

Chris Austin Songwriting Contest Accepting Entries Nov. 1

Written by Amber Herman
Thursday, 31 October 2013 06:59

MerleFest, presented by Lowe's, now offers three ways for aspiring songwriters to enter the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest. The contest will accept mail-in applications from aspiring songwriters beginning Nov. 1 via U.S. Mail (P.O. Box 121855, Nashville, TN 37212). To enter by mail, visit www.merlefest.org/CASCRulesandEntry for a downloadable form and instruction.

Entries may also be submitted through Sonicbids (www.sonicbids.com/chrisaustinsongwritingcontest).

And new for 2014, applicants can now submit an online registration directly from the CASC website (<http://www.merlefest.org/ChrisAustinSongwritingContest/>). Applicants can complete the application and upload their song entry as an .mp3 or related file. A separate application must be completed for each contest entry. Additionally, applicants may pay the entry fee of \$30 per submission using PayPal.

The deadline for submissions is Feb. 19, 2014.

Now in its 22nd year, the contest is an extraordinary opportunity for aspiring writers to have their original songs heard and judged by a panel of Nashville music industry professionals, under the direction of this year's volunteer contest chairperson, Grammy-winning singer/songwriter Jim

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Lauderdale. MerleFest takes place from April 24-27, 2014.

The first round of the CASC competition takes place in Nashville, Tenn., and is narrowed down to 12 finalists representing four categories: bluegrass, country, general and gospel/inspirational. Finalists are then invited to the final round of the competition, which takes place during MerleFest on the campus of Wilkes Community College.

Net proceeds from the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest support the Wilkes Community College Chris Austin Memorial Scholarship. Since its inception the scholarship has awarded over \$38,000 to 79 deserving students.

To learn more details about the contest, visit www.merlefest.org/ChrisAustinSongwritingContest

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 the late American music legend Doc Watson. 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 130 artists, performing on 13 stages during the course of the four-day event. The annual event has become

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the primary fundraiser for the WCC Endowment Corporation, funding scholarships, capital projects and other educational needs.

About Chris Austin:

Chris Austin, from Boone, North Carolina, worked as a sideman for Ricky Skaggs for three years, singing and playing guitar, banjo, mandolin and fiddle. During that time he was discovered by executives at Warner Bros. Nashville, who offered him a recording contract. While releasing singles including "Blues Stay Away From Me," "I Know There's a Heart in There Somewhere" and "Out of Step," Austin also developed his songwriting skills, as evidenced in "Same Ol' Love," recorded by Skaggs in 1991. On March 16, 1991, Austin's life was cut tragically short when the private plane carrying him and six other members of Reba McEntire's band, as well as her tour manager, crashed in the mountains near San Diego. Pete Fisher, then of Warnersongs and currently general manager of the Grand Ole Opry, and Kari Estrin, then MerleFest consultant and Pickin' for Merle video associate producer, initiated the songwriting contest to honor Austin's memory.