

By Rona Distenfeld

# There's **MUSIC** in Those **Texas Hills**

*Waltz, rock, clog and sway  
across the state at  
these major music festivals.*

**F**ROM BOB WILLS TO Buddy Holly, music is as much a part of Texas as cattle and oil. Every month you can find dozens of music festivals celebrating everything from country to classical, but a handful stand out for the quality of the artists and unique experiences that make the festivals worth a trip.

#### **LISTEN, PLAY, MAKE FRIENDS FOR LIFE**

The Kerrville Folk Festival has been drawing people to the Hill Country for 34 years. Starting Memorial Day weekend, the festival runs for 18 days with acts such as Peter, Paul and Mary, Lyle Lovett, Judy Collins, Willie Nelson and Mary Chapin Carpenter on the main stage and up-and-coming singer/songwriters in the Threadgill Theater. You'll hear blues, rock, country, bluegrass, Americana and, of course, folk. It's superb songwriting that holds them together.

For many, the best part is the campground, where music of all kinds goes on all night. You'll find many main stage musicians playing there, too. It's a place to bring your instrument and participate or just wander from camp to camp and listen.

New friends quickly feel like family. It's not unusual to meet people who started coming here as children and now bring their kids. Hotel rooms are also available in town for those who prefer a bed, and campground passes are available for participation in after-hours music.

#### **YEAR-ROUND MUSIC**

Over Labor Day weekend, a smaller version of this event is the Kerrville Wine & Music Festival. The three-day event features the same

high-level performances and singers/songwriters but adds wine tastings and seminars hosted by local Hill Country wineries.

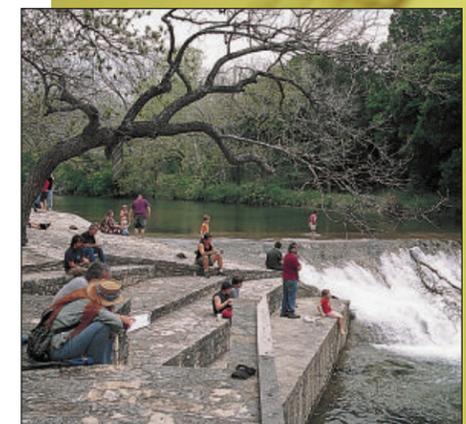
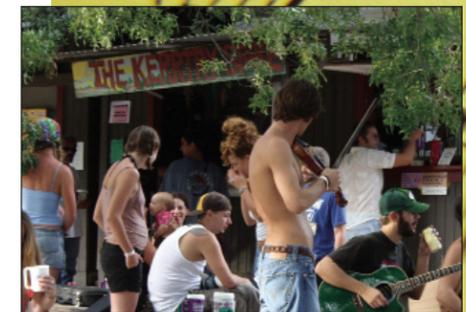
The Old Settlers Music Festival started 18 years ago in Round Rock. This four-day festival moved to Driftwood, just outside Austin, several years ago and is now held in April in a beautiful shaded venue on the banks of a creek.

If you love bluegrass, you'll love Old Settlers. Legends such as Vassar Clements, Peter Rowan and David Grisman regularly grace the three stages, along with acts such as Bruce Hornsby, Tim O'Brien, Natalie McMaster, Leftover Salmon, Del McCoury Band and many more. And the music doesn't stop when the stage shows end. You can play and listen all night long in the camp grounds (a special family section is designated for those who prefer to sleep). Plus, Austin is a short drive for those who prefer a hotel or who want to sightsee and shop during the day.

#### **THE LONGEST RUNNING FREE JAZZ FESTIVAL**

Think of jazz and Corpus Christi is not the first place that springs to mind, but the Texas Jazz Festival is the longest running free jazz event in the world. For more than 30 years, musicians have come from New York, Chicago, New Orleans and elsewhere to play music just a stone's throw from the bay. This mid-October festival also features local favorites and encompasses everything from Latin jazz to blues to classical jazz.

The small, low stages make for a friendly, intimate experience. The music starts early and runs late, so there's plenty of time to get your full dose of jazz and still have time for



Fiddle player Warren Hood (top) is a Kerrville Folk Festival favorite. Emmylou Harris (second from top) takes the stage at Houston's IFest 2004. The Kerrville Store (second from bottom) provides a gathering spot for playing and visiting. Attendees of the Old Settlers Music Festival take a dip (above) while enjoying the music.



The shady venue of the Old Settlers Music Festival in Round Rock is welcoming and relaxing.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RONA DISTENFELD

other things Corpus has to offer, such as birding, watersports, beaches and museums.

#### **SIGHTS AND SOUNDS FROM OTHER PLACES**

If you like Irish music and dance, you'll have a blast at the North Texas Irish Festival. Held every March in Dallas' Fair Park, this is the largest Irish festival in the Southwest. Top Irish musicians fill five stages for two days while dance troupes and storytellers take over two more stages. There are also dozens of vendors offering everything from Celtic harps to Uilililts. Many who attend come in traditional Irish dress or Renaissance attire. Don't worry about the weather—most of the activities are held indoors.

Another festival with a foreign flair is Houston's International Festival, or IFest. For two weekends in April, this festival spotlights the music and dance of a single country. There are also stages for blues, zydeco and coun-

## If You Go

To be mailed a copy of the Texas Music Office Events Calendar, send a \$5 check or money order to the Texas Music Office, P.O. Box 13246, Austin, TX 78711; or visit <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/music/events/tmec.main.htm>.

- **Kerrville Folk Festival and Kerrville Wine & Music Festival:** Quiet Valley Ranch, *Kerrville*, (800) 435-8429; [www.kerrvillefolkfestival.com](http://www.kerrvillefolkfestival.com)
- **Old Settler's Music Festival:** Salt Lick Pavilion/Camp Ben McCulloch, *Driftwood*, (512) 346-0999, ext. 3; [www.oldsettlersmusicfest.org](http://www.oldsettlersmusicfest.org)
- **North Texas Irish Festival:** Fair Park, *Dallas*, [www.ntif.org](http://www.ntif.org)
- **Houston International Festival:** Reliant Park, *Houston*, (713) 629-3700; [www.iFest.org](http://www.iFest.org)
- **Austin City Limits Music Festival:** [www.ACLFest.org](http://www.ACLFest.org)

try music, and dozens of arts and crafts booths, but the real draw is the featured nation.

#### **TAKE IT TO THE LIMITS**

No list of Texas music events can be complete without something in Austin, the self-proclaimed live music capital of the world, and the Austin City Limits Music Festival doesn't disappoint. From its debut four years ago, when 30,000 people attended each day to last year's more than 70,000 per day, this mid-September festival was a hit from the start.

Set in Zilker Park, in the heart of Austin, the festival presents five stages showcasing 130 bands over three days. You'll find every kind of music here: bluegrass, blues, hip-hop, rock, country, rhythm and blues, and more. Major label artists are a regular part of this event. ■

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