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# Creative Industry Analysis

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## Traditional Music Venues in the Blue Ridge Region of North Carolina

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North Carolina Arts Council  
July 2012

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# Raw Data Report

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The N.C. Arts Council is a division of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, the state agency with the mission to enrich lives and communities, and the vision to harness the state's cultural resources to build North Carolina's social, cultural and economic future.



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## Executive Summary

### Analysis of Traditional Music Venues in Western North Carolina

Western North Carolina has a national reputation as a music-rich region and its traditions of old-time string band music, ballad singing and bluegrass are internationally renowned. The artistry of musicians from this region has shaped many forms of American music.

North Carolina's distinctions in traditional music draw people to the state, not only for entertainment in the beautiful, lush settings of the mountains, but to appreciate the places that had significant influence on the development of iconic American music. Mountain music events celebrate the origins of folk festivals, fiddle and banjo ensembles, ballad singing and team square dancing. Intimate personal connections with traditions like these happen through such experiences as hearing the ballad of Tom Dooley in the very spot its lyrics describe or sharing the energy of young musicians learning from their elders. Traditional music in western North Carolina touches people, motivating them to travel great distances, and even to move to the region. The sense of place in the Blue Ridge region is an important audience draw.

In order to gauge the economic impact of traditional music venues, the North Carolina Arts Council and the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area jointly sponsored this study. The study was conducted in 2011 in 18 counties that are part of the Blue Ridge National Heritage area. Data was collected from audience surveys at the 26 Blue Ridge Music Trails project events taking place during the study period. Folklorists also collected anecdotal information from interviews with participants to help contextualize the data. People told stories about prior experiences with the venues, a personal love of Appalachian music and why they made the journey to experience the music first-hand. This information led to a deeper understanding of the many different audiences present at traditional music venues, from multiple generations of local regulars, to a growing population of retirees and second homeowners, to visitors from as far away as Australia.

The events that were included in this study play an important role within western North Carolina and the Blue Ridge Mountain region. A total of \$20.7 million in economic impact is associated with the 26 events, documenting that traditional music is a significant sector of the Creative Industry. This research confirms that traditional music contributes to community identity and returns economic value.

The Blue Ridge Traditional Music venues study shows the significance of traditional music venues and sites as valued social spaces, and music itself as a meaningful part of people's lives and an important facet of the region's cultural identity for both residents and visitors. Traditional music is particularly important to western North Carolina's tourism economy.

The sites included in this study are diverse, ranging from intimate, local spaces to some of the largest music festivals in the country. The audience also varies, from teenagers picking up the fiddle for the first time to flat-footers in their 90s; from first-time visitors to our country to people who have lived in the same community for generations. A majority of the attendees were European-Americans and were 55 years or older. While there is a lack of ethnic diversity

at bluegrass and old-time events, these audiences were not homogenous. Participants varied in income levels and educational background, as well as point of origin.

People in this study said that the music of western North Carolina is an important part of the state's cultural and historical identity, as well as their own. These events create satisfying experiences for both visitors and local community members. Respondents indicated that they planned to return to the same events next year and were happy with the event venues/locations. Blue Ridge Music experiences provide an important service to local residents attending the events and also serve to initiate or provide a positive orientation to first time visitors to the host communities.

The venues in the study were only a sampling of the more than 150 traditional music events in the region. A total of 512 surveys were completed by audiences of these events, a sampling from the more than 116,000 estimated total attendees at these events on the days the surveys were collected.

Selected findings include the following:

- Nearly 70 percent of survey respondents indicated that they were full time residents of N.C., and 65% of these were from western N.C.
- Nearly 40 percent indicated that the primary purpose of their visit was to specifically attend the music event where they were surveyed.
- Residents from 10 different states were also represented in the sample. Visitors from outside the venue location spent an average of 2.9 nights in the region while attending the events where they were surveyed.
- Respondents tended to be mature. More than 50 percent were older than 55 and nearly 75 percent were older than 45. Respondents were also highly educated with well over half the sample having at least a four year degree, and more than 25 percent having an advanced degree. Nearly all sample members (95 percent) reported their ethnicity as Caucasian.
- Findings indicate a high level of satisfaction because respondents stated their intended behavior to return to the same event next year. Overall 99 percent of the sample stated that they intended to return to the same event the following year, and for each individual event at least 93 percent indicated that this was true. This response indicates a high level of satisfaction with the events specifically and likely with the venues/communities in which the events were held.
- If these events were not held, 65 percent of survey respondents indicated that they would have traveled to another community to attend a different event.
- The majority of the sample indicated that they participated in the arts/music and were also influenced by North Carolina's musical traditions.
- The \$18.6 million of direct economic impacts, along with the \$972,611 of indirect impacts, and the \$1.2 million of induced impacts combine for a total of \$20.7 million of total economic impacts associated with these 26 events. This is a substantial contribution to the region.
- Since all of the spending that was reported on the surveys was associated with the events, not holding these events would have resulted in a loss of 65-percent of the impacts or \$13,513,265 to economies of the various communities that hosted the events.
- A typical community event can be expected to return more than \$4,000 for every 100 visitors attending.

## Creative Industry Analysis: Traditional Music Venues in the Blue Ridge Region of North Carolina

### Overview

A study sampling traditional music venues in the North Carolina Arts Council's Blue Ridge Music Trail was conducted in 2011 in partnership with the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. The study assessed the economic impact of traditional music in the western part of the state by examining data collected from audience surveys at selected events. In addition to the data on the forms, anecdotal information collected by interviews with respondents helped contextualize the data. People told stories about their prior experiences with the venues, their love of Appalachian music and why they made the journey to see it in person. This led to a deeper understanding of the many different audiences present at traditional music venues, from multiple generations of local regulars, to a growing population of retirees and second homeowners, to visitors from as far away as Australia. Some people spent their summers traveling from one fiddlers' convention to the next, staying up all night playing around campfires. Others were first-time "leafers" getting a taste of fall in the mountains, and happened to see an ad in the paper or sign by the roadside.

The Blue Ridge Traditional Music Venues Study demonstrates the importance of music to western North Carolina's tourism economy. It also shows the significance of traditional music venues and sites as valued social spaces, and music itself as a meaningful part of people's lives and an important facet of the region's cultural identity for both residents and visitors.

**"65 percent report that they would have traveled to another community to attend a similar cultural experience. That drives home the point that the arts are a cultural tourism engine. And it clearly suggests that if a community doesn't invest in local cultural opportunities, its residents will go spend their discretionary income someplace else."**

*Ben Davidson, Director of Research, Americans for the Arts*

### Methodology

Between April and November 2011, 512 surveys were collected from audience members at 26 traditional music venues in 18 western North Carolina counties. The number of surveys to be collected at each event and the first ten survey questions conformed to the protocol for the national Arts and Economic Prosperity IV survey guidelines developed by Americans for the Arts for the Arts.

The study covered a diverse range of events, including some of the country's largest traditional music festivals with tens of thousands of spectators as well as intimate local dance halls and jam sessions, sometimes with fewer than 100 people present. Venues were situated in rural areas, small towns and in urban settings. Municipal governments or universities supported some; others were privately run. The North Carolina Arts Council and the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area selected venues to be surveyed. Initial contact was made with the sites by email or telephone.

Surveys were collected primarily by one professional folklorist, with several events covered by a second professional folklorist. The survey collector attended each venue or event, manning an information table close to high traffic areas or at the point of entry. In addition,



the survey collector walked through the crowd, seeking people to complete the survey during breaks in performance and when table traffic was low. Through collaboration with the venues, announcements were made to the audience to direct people to the survey collector and to let the audience know about the project. Most surveys were filled out by the respondents with explanation from the collector. A small number were filled out by the survey collector in conversation with the respondent, facilitating the gathering of qualitative anecdotal information. The initial goal was to survey at least 25 sites and obtain a minimum of 10 surveys at each venue and no more than 50 at any single event. This was accomplished at every venue with an average of 19.6 surveys per site (see Venue Summary table).

Anecdotes were paraphrased from field notes based on conversations with respondents. This anecdotal information helped to contextualize the rest of the data gathered. Because the survey collectors were not only professional folklorists but traditional musicians and past attendees at some of the events, they were also able to provide context for the anecdotal data. Anecdotal data will help account for differences in spending patterns and demographics between individual venues. Stories and opinions from attendees also help illustrate the personal relationships between people and the venues, and help illuminate the strong ties people have to traditional music in the mountain region of North Carolina.

The spaces in which they experience these connections are also social spaces, places where friendships and partnerships are formed, places where new generations take up long-lasting traditions and make them their own. These difficult to quantify experiences combine with hard demographic data to paint the most accurate picture to date of the people who contribute to this unique sector of the creative economy.

The survey collectors (Steve Kruger and Ashley Melzer) made a total of 20 trips to the mountain region, traveling an average of 400 to 500 miles per trip from their homes in the Chapel Hill area. The survey collectors were responsible for their own lodging, transportation costs and any other expenses incurred during the survey collection process. Because some events lasted more than one day, 28 days total were spent collecting surveys. Hours spent collecting surveys varied greatly from eight hours per day at a large festival to two to three hours at a concert or radio program. The survey collectors spent 19 nights away from home.

The survey consisted of 18 questions (see Appendix) on a two-page form. The first ten questions on the survey's front side were identical to the questions developed by Americans for the Arts for the Arts and Economic Prosperity IV (AEP-IV) national economic impact study, for which data was being collected in North Carolina during the timeframe of the Blue Ridge study. Demographic questions including place of residence, age, income level and education came from the AEP-IV study, as did the questions about travel to music sites, such as length of stay, reason for the visit and spending on transportation, lodging, and souvenirs and meals purchased in the surrounding community and at the event itself. The second side of the form contained additional questions specific to the Blue Ridge Music Venues, including the influence of North Carolina traditional music, ethnicity, personal music spending and sources of information about the event. The last optional question sought to determine other recreational activities in the region in which visitors who attended musical events participated.

## Counties Visited

Alleghany  
Buncombe  
Burke  
Caldwell  
Clay  
Graham  
Haywood  
Iredell  
Jackson

Madison  
McDowell  
Mitchell  
Polk  
Surry  
Transylvania  
Watauga  
Wilkes  
Yancey



*Merlefest Audience 2009 Photo courtesy Becky Johnson*

**“As long as I’m alive, I will be here every year.”**

*Merlefest Audience comment 2011*

## Venue Summary by County

Venue 26 total	County 18 total	Date(s) Visited	Surveys Collected 512 total	Estimated Attendance	Type of Venue
Alleghany Fiddlers' Convention	Alleghany	7/16/11	13	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Alleghany Jubilee	Alleghany	10/8/11	12	100-200	Dance/Concert Hall
Shindig on the Green	Buncombe	7/9/11	28	Few Thousand	Concert Series
Bluegrass at the Old Rock School	Burke	11/5/11	10	2-300	Concert Series
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	Caldwell	6/25/11	10	Few Hundred	Small Festival
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	Caldwell	8/19/11	10	1-200	Restaurant/Dance Hall
Happy Valley Fiddlers' Convention	Caldwell	9/3/11 9/4/11	50	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Friday Night Concerts at John C. Campbell Folk School	Clay	9/23/11	10	100-300	Concert Series
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	Clay	10/2/11	24	Several Thousand	Festival
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	Graham	8/13/11	13	1-200	Concert Series
Haywood Street Dance	Haywood	7/22/11	12	Few Hundred	Street Dance
The Stompin' Ground	Haywood	9/10/11	10	<50	Dance Hall
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	Iredell	5/28/115 /29/11	20	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	Jackson	9/24/11	30	Several Thousand	Heritage Festival
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	Madison	6/30/11	13	< 100	Jam Session
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	Madison	10/1/11	17	Several Hundred	Heritage Festival
Old Fort Mountain Music	McDowell	7/1/11	15	1-200	Music Hall
The Orchard at Altapass	Mitchell	9/10/11	19	200-400	Dance Hall/Concert Venue/Food Venue
Coon Dog Day	Polk	7/9/11	15	Few Thousand	Street Festival
Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old- Time Fiddlers' Convention	Surry	6/3/11- 6/4/11	38	Several Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	Surry	8/20/11	10	<100	Live Radio Show
Old Time Music Contest at Brevard Halloweenfest	Transylvania	10/29/11	28	Few Hundred	Fiddlers' Convention at Street Festival
Music Fest n Sugar Grove	Watauga	7/8/11	22	Few Thousand	Festival
Merlefest	Wilkes	4/29/115 /01/11	51	Tens of thousands	Festival
WKBC Hometown Opry	Wilkes	9/9/11	10	<50	Live Radio Show
Music in the Mountains Folk Festival	Yancey	10/1/11	22	Few Hundred	Annual Concert

