




Fourth annual bluegrass festival fills Anderson Marsh with music   

Written by Terre Logsdon Sunday, 13 September 2009



Susie Glaze and the Hilonesome band, from Los Angeles, wows the audience with her unique vocal talent from Grand Ole Opry roots. Photo by Terre Logsdon.

LOWER LAKE – Smiles, toe tapping, applause, and great American roots and bluegrass music filled the air at the fourth annual Old Time Bluegrass Festival held Saturday at the Anderson Marsh State Historic Park in Lower Lake.

Grammy award-winner Laurie Lewis, accompanied by Nina Gerber, headlined the show and brought the estimated 1,200 guests to their feet again and again. Lewis, best known for her fiddle playing, singing and songwriting, has been called “one of the preeminent bluegrass and Americana artists of our time,” and enchanted the crowd accompanied by Gerber, who performs with many other luminaries of American roots music.

“This is a beautiful place and a wonderful festival,” Lewis told the audience from the stage just before her last song of the evening on Saturday.

The festival was presented by the Anderson Marsh Interpretive Association (AMIA), a nonprofit organization that seeks to promote education and interpretive activities at the park, the Children’s Museum of Art & Science (CMAS), and the Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce, as a benefit to help support education in science, history and performing arts for the children of Lake County.

Bluegrass banjo player and Upper Lake resident Pat Ickes with his band Bound to Ride returned once again to the festival, which was much appreciated by their fans who were treated to original tunes and classics.

A member of Bound to Ride, Larry Chung, reintroduced this reporter to bluegrass about 10 years ago when he played weekly with a band of rotating musicians at Cato's in Oakland. Growing up in southern Illinois, my grandparents were bluegrass fans, taking my brother and I to shows near and far, including the Grand Ole Opry.



The Clear Lake Clickers, under the direction of Michelle John-Smith, enjoy clog and buck dancing for the exercise and social aspects – as well as giving live performances.
Photo by Terre Logsdon.

Seeing Chung trade off string instruments – guitar, banjo, mandolin – for different songs hooked me back into the genre. Not to mention that at times there were five, six or more musicians jammed in to a 6-foot by 6-foot area at Cato's, and the dance of the instrument necks over musician's shoulders to get to the mic was a beauty to behold – and Chung and the other singers never missed a beat.

Other local performers included Blue Moon, Off Hand Gents, Clear Lake Clickers, Cobb Stompers, Konocti Fiddlers, and Sarah Ticheva and Jill Shaul.

The Might Chiplings, Jim Nunally and Dix Bruce also played, as well as Susie Glaze and the Hilonesome Band, who drove up from Los Angeles to play at this year's festival.

A family-friendly event, the children's play area was popular with the kids. Next to the "big, old oak tree" behind the ranch house, several workshops were held including a children's sing-along, beginning guitar, banjo, flat-picking guitar, mandolin and fiddle.

Residents of Lake County who couldn't make it to the festival in person, or on their way to and from the event, could still enjoy the top-notch musicians as KPFZ, Lake County's community radio station, broadcast the performers on the Ranch Stage live.

Interviews with musicians, community groups, KPFZ programmers and the chair of the Board of Supervisors Denise Rushing, occurred as the music transitioned to the Shady Grove Stage.

Fans of bluegrass and American roots music not only have this premier annual event – in and for the benefit of the Lake County community – but Don Coffin and Buck Bouker, KPFZ programmers who host the Bluegrass Traveler show from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Thursdays, where many of the musicians that performed Saturday have been highlighted on their show, were invited to the festival and accepted the invitation.



Laurie Lewis (right) and Nina Gerber (left) headline the Fourth-Annual Old Time Bluegrass Festival at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park. Photo by Terre Logsdon.

Flitting around the festival talking to musicians here, teaching a mandolin workshop there, Coffin, who produced the festival, has been in the American roots music scene for decades and is impressed with the talent up here. “So far, it’s been sunshine and smiles,” Coffin said of the day. “The community support for this festival has been fabulous,” Coffin also said in an interview with other KPFZ programmers, and event coordinator Gae Henry agreed. With more than 40 sponsors and more than \$13,000 raised before the day of the event, Henry was enjoying the music and the day by asking the numerous volunteers and vendors, “How can I help?”

The Old Time Bluegrass Festival is a true community event. Almost 50 student volunteers from Carle High School, as well as another 50 adults pitched in their time and efforts to ensure the success of this event. And a success it was, with plans for the continuation of the festival already under way, beginning with a petition drive to ensure that Anderson Marsh State Historic Park is kept off the list of park closures due to the California state budget crisis.

Henry explained that area state park rangers have been extremely supportive of their efforts. There has been no official word on closures yet, but Henry expects to hear something within the next two weeks about the fate of the park. If Anderson Marsh is on the closure list, Henry is prepared to rally the community to its defense



David (right) and Sarah (left) Ryan are featured in the band Blue Moon, as they play on the Shady Grove stage. Photo by Terre Logsdon.

. Given the accomplished musicians, high-quality festival, and excellent community support, coupled with the public awareness and volunteer spirit, the Old Time Bluegrass Festival and Anderson Marsh State Historic Park needs to persevere for the good of all – now and in to the future.

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Event Coordinator Gae Henry (left) with one of the many volunteers who helped to make the Old Time Bluegrass Festival such a success. Photo by Terre Logsdon.



Along with a myriad of vendors at the festival, nearly a dozen wool-spinners showed festival-goers how to turn wool fleece in to yarn. Photo by Terre Logsdon.