this writer's ever seen) along with Caravan of Thieves. And late-night Saturday it's Milk Drive, Crooked Still and the Infamous Stringdusters.

The campground scene also remains a picker's and music lover's paradise. Whether you like it or not, late-night revelers will play their instruments well into the wee hours of the morning. That may be obnoxious for some of you, but it comes with the territory. Ideally you could see some of the best music of the weekend in the campgrounds without ever going near the main stage. Sleep tight.