## Venue Summary by Name

Venue 26 total	County 18 total	Date(s) Visited	Surveys Collected 512 total	Estimated Attendance	Type of Venue
Alleghany Fiddlers' Convention	Alleghany	7/16/11	13	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Alleghany Jubilee	Alleghany	10/8/11	12	100-200	Dance/Concert Hall
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	Graham	8/13/11	13	1-200	Concert Series
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	Madison	10/1/11	17	Several Hundred	Heritage Festival
Bluegrass at the Old Rock School	Burke	11/5/11	10	2-300	Concert Series
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	Madison	6/30/11	13	< 100	Jam Session
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	Caldwell	6/25/11	10	Few Hundred	Small Festival
Coon Dog Day	Polk	7/9/11	15	Few Thousand	Street Festival
Friday Night Concerts at John C. Campbell Folk School	Clay	9/23/11	10	100-300	Concert Series
Happy Valley Fiddlers' Convention	Caldwell	9/3/11 9/4/11	50	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Haywood Street Dance	Haywood	7/22/11	12	Few Hundred	Street Dance
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	Clay	10/2/11	24	Several Thousand	Festival
Merlefest	Wilkes	4/29/115 /01/11	51	Tens of thousands	Festival
Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	Surry	6/3/11- 6/4/11	38	Several Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	Jackson	9/24/11	30	Several Thousand	Heritage Festival
Music Fest n Sugar Grove	Watauga	7/8/11	22	Few Thousand	Festival
Music in the Mountains Folk Festival	Yancey	10/1/11	22	Few Hundred	Annual Concert
Old Fort Mountain Music	McDowell	7/1/11	15	1-200	Music Hall
Old Time Music Contest at Brevard Halloweenfest	Transylvania	10/29/11	28	Few Hundred	Fiddlers' Convention at Street Festival
Shindig on the Green	Buncombe	7/9/11	28	Few Thousand	Concert Series
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	Caldwell	8/19/11	10	1-200	Restaurant/Dance Hall
The Orchard at Altapass	Mitchell	9/10/11	19	200-400	Dance Hall/Concert Venue/Food Venue
The Stompin' Ground	Haywood	9/10/11	10	<50	Dance Hall
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	Iredell	5/28/115 /29/11	20	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
WKBC Hometown Opry	Wilkes	9/9/11	10	<50	Live Radio Show
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	Surry	8/20/11	10	<100	Live Radio Show

## Venue Descriptions by Type of Venue

### Fiddlers' Conventions

Venue	County	Date(s) Visited	Number of Surveys	Estimated Attendance	Type of Venue
Alleghany Fiddlers' Convention	Alleghany	7/16/11	13	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Happy Valley Fiddlers' Convention	Caldwell	9/3/11 9/4/11	50	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	Surry	6/3/11- 6/4/11	38	Several Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	Iredell	5/28/11 5/29/11	20	Few Thousand	Fiddlers' Convention

#### Alleghany Fiddlers' Convention

County: Alleghany

Surveyed: 7/16/2011

Surveys Collected: 13

Estimated Attendance: Few Thousand.

The event is attended by a large contingency of locals and musicians from around the region, mostly from North Carolina and Virginia. There is a relatively large spectator audience compared to some other fiddlers' conventions - people sit in risers in the large amphitheater watching the competition. Most of the jamming takes place after the competition in the campground. You would expect to find similar responses as you would at Happy Valley or other small fiddlers' conventions, although it has a larger reputation, having been around longer than Happy Valley or Halloweenfest and generally features music that is more traditional and based in the local style.

Survey collector Ashley Melzer observed that inclement weather and poor cooperation prevented gathering any significant anecdotes. Due to the weather, the only shelters were the audience area (where no one could hear the survey collector), the backstage area where most people had instruments in hand and were practicing their licks for their performance, and a food shelter area where the show-off type bands would perform amongst themselves for the other people standing around. There seemed to be a lot of passive competition similar to that at Merlefest. These types of events attract independent people who will (in the case of Merlefest) pay a couple hundred bucks to come inside and then spend most of their time there picking a mandolin in a corner by themselves. Virginia's Crooked Road was selling T-shirts and giving away maps and such backstage in Alleghany.

## Happy Valley Fiddlers' Convention

County: Caldwell

Surveyed 9/3/2011-9/4/2011

Surveys Collected: 50

Estimated Audience: Few Thousand

Every Labor Day weekend Tony Jones hosts a three day fiddlers' convention on his farm in Yadkin County, sponsored in part by the Caldwell Arts Council. The convention features old time and bluegrass music contests and performances. The event was small for a fiddlers' convention, but had a few thousand attendees. The crowd was a mixture of local and regional residents and tourists primarily there to see the music performances, and musicians who came to camp out and compete in the contests. The site is very picturesque, located on the Yadkin River. Laura Foster, whose death is told in the ballad of Tom Dooley, is also buried on the property. The most common comments revolved around the beauty of the site, the small crowd and intimate setting and the quality of the music performances on Saturday. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I love the size of this festival; you can get really close to the performers.
- We rode our bikes (motorcycles) down here for our first date last year. I think we might make this our anniversary ritual.
- They have great food vendors and the food and admission is reasonably priced.
- It's a beautiful location. I love being able to swim in the river.
- The contest portion is very well managed. They move things along very quickly.
- It's neat being where such a big piece of the music history took place.
- I'm RVing around the country and I came to this event last year. I love being able to talk to the performers after the show. Most of my family is up in Wisconsin and they don't get to see stuff like this. I usually pick up some CDs to take up there to them.
- We like having this event in our community, but we don't want the community to change much. We like it the way it is. But it is nice to have such a big event out here for as little money as it is.
- I am surprised there aren't more people here. There wasn't as much jamming late night as I thought there would be.
- I wished there were craft events on both days.
- We will drive a long way to go see the Kruger Brothers. It is amazing to see a group like that and then these local musicians coming out of the woodworks. There's a lot of variety here.
- I am not normally a fan of bluegrass music, I don't listen to it much at home, but I love seeing it live. I think I started liking it more when I moved here. I might start getting my kids lessons.
- I love the location. I went up and sat by the Laura Foster grave for a while today. I've heard that song for years and I couldn't believe she was right there below the ground. It's amazing being that close to such an important piece of music history.

## Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention

County: Surry

Visited 6/3/11-6/4/11

Surveys Collected: 38

Estimated Attendance: several thousand

The Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention is one of the largest and most anticipated events of the year in the old time community. Many people come as early as the previous Sunday to set up their tents, play music and visit with friends. While most of the crowd is from North Carolina and Virginia, some people travel from across the country and beyond to attend Mount Airy. Part of this is the heavy influence of the regional "Round Peak" or "Surry County" style of old time music, but by now it has become an annual social event for old time musicians and fans. The same is true for the bluegrass musicians, but the bluegrass crowd tends to be more regional. There are also local and regional spectators who come to watch the music competitions. With the exception of this group, most of the attendees are musicians and are passionate about the festival as a social event, or a huge musical party.

Most participants perceive Mount Airy as having a heavy local element as opposed to some of the other large fiddlers' conventions that are mostly populated by revivalists from outside the region. Many of these comments came from revivalists themselves. Participants who have seen the festival grow over the years feel that it is changing, but that local element is something valued by everyone. The anecdotes below are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- The really great thing about Mount Airy is that it is all about the music of the region. A lot of people get into old time music by listening to all that Surry County Round Peak stuff and it's great to be here where it all happened.
- This is the event I always drag first-timers to. Some people are nervous about the cultural experience, you know being around real country people. This festival is a good example of a place where the locals, the revivalists, and the hippies are all in one place. I bring people in here, show them the lay of the land, where the crazies on the hill are, the bluegrassers in their RVs, the hippies and rednecks in the lowlands and then I take them around. We watch the band contest and I introduce them to (local musicians). They're usually hooked after about 5 minutes.
- I like how this isn't a performance oriented festival. It's mostly all competition and the real good music is out in the jam circles. It just goes to show you that you can't draw a line between "professional" musicians and the rest of us.
- They have a lot of great music here and I like the regional element, how folks play Surry County music at Mount Airy.
- This one (fiddlers' convention) has the best music. They have some great pickers from around here really quality, traditional music.
- I love how they broadcast on WPAQ that way you can catch some of it on your way in and out.
- They have good food here and reasonably priced. I also like the vendors. This is a good place to find recordings and good affordable instruments.
- It is so hot here, but that's part of it, the endurance factor is one of the things about Mount Airy, it will rain every year too, usually when it isn't 100 degrees, and then when the sun goes down, things just come alive.
- This festival is very affordable.

- I like the midnight square dance, that's just something they started doing one year, its open caller, and there's an open jam session for the band. It's a tradition now.
- I run a record label in France, blues, and old country mostly, but some bluegrass too. I've been coming over here for 30 years. I love this country, it feels more like my home than France. This is the first time I've been here to this festival, but it is good. Afterwards I'm traveling west by motorcycle, looking for musicians and visiting friends.
- I love it because it is so family friendly. My kids are starting to get festival friends just like we have, so when we get here they go off and do their thing and we do ours and we don't have to worry about them.
- I used to love it because it was a local event. You'd see all the great old timers here, Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham and Earnest East. When I came I would sleep on Tommy Jarrell's couch. Most of them are gone now. I was here at the 3rd or 4th one in the 70s and it was a lot smaller, but a lot more local.
- I had a friend who got married here in the 90s. They had a bunch of people march out to the field near the tank playing cripple creek, one group for the bride and one for the groom and they got married out there in that big flat field. Then it basically turned into a huge party.
- This is our least favorite convention. We just came down to see friends and play, try to sell a few CDs, but we never do well here (meaning in competition). When this thing started you had to be local, and I mean real local to win. Daddy says they wouldn't even bother coming. Now it's just the opposite, they give out awards to hot shots like the Carolina Chocolate Drops.
- This is where I see all of my old friends - I have friends that I met here, that I only see here. It's magic. It's Mount Airy! I come here a week before, I have set up in the same place for years, and we have a party all week long.
- This event is really well managed. It's something that you can get this many people together in one spot and not have any problems. No fighting, and they don't have to harass people to make it happen. People just get along.
- This is our first fiddlers' convention. We're on our way to a dulcimer workshop in Black Mountain, and we thought we should come see this on the way.
- When you go to Mount Airy, it's like the first day of summer. It's hot, you do whatever you want to do and you have a great time with your friends.
- I teach at the High School, you can see it over there (gestures toward school building). We really are proud of our musical heritage here, we are raised to appreciate it. I get people like Chester McMillan and Don Vipperman to come talk to my class. Part of it is this festival. It's been here a long time, and music in general is a big part of our local identity, and people will come here to see it. I would love to see the results of this study because I'm sure it is a significant part of our economy here in Mount Airy.



## Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention

County: Iredell

Surveyed May 28th-29th. 2011

Surveys Collected: 20

Estimated Attendance: Few Thousand

Union Grove, or Fiddler's Grove as it is often called, is one of the oldest fiddlers' conventions in the country. It was started by the Van Hoy family in the 1920s. Today it is mostly run by members of the Cockman Family, a well known gospel bluegrass band. Although it went through a period of explosive growth and attracted a wild crowd in the 1970s, today it is known as being the family-oriented, low key fiddlers' convention. Most attendees appreciated this, though a few felt differently. Friends and families camp in the shaded woods of the campground and have jam sessions. For those who attend multiple fiddlers' conventions during the season, Fiddlers' Grove is often the first large festival of the year. Several people indicated the importance of the music's authenticity. For others, the festival is a place to spend time with friends and make new ones. People also pointed out that Union Grove is more performance-oriented than other fiddlers' conventions, meaning that there are cloggers, storytellers and professional musical acts in addition to the competing musicians. The following anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I grew up in Charlotte, but I didn't get into the music until I was a teenager. It sounded so exotic, and then I found out that I had it in my own family history, on my Mom's side. When I left North Carolina I found that I really missed it, and missed the music. I used to come back every year to the festivals and it would recharge my batteries. I ended up moving back, partially to be around the music. I've played in a few bands and my children are learning to play too. We never miss this festival. It's the first of the year and one of the best.
- They (family associated with the festival) go to our church. We used to come up a few weeks early and help them get set up. When I was little it was my job to alphabetize all the band's entry forms. Now we come every year.
- We've just retired. It's been a long time since we've come to any festivals, but the kids have moved out and we want to do some traveling. We both play and we have lots of old friends that come out to these. We're trying to hit as many as we can for the rest of the summer.
- I teach in the music department at UNC-G (University of North Carolina at Greensboro). I started the old time music ensemble. These people here are my former students. They're competing in the band contest this year.
- It's important that they try to keep things traditional here. We've been coming for years and it's great to hear that the music hasn't changed much.
- This is where I see all my friends. Its like a reunion of all of the old back-to-the-landers, all the people who moved up here in the 70s. Some of us are still here, some of us are scattered around but we keep in touch.
- It's nice having a venue that is so child friendly. And there's lots of shade.
- We use that book (Blue Ridge Music Trails) book in class. I teach 4th graders and every year when we do our North Carolina unit I make sure they know about how important North Carolina's musical traditions are. I show them the article on Larry Pennington and Josh Goforth so they know that this is something that is old, but something that young people are still doing.
- There aren't enough places that really feature gospel music, especially real traditional gospel. They have really tried to hold onto that sound here.
- I've been coming since the 1970s. It was pretty wild back then. I don't play music much, just a little harmonica, but I love being around it. I met (names of other people at campsite) back then and

we've been camping together ever since. Me and some friends make a big dinner every Saturday night, and we get a big crowd of good people down here.

- It's not my favorite, there isn't as much jamming going on. It gets pretty quiet at night.
- I used to listen mostly to hip hop, but I love live music. When I moved to the mountains I just started listening to bluegrass because it was all that was around. Now I love it. I think it's also a cultural thing. I love the mountains and the people there and that makes me like the music more. This is my first time here, someone left a flyer on my car a few weeks ago.
- We go to this one because it's an easy shot from Charlotte, we're involved with the Folk Music Society there and Union Grove is the closest festival to us.
- We've been traveling for 4 years. I'm from Virginia Beach and she's from England (Woman says "I really hear my home in this music"). We've spent the last few years overseas in Europe. Now we're headed out west, but we're going to see as much music on the way as we can.



Fiddler's Grove Log Cabin

Photo: [www.fiddlersgrove.com](http://www.fiddlersgrove.com)

## Festivals

Venue	County	Date(s) Visited	Number of Surveys	Estimated Attendance	Type of Venue
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	Madison	10/1/11	17	Several Hundred (Inclement Weather)	Heritage Festival
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	Caldwell	6/25/11	10	Few Hundred	Small Festival
Coon Dog Day	Polk	7/9/11	15	Few Thousand	Street Festival
Haywood Street Dance	Haywood	7/22/11	12	Few Hundred	Street Dance
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	Clay	10/2/11	24	Several Thousand	Festival
Merlefest	Wilkes	4/29/11-5/01/11	51	Tens of thousands	Festival
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	Jackson	9/24/11	30	Several Thousand	Heritage Festival
Music Fest n Sugar Grove	Watauga	7/8/11	22	Few Thousand	Festival
Old Time Music Contest at Brevard Halloweenfest	Transylvania	10/29/11	28	Intermittent Few Hundred-More at Street Festival	Fiddlers Convention at Street Festival

### Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival

County: Madison

Surveyed 10/1/11

Surveys Collected: 17

Estimated Attendance: Several Hundred (Inclement Weather)

The Bascom Lamar Lunsford is an all-day festival on the grounds of Mars Hill College in Mars Hill. The festival celebrates the life of local musician and folklorist Bascom Lamar Lunsford. Throughout the day local bands play on a stage set up on campus, and there are smaller ballad swaps and concerts that take place indoors. There is also a street festival downtown, as well as an evening concert. The audiences at these additional sites were not surveyed. It was unseasonably cold and raining off and on, so attendance was down from past years. Most respondents came from the surrounding area, (Madison County), as well as the Asheville area. There were also a few out of town repeat visitors, as well as Mars Hill students and their families. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- My grandfather drove my grandmother in an old Ford over mud roads to bring her to school years and years ago. After they got married they would come back to visit. We make the same trip a few times a year and we never miss the festival. The trip is a lot easier now though.
- I came to see the clogging groups, and we're fans of Don Pedi. There's not enough dulcimer music you can go hear. The food is great too.
- Our daughter is a student here, we picked this weekend to come up and visit.
- I've lived in Mars Hill all my life. This festival has been a part of this community since he (Lunsford) was still alive, back in the 1960s. He really helped put this area on the map. It's a big deal around here, and I always look forward to it.

- I came up from Asheville because I'm a big fan of Bascom Lamar Lunsford. I brought some friends that are visiting too. So far it doesn't seem to be as much about him, but I like seeing the local music scene, and I think he would probably like that too. I especially liked seeing the ballad singers, unaccompanied singing isn't that common these days.

### **Bolick Pottery Heritage Day**

County: Caldwell

Visited 6/25/2011

Surveys Collected: 10

Estimated Attendance: Few Hundred

Heritage Day at Bolick Pottery begins with a kiln opening and pottery sale in the early morning, followed by music and storytelling throughout the day. It also serves as a local vending site for other craft artists and a place to see demonstrations of older agricultural practices such as working with horses and hit and miss tractor engines. The event is free, but the Bolick family sells a significant amount of pottery. Other crafters present also mentioned this as a lucrative event for them. It has a very intimate feeling, partially because of the visibility of the family and its site on the grounds of their scenic home. Generally, the crowd was elderly, though there were a few younger families with children. People attending this festival generally fit into 3 groups: people from the immediate area, or relatives or close friends of the Bolicks; those who were primarily there for the kiln opening, some of whom had been coming for years, often from a distance; and people either visiting or seasonally inhabiting Boone and Blowing Rock who heard about the event through local media. The following anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I met the Bolicks in the '80s and we became friends and come from Tennessee every year. Coming to their place is like going back in time. I actually wrote a song about the Bolicks, and they had me sing it before they opened the kiln.
- There's not many people doing a true wood fired kiln opening anymore, it's something to see all the different pots coming out, you never know what's going to happen in there. In general I like all the crafts, its high quality and everyone is very friendly.
- The location is beautiful. It's nice and shady and relaxing to be able to sit and hear all this good music.
- My children and grandchildren were in town visiting and we saw this event in the paper and decided to come check it out. We love this kind of music, and the kids have had a great time playing in the creek.
- It's great that it's free.
- We're old time musicians ourselves, we've traced it in my family back to the Civil War. I think it's important to see the other things that people did who passed this music down. That's what Heritage is about, not just the music but the lifestyle.
- I'm one of Glenn's cousins. I grew up down the road. We come down most years and have a great time visiting. There's a few buildings here that Glenn brought down that belonged to our family.
- I love the location. We bought a couple baskets and some pottery. I'm doing secret Christmas shopping right now.

## Coon Dog Day

County: Polk

Surveyed: 7/9/2011

Surveys Collected: 15

Estimated Attendance Few Thousand

The music at Coon Dog Day in Saluda is only a part of this celebration, now in its 48th year. The festival begins Friday night with a raccoon hunt. All day Saturday there are events for the coon hunters who bring their dogs to the Saluda School's baseball field for bench shows and treeing contests. At the other end of the downtown strip there is a street festival, with craft and food booths and a music stage. Throughout the day there are performances by local acts, with a focus on bluegrass, country and blues music. In the evening there is a street dance with square and couples dancing. Perhaps the biggest draw at the festival is the parade, which begins at 11 and lasts for over an hour. A big element of the parade is a tongue-in-cheek play on Hillbilly stereotypes, with people in patched overalls driving jalopies with raccoons and possums hanging off the fenders. There are also floats by local businesses, politicians and clubs, and floats celebrating coon dogs. In general it is a celebration and affirmation of small-town rural southern culture. It is heavily attended locally and regionally, with a large contingent from nearby South Carolina. There are lots of families and children, and a lot of people who come every year. Since music is only a part of the celebration, there are less musicians and bluegrass or old time enthusiasts. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I used to date a girl in Saluda, so I came to my first Coon Dog Day when I was 18 or so. That was back in the 60s and it was a lot smaller then. They used to have the dance in the Schoolhouse. I've been back three or four times since and always have a good time.
- I come for the people-watching mostly. The whole cultural element is pretty fascinating.
- I love the small-town atmosphere of Saluda. There are not many places like this anymore, especially in such a gorgeous setting.
- You got to come to Coon Dog Day. If you live within an hour's drive you've heard about it all your life and more than likely you've been once or twice.
- I have a good time but if you ask me the quality of the music has gone downhill. There needs to be more traditional bluegrass and less of this rock and roll stuff.
- It has the whole package, the food, the music and the parade. That's probably our favorite part, I mean it's a trip seeing all those people dressed up. We always go over and check out the dogs too, it's just a great slice of life.
- I come every year, this year I'm also helping out at a booth for a restaurant my friend is opening up here soon. This is a big event for the town, and a huge benefit for all the restaurants and local businesses.
- It's nice having something for the kids to do, a good family event.
- We used to live in Saluda and we are visiting some relatives. We would come up anyway, but we planned it this time to be here for Coon Dog Day. You know it's just one of those places. The train comes through once a week, and we've got some great places to eat, nice people and stuff like this going on. What's not to like?
- I came from Colorado to see my brother play in the bagpipe band. I love it here. It's beautiful and you are all really lucky to have so much good music around. We play this stuff out there too, but it's harder to find. I love it, I am actually thinking of getting a place here.

### Haywood Street Dance

County: Haywood

Surveyed 7/22/11

Surveys Collected: 12

Estimated Attendance: 300-450

At the street dance in downtown Waynesville, there were two sets of bleachers on either side of the dance area (that likely hold about 60 people) that were all full and then two rows of bag chairs along the front, plus a lot of people standing around on the sidewalks and in the grass. The crowd seemed pretty evenly split between younger (+/-40s) and older (60s+) people. Survey collector Ashley Melzer did not obtain significant anecdotes from the audience.

### John C. Campbell Folk School Fall Festival

County: Clay

Surveyed 10/02/11

Surveys Collected: 24

Estimated Attendance: Several Thousand

John C. Campbell Folk School sprawls across a picturesque campus in Brasstown. The folk school is known for its courses in traditional craft and music, and its weekly concert and dance series. On the first weekend in October the grounds of the school host thousands of visitors, who browse craft vendors and demonstrators stationed along pathways winding through the woods, sample local cuisine and watch musical performances from two different stages. Apart from a strong local turnout (this is one of the largest festivals in the Cherokee/Clay County area), John C. Campbell itself is well known outside the region, and many former students return to annual events such as the Fall Festival from far away. Brasstown is close to the Georgia border, so many attendees came from across the line, and even as far as the Atlanta metro area. While music played a large role in the festivities, crafts are as great a draw. There were many vacationing families present, as well as retirees and second-home owners. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes.

- We're doing our Christmas shopping. You can find some very unique things and buy them right from the person who made them, so you know exactly where your money is going. That's a rare thing in this day and age. We are also here for the kettle corn (laughs).
- We took classes at John C. Campbell years ago. Now we come back for all the big events to see our old teachers, and relive good memories.
- It's a great place to bring the kids. It's safe, and they get to learn something. You see all these people making things, and what people had to do to survive, and you get sense of how resourceful people have been and how resourceful they can be. It's a good thing to learn, now more than ever we need to be learning how to be self-sufficient.
- We are visiting from overseas. With a long trip, it's nice to have something to bring the kids to, and we like to find things that you can't find anywhere else.
- This is the Rolls Royce of craft fairs. You get a large spectrum of fine and traditional craft work here, and it is all very high quality.

