

LATITUDE 21

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music BY SUZI STEFFEN

Don't Lose the Harmonica, Albert

Folk Festival showcases blues, jazz, roots, Americana ...

"Folk" isn't a word that many musicians like to use anymore, perhaps especially since the searing parodies of *A Mighty Wind*. No, they're singer-songwriters; they're roots musicians; they play Americana. So what's the poor Willamette Valley Folk Festival to do? Become WVSSF? Or just go back to its, er, roots?

The WVFF began 36 years ago and has, over the years, hosted rising stars like Ani DiFranco along with established folk legends like Greg Brown. Last year, the two-day party moved to the Cuthbert so adults could down a cold one while enjoying the music, but the festival was still free. This year, no huge name pops into view on the festival lineup (Where's Patty Griffin when you need her? Or how about Erin McKeown?) although the headlining groups have a few international credits to their names.

From close to home, perennial Eugene fave and actual folk musician **Laura Kemp** kicks off the fest at noon before bluesman **Walker T. Ryan** takes over the mainstage. The ever-playing-at-World-Café **Conjugal Visitors** start it on Sunday, and the formerly Oregonian, now Coloradan band **Taarka** brings its jazzy world folk/gypsy sound to the stage early Sunday afternoon. For acoustic fans, there's **Andrew Heringer** on Saturday afternoon and **Korby Lenker** on Sunday. Heringer plays just before **Green Mountain Bluegrass** gives the "hard-driving 5-string banjo" a workout. Before Heringer comes the **Tallboys**, an old-time string band from Seattle that has played Eugene fairly often, including some crazy fun community dances. The band's tight harmonies and fiddlin' should bring out the contra community in force. Don't forget your clogs!

This year's awfully heavy on the boys (and by that we mean "WTF, Cultural Forum?"), but Portland's **Cross-Eyed Rosie** (3 pm Saturday) at least has two women in the group. The quintet's music spans those genres that earn the roots label, things like blues, bluegrass, even jazz or pop from time to time. And from the band Cross-Eyed Rosie also comes guitar and mandolin man **Lincoln Crockett**, who plays a solo set early Sunday; we have to quote the press release on him because it's

so unlike his sweet-looking photos: "Progressive, earthy, grungy, acoustic prog-rock ... ass-kicking acoustic new age ... they don't get at it." Yeah. Ass-kicking mandolin! Awesome!

Also from PDX is **Hillstomp**, hitting the stage at 4 pm Sunday. The duo plays in Eugene about every week and should have



a wide fan base to draw from for the festival. Aside from playing buckets and slapping lids, the two guys also play guitar and sing; their skill earned them kudos from *Willamette Week* for best album for 2005's *The Woman That Ended the World*. Are they still kickin' butt and shakin' things up? Find out for yourself. Interspersed throughout the two days are the New Song Contest winners with short sets and possibly some new hybrid of musical styles.

Saturday night's headliners are, at 6:30 pm, **The Devil Makes Three**, a Cali group that claims to be influenced by Django Reinhardt and Steve Earle (among many others), and later **Jackie Greene**, piano-playin' Americana-singin' dude extraordinaire. On Sunday evening, after the crazed Hillstomp set, comes **The Bills**, five Canadian guys who blend European, Latin American, Romany and North American sounds. Um, roots sounds, of course.

The WVFF(RASSGJLAWF)F kicks off at noon on both Saturday, May 19, and Sunday, May 20, at the Cuthbert. It's free, but bring some bucks for treats. **EW**

EUGENE WEEKLY'S SUMMER EVENTS
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