

# Willamette Valley Folk Festival

By Sally Mathieson

I think there should be a national carnival, much the same as Mardi Gras in Rio. There should be a week of national hilarity... a cessation of all work, all business, all discrimination, all authority. A week of total freedom. That'd be a start...It would just last for a week and then go back to the way it was.

-Jim Morrison in a July 1969 Rolling Stone Interview

It may not have been the Mardi Gras, but the 1989 Willamette Valley Folk Festival was a much needed respite from the pressures of upcoming finals, papers and deadlines. Many students decided to ditch their books in favor of enjoying themselves on the EMU lawn.

As men, women and children danced in the unpredictable weather, the feeling of celebration floated through the air. In between acts, crowds would form at the food stands as people refueled for the next set or quenched their thirst with homemade lemonade.

The Folk Fest, eagerly awaited by most UO students and the Eugene community, featured talented performers ranging from acoustic guitar to Afri-

can drums. The Folk Fest gave the audience a chance to hear and appreciate music they normally wouldn't listen to. The featured performance Friday night, Foxfire, was a Southern Oregon group with bluegrass roots. Although they started off a bit slow-paced, Foxfire soon had the crowd on its feet. As dancers formed human chains, winding their way through the crowd, or whirled their partner wildly about, everyone became caught up in the foot-stomping rhythm.

Saturday dawned hot and sunny, but despite many sunburned faces, the crowd relished the beautiful weather.. The featured performer was Obo Addy. Addy, a native of Ghana, has been a master drummer since the age of six. His band Kukrudu, in their colorful African costumes, fuses traditional and contemporary African music with American jazz and funk. The result sent the crowd into a frenzy of dancing and chanting, as one by one the crowd let the music take over. Chanting a refrain from one of the band's songs, the crowd managed to persuade Addy to come back for a 10 minute encore.

Sunday, although cloudy and chilly, did not stop people from showing up. James Cotton, harmonica player and blues

singer, took the stage at 8:00. Cotton, who has played with artists such as B>B> King, Elvis Presley, the Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin, is known world-wide for his unique style of musical performance.

Local and regional artists performed a wide variety of material including contemporary original folk, Celtic, Latin, new acoustic guitar, folk harp, old-time string band, country blues, and folk/Latin/jazz guitar.

Throughout the weekend, which coincided with Parent's weekend, workshops were held such as Cajun dance, dulcimer techniques, bottleneck guitar introduction, harp history and styles, rare and unusual instruments and flute of the Andes. The EMU courtyard was the scene of an open mike and children's performances.

As Monday rolled around (just like it always does), there were a few regrets as students came back to the real world of books, tests and commitments. But the three days of dancing, relaxing in the sun with friends and enjoying the music surely recharged many a weary student for the last stretch of Spring term.