## Merlefest

County: Wilkes

Surveyed: 4/28/2011-5/01/11

Surveys Collected: 51

Estimated Audience: Tens of Thousands

Merlefest is one of the largest bluegrass and Americana festivals in the country. The festival honors local legend Doc Watson's son Merle, who passed away at a young age. The festival is spread across a number of stages, sprawling across the campus of Wilkes Community College. It is packed, and draws a crowd of 50,000 - 75,000 people from around the country and from abroad. In recent years the lineup has diversified to include singer-songwriters and even some rock bands, anything falling under the wide description of "Americana." Lasting three days, many people also come for the late night picking sessions that take place in camping areas around the Wilkesboro area. The following anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes collected by Ashley Melzer.

- Wife of survey participant yelling at band. Yay! Real Bluegrass. (then to survey collector) They're deviating too far from Bluegrass. They need to be careful.
- He's from Oregon, I'm from Texas.
- As long as I'm alive, I will be here every year.
- Last year was our first year. We have rock 'n roll and other things in Ohio but we don't have near the variety of music.
- We brought my parents last year. My Dad grew up in West Virginia in the mountains. And do you know what he said at the end of Merlefest last year? "I thought bluegrass was dying. It's not."
- We came last year for one day and area staying this year for the first time for all four days. It's never enough.
- We brought a three day pass and we were talking earlier and think we already got our money's worth.
- It's phenomenal the kind of talent they bring in here.

## Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University

County: Jackson

Surveyed 9/24/11

Surveys collected: 30

Estimated Attendance: Several Thousand

On the last Saturday in September the intramural fields at Western Carolina University fill with people who come to see some of southwestern North Carolina's best traditional music. An equal draw is the other demonstrations of traditional folklife, the chance to snack on Cherokee frybread and perhaps most importantly, to shop for crafts made by regional artisans. The event is heavily advertised, but most of the attendees were either from southwestern N.C., or had some affiliation with the college, either being students, staff or alumni. Some mentioned this as an annual weekend to come back and visit the campus. Second home-owners turned out in heavy numbers, and some tourists were from out of the region or out of the state. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I went to Western Carolina and now my daughter goes here too. We come here every year to visit here and relive our campus days.

- We came here to do our Christmas shopping. We like to be able to give our money directly to the artist.
- It's a great time for free. I grew up near Cullowhee, and this was always one of the biggest events for the year.
- I love seeing all of these different kinds of traditional stuff in one place. It's a good place for the kids to learn about their heritage.
- I came to see my brothers and sisters sing. They really try to focus on the real regional traditions here, and that is becoming harder to find.

### Music Fest 'n' Sugar Grove

County: Watauga

Surveyed: 7/8/2011

Surveys Collected: 22 (Inclement Weather)

Estimated Attendance: Few Thousand

The Music Fest n' Sugar Grove is a two-day outdoor festival near Boone. It's put on by the alumni and preservation society of the Historic Cove Creek High School, a rock schoolhouse built during the depression. The building now houses a gymnasium/performance space, a museum dedicated to Doc Watson and other local musicians and rental spaces housing among other things a traditional Chinese medical practice. Cove Creek also has a sustainable development coordinator, and the festival benefits from a partnership between Cove Creek and the Sustainable Development program at nearby Appalachian State University (ASU), which provides volunteers, interns and a sizable portion of the audience. Food and craft vendors also attend the festival. A mix of local and nationally known acts with regional connections (Doc Watson, the Kruger Brothers, and the Carolina Chocolate Drops) performed on one large covered stage and a smaller solar-powered one. The music is mostly bluegrass, with some Americana and old time mixed in. The survey was conducted on a Friday, usually less attended than Saturday, and there was also rain on and off throughout the day. The crowd was a mix of locals, students from ASU, tourists and second-home owners (the largest group). On Saturday when the Carolina Chocolate Drops headlined, the balance was probably tipped towards a younger audience of ASU students. The following anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I try to buy local. My house is filled with North Carolina furniture and I try to eat food from North Carolina too. Music and culture to me are an extension of that, so I love the traditional music of Western North Carolina.
- I love the setting, it's so beautiful here, they have great food too.
- We came from Sweden. I invented a system for improving the intonation of guitars, and my wife is a folk artist and musician. We came to the US to see friends and hear traditional American music. We came down to North Carolina specifically to see Doc Watson and the Kruger Brothers.
- I love the schoolhouse, the history here that they talk about in the museum exhibit. The music is about community and having an event like this here at a place that's important to the community makes that more apparent.
- We used to go to Merlefest, but it's gotten too big. You can see a lot of the same caliber of music here, and it's smaller, prettier and less expensive.
- I grew up around here and my whole family were musicians. My uncles helped build this school. My grandfather used to have the whole community over to his house and have music and dancing all night long. This kind of reminds me of those nights.
- We have a home here and one in Florida. We make it a point to be here and to have family visiting



this weekend so that we can all make it out to the festival. It's a great chance to hear some good music and experience some local culture.

- I am thinking of buying a place up here. Right now I am staying with friends and they told me to come out to see this, and I love it. I live in the Virgin Islands now and everything is too expensive. It's gorgeous here, you have seasons and you have stuff like this going on. It's great.
- I am travelling across country in an RV. I'm retired and at some point I just started writing country songs. I don't know why, I'm more of an opera person, but I'm coming to these kinds of things now to get inspired.
- It's my birthday and my family is visiting me at ASU. We decided to come out here to celebrate.

### **Old Time Music Competition at Brevard Halloweenfest**

County: Transylvania

Surveyed 10/29/11

Surveys Collected: 28

Estimated Attendance: Intermittent, 100 - 300 at any given time, more attendees at street festival.

Normally the Old Time Competition at the Brevard Halloweenfest is held outside the Transylvania County Courthouse, and the band contest occurs later indoors in the courtroom. On October 29<sup>th</sup> the weather was unseasonably cold and windy, and all of the day's events were held in the courtroom upstairs. This did not deter a large audience from observing, and contestants traveling from as far away as Tennessee, South Carolina and Virginia. Halloweenfest on the whole is a street festival with the standard selection of crafts, food vendors and family-oriented activities. Most of these visitors were local and tended to drift in and out. Others came just to watch the music, especially for the band contest, which occurred after the rest of the festival had shut down. The survey table was by the registration area, so many of the respondents were contestants, who played a fee to compete for prizes for best old time music instrumentalists, singers and bands. In essence this crowd is similar to the crowd at fiddlers' conventions such as Mount Airy and Fiddlers' Grove, and there was jamming going on in every empty enclave, stairwell and room. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- We come every year from Tennessee. For the size there are some great musicians here, and there just aren't a lot of other contests this time of year.
- My kids are in the Y.A.M. program in South Carolina. It's good that they have a youth category. There aren't as many old time musicians down there as there are here, so it also opens their eyes to what else is going on, and let's them see how good you can get.
- We are here to see the fall colors and we thought we would poke our heads in and hear some music. There are some great performers here, and I love the venue. It's great to see something fun happening in a courtroom.
- We've been traveling for a few weeks. We went to a lot of the Crooked Road venues in Virginia which are great. Every event is different, has its own flavor. I like this one because there are a lot more young people playing, that's harder to find these days.

## Concerts

Venue	County	Date(s) Visited	Number of Surveys	Estimated Attendance	Type of Venue
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	Graham	8/13/11	13	1-200	Concert Series
Bluegrass at the Old Rock School	Burke	11/5/11	10	2-300	Concert Series
Friday Night Concerts at John C. Campbell Folk School	Clay	9/23/11	10	100-300	Concert Series
Music in the Mountains Folk Festival	Yancey	10/1/11	22	Few Hundred	Annual Concert
Shindig on the Green	Buncombe	7/9/11	28	Few Thousand	Concert Series

### An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center

County: Graham

Surveyed 8/13/2011

Surveys Collected 13

Estimated Audience 100-200

Stecoah Valley Arts Center is housed in a stone schoolhouse built during the Great Depression near Robbinsville in the small community of Stecoah. Currently the building houses a craft gallery, classrooms used for workshops and meetings, and the school's historic auditorium, which is the site of the Appalachian Evening summer concert series. The Arts Center also hosts a few annual events held on the grounds of the school. Before the show, much of the audience attends an Appalachian-style dinner in the school's separate gymnasium building. The audience of a few hundred was divided between locals from Stecoah and Robbinsville, people with second or vacation homes in the area, a small cadre of regional music devotees, and some visiting tourists. The Arts Center sells season tickets to the concert series, so many attendees come to all of the events. There seemed to be a sense of the Arts Center as a community space, and that the attendees had a vested interest in it. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I left the mountains to find work, but I came back because I wanted my children to experience it. My kids went to school here until it closed down. This school was the center of the community. There's not a whole lot else around here, so it's good to have something like this going on, and to keep the history of this place alive.
- This is a big reason we decided to move here (to Stecoah). If there wasn't a regular meeting place like this, with such great entertainment we may have gone somewhere else. We have another home in Florida, but we hope to end up spending most of our time in this area.
- We had Steve Martin playing where we live, near Brevard, but we drove over an hour to be here because this is a special place and a special audience. People are very respectful hear and really listen. You can hear a pin drop.
- We just showed up, we heard about it, but we had no idea there was music here tonight, and here is this world class band. This is fantastic. It's a beautiful building, a beautiful setting and a great production.

- My parents started coming here a few years ago and told us about it. We came down on our vacation. It's a great area, there's so much to do recreation-wise, and the music here is a big draw too.
- I have season tickets, so every year I come to almost every show. It gives us something to look forward to, and a place to see all of my friends. They have really done a good job of getting this place off the ground.

### **Bluegrass at the Old Rock School**

County: Burke

Surveyed 11/5/11

Surveys Collected: 10

Estimated Audience 200 - 300

Built by local masons in the 1920s, the Old Rock School in Valdese is a rare example of Waldensian stone work. The school closed in 1980 and then reopened its doors later as a gallery space, meeting venue and a model train museum. Part of the renovation was building a modern auditorium that seats almost 500 people. The school hosts monthly bluegrass concerts during the fall, winter and spring. The bands are usually big-name performers from outside the region, many of whom play more progressive bluegrass. Most of the attendees however, come from Burke and other surrounding counties, though there were a few visitors from farther afield. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- This is a great event, they get really hot pickers in here. I'm a big fan of Balsam Range, and I'll drive a long way to see them.
- This time of year the festivals stop happening, so it's nice to have a big event like this close by. There really isn't anything else like it, and I love the building.
- I wish they would have more traditional acts (as opposed to progressive bluegrass) here, but other than that, they do a great job.
- I have some family visiting from out of town, we brought everyone out to the music tonight to get the local experience.

### **Friday Evening Concerts at John C. Campbell Folk School**

County: Clay

Surveyed 9/23/11

Surveys Collected: 10

Estimated Attendance 100-300

John C. Campbell Folk School has been a renowned center for the teaching and documentation of Appalachian culture and arts since its founding in the 1920s. On Friday nights the Folk School hosts a free concert. Many of the attendees are students who come from afar to take classes at the school. Others travel from the surrounding area including Georgia and Tennessee to see the free shows. Due to the short length of the show and the lack of an intermission, the number of surveys that could be collected was limited. All remarks are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I love that you can go see a performer this good for free.
- We come every week from Murphy. It reminds me of the music I heard when I was growing up.

- I'm down here for a shoe making class. I also learned some dulcimer while I was here. This is a good chance to interact with some of the local folks.

### Music in the Mountains Folk Festival

County: Yancey

Surveyed 10/01/11

Surveys Collected: 22

Estimated Attendance: 200-400

The 26th annual Music in the Mountains Folk Festival was held in the Burnsville Town Center, recently constructed as a mixed-use building just off the Burnsville town square. It's a sit down show held in a modern auditorium. The lineup has a mixture of acts, but tends to feature some regional tradition-bearers like Bobby McMillon and the flatfooter Bob Aldridge, as well as revivalists and younger musicians. There is often a lot of contextualizing by the performers, a feature that some liked and some didn't. The festival is put on by the Toe River Arts Council, and there is a strong representation from members and friends of the arts community in the Yancey/Mitchell County area. Many of the concert goers were retirees living in the area and there were also some attendees from Asheville and other areas farther afield. There was also a sizable group from the Penland School.

