

MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove Announces Name Change, Honors Doc and Rosa Lee Watson

Written by Ashley Wilson

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It's been one year since the passing of Deep Gap native Doc Watson, a world-renowned flatpicking guitarist and singer-songwriter of traditional, bluegrass and folk music. Watson died at the age of 89 on May 29, 2012. Following the loss of both Watson and his wife Rosa Lee last year, the organizers of MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove are honoring them by renaming the festival the Doc & Rosa Lee Watson MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove.

A celebration of Appalachian music and cultural heritage, the Doc & Rosa Lee Watson MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove will take place July 12 and 13, 2013 on the grounds of the Historic Cove Creek School in Sugar Grove, N.C., featuring world-renowned recording artists.

MusicFest has had a close association with Deep Gap native Doc Watson since its inception in 1997. The much admired flat-picking guitarist performed at the inaugural MusicFest and headlined many times in following years. Rosa Lee was often in the audience.

“The whole reason we changed the name to the festival was to show appreciation for not just Doc, but also for Rosa Lee and all the hard work she did,” Willard Watson, festival coordinator, said. “She really was the rock of the Watson family. They were a very tight-knit and loving family.”

Willard Watson said the MusicFest family espouses many of the same values that Doc and

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Rosa Lee possessed, such as giving back to the community and placing a high value on local resources. MusicFest was created as a fundraiser for community development projects in the economically-distressed areas in Watauga County, N.C. and eventually went on to also fund the Doc & Rosa Lee Watson Scholarship Fund for students studying sustainable development at Appalachian State University.

“Through receiving the blessing of Doc and Rosa Lee’s daughter Nancy, we will carry on their legacy of strong Appalachian values,” Willard Watson said.

MusicFest will continue to showcase the bluegrass and Appalachian music Doc popularized. Performers will show their appreciation for the late musician, whose influence and contributions to traditional and cultural expression are known worldwide.

MusicFest welcomes bluegrass and gospel group Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver as a headlining performer at this year’s event. Lawson was a 2012 inductee into the International Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and along with his group Quicksilver, he has been awarded multiple IBMA awards. They will be joined by previous MusicFest favorites such as the Carolina Chocolate Drops, the Krüger Brothers, and Doc’s long-time friend Charles Welch and grandson Richard Watson.

MusicFest remains an intimate, family-friendly event in a beautiful mountain setting. In addition to the main stage, the festival features a solar-powered stage with up-and-coming performers,

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musician workshops, a pickin' parlor, the Doc & Merle Watson Folk Art Museum, and local food and vendors.

Much of the audience have attended the festival multiple times to experience a one-of-a-kind celebration of community, music and Appalachian culture. Willard Watson said it has become a tradition for many music fans.

"It's like a family reunion," he said. "We have such a constituency that comes back year after year."

MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove is presented by Cove Creek Preservation and Development and Appalachian State University's Goodnight Family Sustainable Development Department. All proceeds generated by the event are recycled back into the community, benefiting the restoration of Historic Cove Creek School and sustaining the Doc & Rosa Lee Watson Scholarship Fund. Tickets and more information are available at www.MusicFestNSugarGrove.org and www.CoveCreek.net.