- I remember visiting family in North Carolina when I was 8. I thought it was so beautiful and I wanted to move back ever since. When I was 65 I finally got my chance. Part of that coming back and remembering that older time was the music, and it has been one of my favorite things about living here. There really are more traditional musicians here than anywhere else in the country.
- Without Art, life is a soulless existence. Art brings out the best in people and in communities. I think we need to acknowledge that and support it in whatever way we can. With this kind of music, you're seeing what makes North Carolina unique.
- I saw the old dancer (Bob Aldridge, a local flat-footing legend) on PBS and then saw he was coming here in the paper.
- We come to this every year, they do a good job of bringing in real traditional music, but I think there was too much talking in between the music.
- I like being able to eat the local BBQ and also having downtown be so close. The location is very convenient.
- I'm a visiting art instructor from Australia. I have loved the opportunity to go out and see traditional music while I've been visiting. It's interesting to see the similarities between this and music back home, and also the differences. It is much more alive here, and that is very special.
- I like the mixture of younger and older musicians, and the variety of musical acts, but especially the more traditional music. I like when the performers also have a story to tell.
- We saw the ETSU string band at Riddlefest (another event in the Burnsville Town Center) last year and came back to hear them.

## Shindig on the Green

County: Buncombe

Surveyed: 7/9/2011

Surveys Collected: 28

Estimated Attendance: Few Thousand

Shindig on the Green is an Asheville institution going back to 1967. The concert series is held weekly during the summer on Saturday evenings in Pack Square in downtown Asheville. There is a house band, the Stoney Creek boys that have been there from the beginning. The other entertainment is provided by whoever shows up. Bands play two songs each. Usually there are a few performances by clogging teams and a few square dances that are open to whoever wants to participate. In recent years, a large concrete stage and pavilion has been built. Beyond that people spread out on the grass in the park. There are more families here than were represented by the survey response. The crowd was mostly locals, but there are also many people who come in from surrounding communities to combine the event with other activities like eating out or shopping. There were also a high number of tourists. People commented positively on the event being free, outdoors and family friendly, and having dance and jamming elements. Asheville has undergone tremendous growth and change in the last few decades, and some of the comments reflect the issues surrounding that change in demographics. Overwhelmingly, though, people loved Shindig and seemed personally invested in it. Several respondents asked if filling out the survey would help keep Shindig going. The following anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I love Shindig. This is our favorite part of the summer, and it wouldn't be complete without it.
- I started playing music because of Shindig. I came with my husband and after seeing all the music I went out and bought a banjo. It's a big part of our lives now, and I owe it to Shindig.
- It's great seeing the continuity of the tradition here. You've got performers from age 8 to 80. It's good for people to see that it is a living thing, something being continued.
- This is a community thing for me. I've known the Glen (the emcee) since I was a kid. He used to call dances in Montreat when I was growing up. I had some musicians in my family and when I moved away, I really missed all of this. I try to come out to Shindig whenever I'm home visiting, and I hope one day I can find a job that allows me to stay here.
- I wished they hadn't put in all the concrete. It was better when it was all grass. People laid out on blankets and now everyone brings chairs. It's not the same and its harder if you have children.
- I understand what you're (referring to the survey work) doing, but this shouldn't be about money. This is part of our heritage. My family has been in this area and played music for generations. That's what is really important. This town is changing a lot and we're losing something, our character and our culture in the process.
- People talk a lot about Asheville changing, and that is just the way it is. No one can stop it. At least they're still doing things like this, it shows the city values the traditional culture here.
- We came up from Research Triangle Park. I am a displaced Yankee and this actually reminds me a lot of Boston during the 60s, when everybody was playing this music. There is a politeness and friendliness though, that is great, and something a lot of my fellow travelers could learn from.
- I like the clogging teams the best. You can't see that stuff everywhere and the quality here is superb.
- My favorite part is walking behind the stage and seeing all the bands practicing and jamming. You don't usually get to see that side of a performance.
- I live about three miles from here, and it's great to be able to walk and sit outside and hear all of this great music.

- My wife and I come to town every week in the summer. We go out to eat, walk around town and come to this. It's a nice way to anchor a weekend out on the town.
- I come mostly to find folks to play with. I've played on stage a few times, but my favorite part is getting to see all my musician buddies and pick behind the stage.
- We're just passing through and happened to come on this. It's great. We just came from New York and it's a whole different world down here, like another country. We've really enjoyed it.



Shindig on the Green 2010 Photo courtesy Lynette Haggard

## Dance Halls

Venue	County	Date(s) Visited	Number of Surveys	Estimated Attendance	Type of Venue
Alleghany Jubilee	Alleghany	10/8/11	12	100-200	Dance/Concert Hall
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	Caldwell	8/19/11	10	1-200	Restaurant/Dance Hall
The Orchard at Altapass	Mitchell	9/10/11	19	200-400	Dance Hall/Concert Venue/Food Venue
The Stompin' Ground	Haywood	9/10/11	10	<50	Dance Hall

### Alleghany Jubilee

Surveyed 10/08/11

Surveys Collected: 12

Estimated Attendance: 100-200

The Alleghany Jubilee is a small dance hall and concert venue housed in a former depression-era movie theater in downtown Sparta. The space holds room for a few hundred people, most from the surrounding area (Alleghany, Ashe, and Surry County in NC and Carroll and Grayson County in Virginia). There was also a contingent of out of town tourists, second-home owners, and those who drive long distances to be able to clog and flat-foot to old time music, something many dancers prefer to bluegrass or country music. A lot of the draw of the event is owed to its authenticity, and down home, family-friendly atmosphere that is also very high-energy. This was very much a social event. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I started playing old time music because I used to come here and watch. I was in a rock band, but one night they called me up on stage. That's part of the atmosphere here, they are very welcoming
- They have a good sound system here, and really friendly people.
- I am 91 years old and I try to come out whenever I can. My family were all dancers growing up, and it reminds me of my childhood. I think it's also great exercise, 'specially for those getting up in years.
- We have a house in the area and this one of the only things going on in the way of nightlife. We've made a lot of friends here.
- We saw this on the internet and thought we would come up and check it out. We're also traveling up the Blue Ridge Parkway. It's very reasonably priced, and you don't get many opportunities to hang out with locals and get to experience the culture like this.
- We're staying here and just happened to pass by. It's great, I didn't know places like this still existed.

### Sims Country Bar-B-Que

County: Caldwell

Surveyed 8/19/2011

Surveys Collected: 10

Estimated Attendance: 100-200

Sims Country Bar-B-Que is tucked away down a gravel road in Caldwell County. For more than 30 years the Sims family has served wood smoked Bar-B-Que to the music of traditional

bluegrass in a rustic wood building built specifically for the task. You enter along the buffet line and can sit at picnic tables or in riser seating along the side of the dance floor, where everyone from toddlers to octogenarians flatfoot, two-step and waltz to some of the region's best bands. Dancing is important, and there are usually clogging performances by teams, including one affiliated with the Sims' whose trophies are displayed in the corner. It is a lively place, but very family-oriented, and very open and friendly. The crowd in Sims' could be described as being mostly regional as opposed to simply local. In the Lenoir, Morganton and Hickory area Sims is something of an institution as the anecdotes document. It is a place where people identify with the region's culture, and also is viewed as a place where tradition is transmitted. There are also those who make the trip from within a radius of a few hours' drive, such as the metropolitan areas around Charlotte and Winston-Salem, as well as a few tourists from outside the region. According to the owners the crowd on this Friday evening was smaller than usual due to it being the first weekend of the high school football season. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- This is a rite of passage around here. I grew up in Hickory and my parents took me here when I was a little girl. I'm at App State now, and I brought a friend with me.
- It's the cultural experience. Where else can you see something like this? You get to meet nice local people, and see the real deal as far as music and dancing goes.
- I'm a clogger and I learned how to dance here. I haven't been in a while but I brought my daughter and she seems to be taking to it. I might have to sign her up for some lessons.
- I heard about this place on public television. We are up from South Carolina for a motorcycle rally and we wanted to get out on some country roads, and experience some local culture. We have definitely found that here.
- The food is great, and they usually have pretty traditional music here. Doc Watson used to show up once and a while and play without announcing it. I like watching the dancers too.
- When I was in high school we would bring foreign exchange students here to give them a taste of local color. Part of the adventure was just trying to find our way here without getting lost.
- We've been coming for years, the Sims are like family to us. We've watched the grand-kids grow up, and we feel like part of the family too.

### **The Orchard at Altapass**

County: Mitchell

Surveyed 9/10/2011

Surveys Collected: 22

Estimated Attendance: 200 - 400 intermittent

Though the orchard at Altapass located on the Blue Ridge Parkway has been in operation for more than 100 years, the apple orchard gained new life in 1994 when Kit Trubey bought the land to save it from development. Her brother Bill Carson and his wife Judy took over the management of the farm, and remodeled and expanded the old processing building, turning it into a store and performance space that sells apples and apple products, books, and CDs of the many artists who come to play there during the spring, summer and fall. On the Saturday surveys were collected, there were performances by a local bluegrass band and a classic country group. The attendees were divided between a devoted group of regulars, some who are longtime residents and others who are second homers and retirees who come to socialize and dance. The other main demographic group was travelers from the Parkway, some who come seasonally to buy apples and some who encountered the Orchard while driving down the parkway and came to investigate. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.



- We come up every year around this time to get apples. The kids love it, and it's great they have music too.
- I never used to dance, but I always wanted to. After my husband passed away I used to come out here a lot, but I never had the courage to get up. Then one day I did. This is a gift from God.
- This place would have been a subdivision if it wasn't for them (The Carsons). Now it's one of the most beautiful places on the Parkway. We really owe a lot to them for doing this.
- We were just on our way hiking and happened to see this. It's pretty wild, these people know how to have a good time.
- This is a social thing for a lot of us. I've lived here for about 20 years, some of these folks have been here their whole life. This is where we get to see our friends and make new ones. It's great exercise too.
- I love how you see the heritage in tandem with the land here. You have the food, the land and the music all celebrated in one place. It's very special.

### **The Stompin' Ground**

County: Haywood

Surveyed: 9/10/2011

Surveys Collected: 10

Estimated Attendance: Less Than 50 (Lower Attendance than usual)

The Stompin' Ground in Maggie Valley is a venerable institution in a region known for its step dancing tradition. The building is shaped like a large red barn on the outside. Inside is a huge performance space with a large dance floor and riser seating on three sides. Each night people come out to see the bluegrass and country music, dancing by attendees and organized performances by clogging teams. Though it can hold hundreds of people, on the night the surveys were collected there were less than 50 people in attendance. The owners attributed low turnout to the economy and the fact that there was a large motorcycle festival going on in town. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- My grandparents brought me here when I was kid. We used to drive up from South Carolina. Dancing was important to them, and that all of us kids learn. It was a much bigger crowd back then, but I still come up and I bring my girls too.
- My wife is in the clogging team. I can't dance much, so we like to come out here together. She dances and I watch.
- We saw this place in that movie Talking Feet. I'm in town visiting my friend in Brevard and we wanted to have a cultural experience. It's inspiring to see that there are still places like this in the world. I love watching the dancers.
- This is the only place I feel comfortable getting up and singing in public. I got married here, that might be why.

## Music Gatherings

Venue	County	Date(s) Visited	Number of Surveys	Estimated Attendance	Type of Venue
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	Madison	6/30/11	13	< 100	Jam Session
Old Fort Mountain Music	McDowell	7/1/11	15	1-200	Music Hall
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	Surry	8/20/11	10	<100	Live Radio Show
WKBC Hometown Opry	Wilkes	9/9/11	10	<50	Live Radio Show

### Bluegrass Jam at Zuma's Coffee

County: Madison

Visited 6/30/2011

Surveys Collected: 13

Estimated Audience: Around 100

Zuma's Coffee is a small cafe and restaurant located on the main drag in Marshall, North Carolina. Marshall is a small town, and the county seat of Madison County. On Thursday nights legendary fiddler Bobby Hicks (multi-Grammy award winner and former Bluegrass Boy) hosts a bluegrass jam that is free and heavily attended by the local community, people who drive in from other areas in the region (primarily the Asheville area), and visitors passing through or vacationing in the Madison County area. The jam is not quite open, generally the musicians represent the best of the area and are encouraged to join in by Bobby or other jam regulars. Other regular attendees include Roger Howell, a local fiddler and music historian; fiddler Adam Masters and guitar player and singer Leonard Hollifield. The group takes turns playing breaks and singing into one condenser microphone before a packed house seated in tables and dancers who flat foot, two-step and waltz. The crowd sometimes spills out onto the street. The jam also serves as a community social event. The most common testimony was how unusual it was to have this music of this quality free in a small venue. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- This is my weekly night out. It's a chance to see some great music, and also see all our friends. They have good food here too.
- We come every week. It reminds me of growing up in Black Mountain. That town is ruined now, but Marshall still has that small-town feel to it.
- Our friends have some property here; we just happened to be in town today on vacation and heard we should check it out. The kids are in there learning how to dance. It's amazing to be able to stumble across something this good.
- Joel (Zuma Proprietor) has really turned this place around. 10 years ago there was nothing happening on this street. Things are starting to pick up, and I think it's because Joel started this business here, reached out to the locals and the newcomers. This is a place where everybody (the locals, second homers, tourists etc.) can mingle together and have a good time.
- We come down here from Asheville every week. We have to come a lot earlier now to get a seat, but it's a great time. It's great this is free, and everyone is really friendly.
- We drive about an hour to be here, just about every week. That's my daughter playing fiddle and singing in there. She met Bobby and he's been sort of a mentor for her. We have a family band, but she's the star of the show. It's pretty special to be able to play with some of these guys on a regular basis.

## Old Fort Mountain Music

County: McDowell

Surveyed: 7/1/2011

Surveys Collected: 15

Estimated Attendance: 100 - 200

Old Fort Mountain music opened in the 1980s and since then has been an institution in the area, a place to see local bluegrass legends and young folks cutting their teeth. The performance space is composed of a stage, a dance floor and several rows of seating. There is also a small counter where the operators sell t-shirts, homemade baked goods and drinks. On one wall there is a memorial in the form of photos of all the deceased musicians who played at Old Fort. Bands sign up for half hour slots. When they're not playing they often practice outside around the building creating multiple small performance spaces. The music is mostly traditional bluegrass. The crowd is mostly local and elderly, but there are a smattering of younger families and tourists. The participants valued the sense of community at Old Fort, the fact the event was free, and the authenticity of it. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I love how you get a thirty minute set. It's a great place for people to learn, but we also get some heavy-hitters out here. There's not much pressure, more variety and people just want to have a good time.
- It's great that it's free, and I love the down home atmosphere. Everyone is really friendly and welcoming.
- I bring my grandson out here every month or so. He's learning to play guitar and I get a chance to dance and visit with my friends.
- I've been coming here since I was a kid, since this opened up. I learned to dance and sing here. And these people are like my family.
- Usually there are a lot of people jamming outside and practicing. That's my favorite part, being able to walk around and see all the different music. Things have slowed down a little bit lately, but this weekend it might be because there's so much going on (4th of July Weekend).
- I'm a history buff and my family is from around here. We all worked in the mills and I think it's important to remember that this kind of music comes from the people. They are the same people that built this country and have died for it. That's really something that needs to be recognized, and it needs to be kept alive.
- We were traveling on holiday years ago and were passing through town on a Friday and ended up checking this out. When we planned our next trip to America we went to as many music events as we could, (the couple was from England) and we made sure to have Old Fort be a part of our trip.
- I have friends visiting me from New York and I wanted to take them out to experience some local culture. Things like this, real local gatherings are not easy to find, if I didn't live here I would have no idea things like this existed.

**“It's important to remember that this kind of music comes from the people.”**

*Old Fort Mountain Music audience comment 2011*

## WPAQ Merry-Go-Round

County: Surry

Surveyed 8/20/2011

Surveys Collected: 10

Estimated Audience less than 100

The Merry-Go-Round is the weekly live radio show on AM 740 WPAQ. WPAQ is legendary in the region for its 60 year history of broadcasting the best in traditional Appalachian Music, and in particular for its devotion to rich local old time music and bluegrass tradition of Surry and its surrounding counties. The show is broadcast out of the Earle (at the time called the Downtown Cinema) a theater on Mount Airy's main street dating from the 1930s and operated by the Surry Arts Council. The concert is free and takes place between 11 and 1:30. It usually features two bands that play a few numbers at a time, broken up by commercial breaks and the news. Because of Mount Airy's "Mayberry" draw and the usual presence of musicians jamming outside the building, the site gets a lot of in and out traffic from tourists. However, it should be noted that tourism to Mount Airy is slightly different and more regionally based than the tourism paired with outdoor activity associated with the sites deeper in the mountains. The event is also attended by local musicians and music lovers, with a heavy representation from retirees. Perhaps due to the cancellation of one of the scheduled bands, attendance on this Saturday was lower than usual. It was also the first weekend of the high school football season). All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- We just saw the people outside playing and decided to come in and check things out. It's great for the kids. There's air conditioning, the music's good and you can stay as long as you want.
- We saw this thing on the internet, (from the way she described it, it sounded like the BRMT website, but she wasn't certain) and we thought we would come and check it out. We're both retired, but when we were young we taught in Watauga County for a while and got hooked on the music. He plays the banjo and I play the dulcimer. We moved to Bethel (community in western Watauga) last year. The best thing about it is that there's something like this going on every weekend, and its all high quality. You don't realize how special it is until you leave, but that was a big reason why we came back.
- We had a free weekend and we decided we were going to go to Boone or Mount Airy and we picked Mount Airy. Once you get here, there's a few things you have to do. You got to go to Snappy's (local lunch place) you have to go to the Andy Griffith Museum, and you have to go the Merry-Go-Round. I love the funky old theater too. They don't make them like this anymore.
- I used to be a working musician. I had to give that up because that's a hard life and I lost a lot of friends. I live down the street now, and this lets me relive some of that without the downsides.
- I'll tell you my favorite thing. You see there? (points through glass door at child watching the jam session) They're learning where they come from. That's really important. You can't do anything if you don't know where you come from. This is our heritage and part of who we are. So when you see that happening, it makes you feel good.

## WKBC Hometown Opry

County: Wilkes

Surveyed 9/09/2011

Surveys Collected: 10

Estimated Audience: Less than 50

Main Street Music and Loan in North Wilkesboro is a working pawn and music store housed in a brightly painted one story cinderblock building. On Friday mornings at 7 a.m. local radio station WKBC broadcasts a live show from inside. The concert is free and lasts for about 2 hours. While it is a small event (the room fits about 50 people), it has a devoted following of people who drive in from the surrounding region, and others who listen from home or watch the show's broadcast on the local TV station. In addition to music, the show also broadcasts local news, and gives announcements for local businesses. The environment is very community-oriented. All anecdotes are paraphrased from field notes compiled by Steve Kruger.

- I come whenever I can. This is a great place to see some world class music for free.
- They have a great sense of humor here. I love the snake (A snake is lowered from the ceiling to scare the announcer)
- We came from Burke County. We'll come a long way to see music, even this early in the morning. We usually make a day of it, go out to breakfast and sometimes we go and see a movie.
- I lived close by here, these are all my friends. I went to high school with a lot of these folks. I get to come here and see my old friends. There was a lot more of this kind of music when I was growing up, this takes me back.



WKBC Hometown Opry

Photo: Town of North Wilkesboro

## Audience Profile

The anecdotal information gathered during the survey collection provides a qualitative analysis of the make-up of audiences at Blue Ridge Music venues and their motivations for attending.

The folklorist collecting the surveys engaged the respondents in conversations about the events, such as what they liked or disliked about the event, or why they had come. People often wanted to talk about question 11 on the survey form, which asked what influence North Carolina's music traditions had had on their interest in music.

People come to the Blue Ridge region to hear music because there are many long-standing, high quality events and venues there. But they also make the journey because it is perceived as the place where the music came from. People are willing to go to the Blue Ridge region to hear music because it is important to them, and because it is part of a larger Appalachian experience that includes the land itself, and other cultural and natural attractions. Even though people can listen to music at home and there are bluegrass and old-time events throughout the United States and abroad, although perhaps not as plentiful as in the southern mountains, the sense of place in the Blue Ridge region is an important audience draw.

An obvious majority of the attendees were European-Americans and appeared to be older than 55 years old. While there is a lack of ethnic diversity at bluegrass and old-time events, these audiences were not homogenous. Participants varied in income levels and educational background, as well as point of origin. Some were elderly couples traveling the country in an RV. Some were groups of young adults learning to play old-time music and bluegrass. Some were local; some were from other distant states and countries.

People also had different reasons for being in the mountains, for being at a music venue and for their appreciation of Appalachian music. Some grew up with the music. Some sought it out. Some happened on an interesting sign by the road and decided to explore.

For local residents and for people who have left the mountains or are descended from mountain people, hearing or playing mountain music can be an affirmation of their own heritage and identity. For visitors to the region, the music and the experience of going to hear it is an encounter with something exotic, something that is seen as having a unique authenticity, something that is not available anywhere else. For some it is ironically edgy and hip; for others, romantic, wholesome, anachronistic or unchanging. For some it is simply good music, or music, period.

The audience for traditional music is composed of a variety of sub-groups, each with its own motivations, ideas about the music, demographics and spending patterns. The proportion of each sub-group represented in an audience varies by venue. People often fall into more than one category or none at all. Participants also represented a diverse array of political contexts. One banjo player at Mount Airy had a tattoo of Vladimir Lenin on his arm; another's banjo case was covered in Republican bumper stickers. People talked about the inherent social values present in old-time music, ranging from independence and self-sufficiency to the music springing from the working class and requiring cooperation and community.

## Audience Groups

The presence of various audience groups at different events affects the data collected at each venue. The prevalent types of participants were:

1. Locals and Cultural Identifiers
2. Retirees and Seasonal Residents
3. Musicians and Dancers
4. Regional Tourists
5. Out of State and International Tourists
6. Members of the Arts Community
7. Regional Students and Alumni
8. Craft Shoppers
9. Bikers and Recreational Drivers

### Locals

There are differences between residents (anyone living in the mountain region) and *locals*, in the sense the term is used in the area, meaning people who grew up there and often have deep roots in the community going back for several generations. While there is friendship and interaction between residents from different backgrounds at music events, there is a difference between the lifestyle and culture of people born and raised in the mountains and people who were not. A socio-economic class difference often exists between recent newcomers (often retirees and second-home owners) and longtime residents, who tend to be from more blue-collar backgrounds.

All music venues were open to all types of participants. Some venues actually served as a place for locals and more recent residents to socialize together. This was especially true at the Orchard at Altapass and the coffee shop at Zuma, which are both run by more recently arrived residents. These venues still reach out to the local community.

Joel (Zuma Proprietor) has really turned this place around. 10 years ago there was nothing happening on this street. Things are starting to pick up, and I think it's because Joel started this business here, reached out to the locals and the newcomers. This is a place where everybody (the locals, second homers, tourists etc) can mingle together and have a good time.

But some venues, especially the older, smaller sites such as the Alleghany Jubilee, primarily serve as valuable and increasingly rare social spaces for the local community.

This is where I see all of my old friends. Coming here on Saturday night is like coming home to a high school reunion or something like that.

In communities where music within the community was once ubiquitous, these events take on greater importance for those who had music as a part of their own lives.

I grew up around here and my whole family was musicians. My uncles helped build this school. My grandfather used to have the whole community over to his house and have music and dancing all night long. This kind of reminds me of those nights.

### Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove

The significance of music to nostalgia is especially important to people who have returned to the region after a period of absence.

This is a community thing for me. I've known the Glenn (Glenn Bannerman, the emcee) since I was a kid. He used to call dances in Montreat when I was growing up. I had some musicians in my family and when I moved away, I really missed all of this. I try to come out to Shindig whenever I'm home visiting, and I hope one day I can find a job that allows me to stay here.

**Shindig on the Green**

I left the mountains to find work, but I came back because I wanted my children to experience it. My kids went to school here until it closed down. This school was the center of the community. There's not a whole lot else around here, so it's good to have something like this going on, and to keep the history of this place alive.

**Stecoah Valley Arts Center**

**Cultural Identifiers**

Apart from being a social space for local residents, the music traditions themselves are seen as being an important part of the community's cultural identity.

I'll tell you my favorite thing. You see there? (Points through glass door at child watching the jam session) They're learning where they come from. That's really important. You can't do anything if you don't know where you come from. This is our heritage and part of who we are. So when you see that happening, it makes you feel good.

**WPAQ Merry Go Round at the Earle Theater in Mount Airy**

Cultural identity was sometimes referred to in an oppositional way, where music events served as a constant in a region that is rapidly changing, especially in places like Asheville.

I understand what you're (referring to the survey work) doing, but this shouldn't be about money. This is part of our heritage. My family has been in this area and played music for generations. That's what is really important. This town is changing a lot and we're losing something, our character and our culture in the process. People talk a lot about Asheville changing, and that is just the way it is. No one can stop it. At least they're still doing things like this. It shows the city values the traditional culture here.

**Shindig on the Green**

In many cases, the events were a place to communicate a positive cultural identity to people from outside the region. At Sims Bar-B-Que, newspaper articles relating to sharing traditions with exchange students are proudly displayed.

When I was in high school we would bring foreign exchange students here to give them a taste of local color. It doesn't get much more local than this. They had a great time.

**Sims Bar-B-Que**

Others at Bluegrass at the Old Rock School and Old Fort Mountain Music (to name just a few) would bring relatives and visiting friends to the events, to give them a sense of place. For them, these places represented the best of their community, and their culture.



I have friends visiting me from New York and I wanted to take them out to experience some local culture. Things like this, real local gatherings are not easy to find, if I didn't live here I would have no idea things like this existed.

#### **Old Fort Mountain Music**

#### **Retirees and Seasonal Residents**

One of the largest groups represented in this study are retirees and people who live seasonally in the mountains in a second home. Often, second-homers and retirees did not grow up with an appreciation for Appalachian music. Many live part of the year near the beach, often in Florida, and grew up in the mid-Atlantic or Northeastern region. Still, they turn up in large numbers at traditional music venues, especially at festivals. Many have become aficionados or have taken up the music themselves.

Retirees and second-homers are attracted to similar amenities, leading to communities that encompass both groups - often clustered around areas with access to quality health care, close to a university or an urban area, such as Asheville or Boone. Both demographics also cite the ability to attend cultural events as a deciding factor in their housing locations, even in more remote areas, such as Stecoah, in Graham County.

This is a big reason we decided to move here (to Stecoah). If there wasn't a regular meeting place like this, with such great entertainment we may have gone somewhere else. We have another home in Florida, but we hope to end up spending most of our time in this area.

#### **Stecoah Valley Arts Center**

Second-home owners—people who often spend winters further south or off the mountain, and their summers in the High Country—often make it a point to visit and to welcome visitors during annual events.

We have a home here and one in Florida. We make it a point to be here and to have family visiting this weekend so that we can all make it out to the festival. It's a great chance to hear some good music and experience some local culture.

#### **MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove**

Several retirees had spent time in the region when they were younger and returned. For some, the music was again a motivating factor in returning.

I remember visiting family in North Carolina when I was 8. I thought it was so beautiful and I wanted to move back ever since. When I was 65 I finally got my chance. Part of that coming back and remembering that older time was the music, and it has been one of my favorite things about living here. There really are more traditional musicians here than anywhere else in the country.

#### **Music in the Mountains Festival in Burnsville**

We saw this thing on the Internet and we thought we would come and check it out. We're both retired, but when we were young we taught in Watauga County for a while and got hooked on the music. He plays the banjo and I play the dulcimer. We moved to Bethel (community in western Watauga) last year. The best thing about it is that there's something like this going on every weekend, and it's all high quality. You don't realize how special it is until you leave, but that was a big reason why we came back.

#### **WPAQ Merry Go Round in Mount Airy**

Another retiree demographic present at festivals during the summer, with significantly different spending patterns, are traveling retirees, folks living out of an RV. Several plan their routes based on music events, with the scenic beauty of the region being a second factor.

We just retired. It's been a long time since we've come to any festivals but the kids have moved out and we wanted to do some traveling. We both play and we have lots of old friends that come out to these things. We're trying to hit as many as we can for the rest of the summer.

#### **Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention**

I am traveling across country in an RV. I'm retired and at some point I just started writing country songs. I don't know why, I'm more of an opera person, but I'm coming to these kinds of things now to get inspired.

#### **Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove**

### **Musicians and Dancers**

#### **Musicians**

A high percentage of attendees at all of these events are themselves musicians. Bluegrass and old-time music tend to be participatory. The chance to jam and or perform onstage during a competition is a major draw for some events, especially fiddler's conventions.

I like how this isn't a performance-oriented festival. It's mostly all competition and the real good music is out in the jam circles. It just goes to show you that you can't draw a line between "professional" musicians and the rest of us.

#### **Happy Valley Fiddlers Convention**

These events form the highlights of the year for a certain sub-culture of non-professional musicians. Some of them will go to a different fiddlers' convention or festival every weekend, and their social groups mostly consist of other musicians. Some have friends that they have only ever seen at Mount Airy or Union Grove. Some met their spouses there. It is a substantial part of their life, and each event has its own traditions and its own flavor. One person said of Mount Airy:

I had a friend who got married here in the '90s. They had a bunch of people march out to the field near the tank playing Cripple Creek, one group for the bride and one for the groom and they got married out there in that big flat field. Then it basically turned into a huge party.

#### **Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention**

Events like Mount Airy, a giant three-day music party with really no onstage entertainment other than amateur competition, can serve as a gateway for others to become old-time or bluegrass musicians. There tend to be more young adults at events that feature jamming in some capacity, although older musicians move in the same circles and live the same lifestyle. It is a place where people who know a little about the music can experience the place of its origin for the first time, and interact with people who have that tradition in their own communities and families, something that is highly valued in the old-time music world.

This is the event I always drag first-timers to. Some people are nervous about the cultural experience, you know being around real country people. This festival is a good example of a

place where the locals, the revivalists, and the hippies are all in one place. I bring people in here, show them the lay of the land, where the crazies on the hill are, the bluegrassers in their RVs, the hippies and rednecks in the lowlands and then I take them around. We watch the band contest and I introduce them to the Birchfields and the Bowmans (local musicians). They're usually hooked after about 5 minutes.

#### **Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention**

These kinds of events are where the musical tradition actually resides and lives. Their existence is seen as important for the continuation of that tradition.

My kids are in the Y.A.M. (S.C. version of J.A.M) program in South Carolina. It's good that they have a youth category. There aren't as many old-time musicians down there as there are here, so it also opens their eyes to what else is going on, and let's them see how good you can get.

#### **Halloweenfest in Brevard**

In some cases, a particular venue, like the Alleghany Jubilee, inspires a life as a musician.

I started playing old-time music because I used to come here and watch. I was in a rock band, but one night they called me up on stage. That's part of the atmosphere here. They are very welcoming.

#### **Alleghany Jubilee**

I started playing music because of Shindig. I came with my husband and after seeing all the music I went out and bought a banjo. It's a big part of our lives now, and I owe it to Shindig.

#### **Shindig on the Green in Asheville**

These approachable venues can also be a place where an aspiring musician can move to the next level and learn to be a professional. Shindig for instance, permits anyone who wants to play to perform on a stage in front of thousands of people.

We drive about an hour from Tennessee to be here, just about every week. That's my daughter (teenager) playing fiddle and singing in there. She met Bobby and he's been sort of a mentor for her. We have a family band, but she's the star of the show. It's pretty special to be able to play with some of these guys on a regular basis.

#### **Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee**

Musicians tended to spend more money on music. In addition to paying for strings, instruments (one banjo collector claimed to have spent \$40,000 in a year trading instruments) and lessons, they also seemed to spend more money on concert tickets and recorded music too, partially because this is a lifestyle and a culture for them.

#### **Dancers**

The dancers who frequented some of the events also saw the venues as necessary for the continuation of their tradition and the preservation of their community. Flat-footing and two-stepping is relatively common in the mountain region, particularly among older people, but it requires a space and, of course, music. Many flat-footers will drive long distances more than once a week to be around good dancing music (which is not all mountain music), in a place with hardwood floors and a community of other dancers. Dancing is also a way to stay healthy and active:

I am 91 years old and I try to come out whenever I can. My family were all dancers growing up, and it reminds me of my childhood. I think it's also great exercise, especially for those getting up in years.

### **Alleghany Jubilee**

Some dancers attended to learn and pass the tradition on. One mother brought her two daughters to the Stompin' Ground, considered by some to be the capital of clogging in the Southern Mountains.

My grandparents brought me here when I was a kid. We used to drive up from South Carolina. Dancing was important to them, and that all of us kids learn. It was a much bigger crowd back then, but I still come up and I bring my girls too.

### **Stompin' Ground**

#### **Regional Visitors**

Visitors from off the mountain, but from North Carolina formed a sizeable group at some of the larger venues and festivals. Regional visitors are a broad group, difficult to generalize about. Most are musicians attending fiddlers' conventions. The largest groups of spectators were families and elderly couples. Many of these visitors' trips coincided with other mountain activities, such as hiking or traveling on the Parkway.

There is also substantial attendance at all the venues, including the smaller ones, by travelers from neighboring communities less than an hour away. The economic and cultural landscape varies widely in short distances in western North Carolina, so despite geographical proximity, these visitors may have quite different backgrounds. Usually these travelers do not spend much money at the events.

We came from Burke County [two counties away]. We'll come a long way to see music, even this early in the morning. We usually make a day of it, go out to breakfast and sometimes we go and see a movie.

### **WKBC Hometown Opry**

Often regional travelers have family connections to mountains, either by relation or by decades of family trips to places like Grandfather Mountain, attractions like Mayberry-themed events in Mount Airy, or long-running events like Coon Dog Day. The presence of a music event can influence the date of a trip.

We used to live in Saluda and we are visiting some relatives. We would come up anyway, but we planned it this time to be here for Coon Dog Day. You know it's just one of those places. The train comes through once a week, and we've got some great places to eat, nice people and stuff like this going on. What's not to like?

### **Coon Dog Day**

#### **Out-of-state and International Tourists**

Most of the venues attracted visitors from out of state. Visitors were usually from neighboring states, but some came from a great distance. The draw is not just the music, but also a chance to experience the music in its context, as a complete cultural experience. All of the events, but especially the smaller more intimate venues, are attractive because they have

authenticity, meaning a real grass-roots community space, where visitors could meet the people whose family and friends had created the music. For visitors from outside the region, interacting with Appalachian culture is, in a sense, exotic. Frequent comments were “I didn’t know places like this still existed,” or “this is like taking a step backward in time.” While the concept of authenticity described in this manner appears to be stereotypical, it is a genuine and positive experience for people at these events—a reason for coming. The chance to interact with local people may also lead to lasting friendships, and a deep connection to the venue.

I met the Bolicks here in the 80s and we became friends. I come from Nashville Tennessee every year. Coming to their place is like going back in time. I actually wrote a song about the Bolicks, and they had me sing it this year before they opened the kiln.

#### **Bolick Family Pottery**

The gap between performer and audience at these events can be more easily bridged than in typical travel experiences. It is common for even well-known artists to wander around a festival ground, or personally sell their merchandise.

I’m RV-ing around the country and I came to this event last year. I love being able to talk to the performers after the show. Most of my family is up in Wisconsin and they don’t get to see stuff like this. I usually pick up some CDs to take up there to them.

#### **Happy Valley Fiddlers’ Convention**

International visitors attended the larger events. Most were traveling through the region as part of a vacation, also visiting natural destinations and urban settings. The Blue Ridge was the destination of a few who had planned their travel schedule to be able to see traditional music. Some were musicians themselves or aficionados.

I run a record label in France, blues, and old country mostly, but some bluegrass too. I’ve been coming over here for 30 years. I love this country; it feels more like my home than France. This is the first time I’ve been here to this festival, but it is good. Afterwards I’m traveling west by motorcycle, looking for musicians and visiting friends.

#### **Mount Airy Fiddlers’ Convention**

Other international visitors made it a point to experience the music and culture for which the region is famous while they were here. The shared roots of Appalachian music are shared with other traditional music from the Old World.

I’m a visiting art instructor from Australia. I have loved the opportunity to go out and see traditional music while I’ve been visiting. It’s interesting to see the similarities between this and music back home, and also the differences. It is much more alive here, and that is very special.

#### **Music in the Mountains**

We were traveling on holiday years ago and were passing through town on a Friday and ended up checking this out. When we planned our next trip to America we went to as many music events as we could, and we made sure to have Old Fort be a part of our trip. It is the real thing, you know?

#### **Old Fort Mountain Music visitor from England**

### **Members of the Arts Community**

Local arts councils and other similar organizations often help organize events, particularly small and mid-sized festivals. Their members, as well as local artists from other genres, attend the venues. This demographic tends to be over 55, well-educated, and extremely enthusiastic about the importance of arts in general both to the health of communities and to maintaining their own quality of life. Old-time and bluegrass music were important more as aspects of art indigenous to the region than for any qualities intrinsic to the music itself.

Without Art, life is a soul-less existence. Art brings out the best in people and in communities. I think we need to acknowledge that and support it in whatever way we can. With this kind of music, you're seeing what makes North Carolina unique.

#### **Music in the Mountains**

Some of these sites, such as the Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center and the Music in the Mountains Festival, are regular or annual events that provide social spaces for the community of artists and supporters of the arts to come together, in the same way that musicians and other locals consider the venues to be community gathering spaces.

I have season tickets, so every year I come to almost every show. It gives us something to look forward to, and a place to see all of my friends. They have really done a good job of getting this place off the ground.

#### **An Appalachian Evening Concert Series**

### **Regional Students and Alumni**

Several of the events were hosted at or sponsored by the region's colleges and universities. These events are part of the annual calendar at educational institutions. Most of the mountain schools are in small towns, and a large music festival draws everyone, whether they are normally fans of the music or not. Most universities in the mountains do have an Appalachian heritage club, and encountering mountain music (even by chance) is part of the experience of attending a school in the region. These events are also ideal dates for alumni and the families of students to visit the school, and can become family traditions themselves.

I went to Western Carolina and now my daughter goes here too. We come here every year to visit here and relive our campus days.

#### **Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University**

There is often a connection between campus traditions and those of a festival and the music presented there.

My grandfather drove my grandmother in an old Ford over mud roads to bring her to school years and years ago. After they got married they would come back to visit. We make the same trip a few times a year and we never miss the festival. The trip is a lot easier now though.

#### **Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College**

The MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove is a partnership between the Sustainable Development program at Appalachian State University (ASU) and the Cove Creek Preservation Society. Most of the volunteers and interns at the festival are students. The festival itself is a way of teaching students about community revitalization and community partnership. Many students from ASU

attend that event, and some attend with their parents. One student was having her birthday party there, with friends, parents and grandparents from off the mountain.

### **Craft Shoppers:**

The pairing of music with traditional craft and foodways is a common occurrence at traditional music festivals. The presence of crafts is a strong draw for many festival goers, especially at events such as John C. Campbell Folk School, Heritage Day at Bolick Pottery, and Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University. People often framed their positive reactions to this facet of the festivals in ideological terms. The ability to buy crafts was not only a way to get a souvenir from the region (though this was also true), but to buy something sustainable, something locally made, or something made in the United States. The chance to be able to meet artists and give money directly to them, therefore contributing to the local economy, was also recognized.

You can find some very unique things and buy them right from the person who made them, so you know exactly where your money is going. That's a rare thing in this day and age.

#### **John C. Campbell Folk Festival**

A small group of people, usually retirees, at these events come primarily for the crafts and not the music. Some have formed relationships with particular artists who regularly attend, and return to reconnect with them, whether or not they buy anything. Others may be particularly interested in certain types of craft—such as pottery or basketry—and know they can find quality, traditional examples at a certain venue. Visitors can make a connection between the music itself and the local nature of the crafts, applying the same concept of sustainability to both.

I try to buy local. My house is filled with North Carolina furniture and I try to eat food from North Carolina too. Music and culture to me are an extension of that.

#### **MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove**

Several people attending the events with a craft component were specifically trying to do their Christmas shopping, even at the events taking place in the summer.

### **Bikers and Recreational Drivers**

Motorcyclists and recreational drivers were a small portion of the audience at several events. Some of the events, such as Sims Barbecue, The Orchard at Altapass, the Happy Valley Fiddlers' Convention and Sugar Grove are located in scenic rural settings far down winding two-lane roads. While this may make them less accessible to some, the location is a bonus for this demographic.

We rode our bikes (motorcycles) down here for our first date last year. I think we might make this our anniversary ritual.

#### **Happy Valley Fiddlers' Convention**

There are regular gatherings of bikers from outside the region who come here specifically for the scenic and technically challenging roads. Some of them also want to encounter local people and local culture.

We were riding up to a meet from South Carolina. We saw this place on PBS and we wanted to come and catch some local color. We also love the BBQ.

### **Couple at Sims Country Bar-B-Que**

There are many biker organizations and car clubs, and it is a relatively tight-knit community, often overlooked in the region.

## **Survey Topics**

In addition to demonstrating a perspective from culturally diverse audience groups, participants responded to several survey topics independently of their group identity:

1. Outdoor Recreation
2. Local Food
3. Educational/Historical Activities
4. Exposure to the Blue Ridge Music Trails Project
5. Listeners
6. Affordability and "Family-Friendly" Events

## **Outdoor Recreation**

Question 18 on the survey form asked what other recreational activities respondents engaged in while visiting the mountain region. Some respondents might have interpreted this section to mean what other recreational activities they regularly participated in, whether or not they were doing it on the same trip. This especially applies to local residents who opted to fill in the section. The most common responses dealt with food, historical/educational activities, and outdoor recreation. Though it was not a specific survey option some people also mentioned hunting, fishing and water-sports. This reflects the perception of a strong sense of place present in Appalachian music, and its subsequent value in communication and promotion.

It is therefore no coincidence that many people who enjoy Appalachian music are also avid hikers, climbers and outdoors enthusiasts, and vice versa. At particularly scenic sites such as Happy Valley, Altapass, Heritage Day at Bolick Pottery and the John C. Campbell Folk School, the beauty of the sites themselves was frequently mentioned, especially from people coming from urban areas like Charlotte and Atlanta.

The connection between the land and the music was especially apparent at Altapass, which is located on the Blue Ridge Parkway, and was originally built to preserve the land and keep it from being subdivided.

This place would have been a subdivision if it weren't for them (The Carsons). Now it's one of the most beautiful places on the Parkway. We really owe a lot to them for doing this.

We were just on our way hiking and happened to see this. It's pretty wild; these people know how to have a good time.

I love how you see the heritage in tandem with the land here. You have the food (the apples), the land and the music all celebrated in one place. It's very special.

### **The Orchard at Altapass**



Leafers, or people who come to the mountains to see the fall foliage, were present at events in the autumn.

We are here to see the fall colors and we thought we would poke our heads in and hear some music. There are some great performers here, and I love the venue. It's great to see something fun happening in a courtroom for a change.

#### **Old-Time Music Contest at Brevard Halloweenfest**

#### **Local Food**

Traditional foodways are often linked to local music, both being iconic expressions of mountain or southern culture. Food is a HUGE draw at these events. For some, like Sims Country Bar-B-Que, the food is on equal footing with the music. At most small festivals, the tents and food carts run by local civic organizations, like churches, fire departments, and scout groups are seen as a strong asset, and again a chance to experience local culture, strike up a conversation with a local resident, and enjoy quality handmade food. Visitors come for the music and stay for the barbecue, kettlecorn, livermush or cider for example. Beyond the gates and the ticket booth this is also the case, even for locals. People often go out to eat before or after an event, even at smaller venues such as the WKBC Hometown Opry in Wilkesboro, and at the Alleghany Jubilee.

My wife and I come to town every week in the summer. We go out to eat, walk around town and come to this. It's a nice way to anchor a weekend out on the town.

#### **Shindig on the Green**

#### **Educational/Historical Activities**

Bluegrass and especially old-time music has a consciously historic quality. Part of the experience of playing or listening to it is the appreciation of what came before in the musical tradition. Indeed, in old-time music, an exchange of encyclopedic knowledge of different versions of fiddle tunes, or obscure recordings from the 1920s is part of the banter before and after a tune is played in a jam session

Historic significance influences people's decision to attend events associated with particular musicians, such as the Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival, or associated with historic events, such as Laura Foster's grave in the field where the Happy Valley Fiddlers' Convention takes place. In a similar way, regional music styles, such as the "Round Peak" sound present at the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention also provide a special incentive to go. At Happy Valley people talk about the significance of standing by the subject of the famous murder ballad's final resting place, and for some from outside the region, coming to the stomping grounds of Tommy Jarrell and the Camp Creek Boys borders on a religious experience. To a certain extent the same is true for Lunsford, and certainly for being able to hear the descendents of the Madison County Ballad singers. The uniqueness of a particular event is appreciated by a community that values its historic place within the larger Appalachian tradition.

#### **Exposure to the Blue Ridge Music Trails Project**

Question number 16 on the survey form asks how the respondents heard about the event, or what media they used to inform their decision to come. The most common answer was word of mouth, or prior experience with an event. Most of the sites in the study have been around for many years. Many people coming to the region are members of sub-cultures. For them, these events are social gatherings, so word of mouth is understandably important.

Very few people mentioned the Blue Ridge Music Trail project directly. (Some did ask if it was related to Virginia's Crooked Road, and then told us we should put up signs). There were, however, a few respondents who had seen the Blue Ridge Music Trails guidebook published in 2003. Though they may have already heard about Mount Airy or WCU's Heritage Day, they found the content of the book useful and interesting and in some cases had used the book to find smaller venues.

We use that book in class. I teach 4<sup>th</sup> graders and every year when we do our North Carolina unit I make sure they know how important North Carolina's musical traditions are. I show them the articles on Larry Pennington and Josh Goforth (a young musician) so they know that this is something that is old, but also something that young people are doing, something that is relevant to them too.

### **Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention**

Many people said they had looked at a website to get information about a site or event. In some cases, particularly with the smaller venues, the Blue Ridge Music Trails Project entry at [www.blueridgemusic.org](http://www.blueridgemusic.org) is the only substantial web presence for the venue. In other cases, in an Internet search for the venue's name, the Blue Ridge Music Trails entry for the site might be third or fourth on the list. People may not realize the source of the information they find on the internet.

### **Listeners**

The nature of the music itself is a visitor draw. People from all the demographic groups said their primary reason for being at the venue was "to hear good music." The region has a reputation for continuously producing great local musicians and having storied venues. The definition of desirable music varied from event to event. Some places like the Alleghany Jubilee, the Folk Music in the Mountains Festival, and the Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival valued the older, more localized traditions. Some places like the Old Rock School and Stecoah tended to offer more well-known regional acts, many of which had more a more contemporary style of traditional music. There were positive and negative reviews for both types at each venue, but generally the majority of the attendees knew of the venue's style and appreciated it.

### **Affordability and Family-Friendly Events**

No matter where people were from and why they were there, affordability and family appropriateness was appreciated across the board. Eight of the events were free and many of the others charged only a nominal admission, often less than the price of a movie or a commercial popular music concert. The affordability of traditional music performances was mentioned as an important factor in deciding to come. Many made the point that this was particularly welcome in a time of economic uncertainty, especially for retirees on fixed incomes, and for families.

People were often surprised at how cheap the events were as a family outing, and praised them for being so family-friendly. Specifically, youth-oriented components of events were praised. But there was also the sense that Appalachian music could be appreciated by all ages, and these events were generally perceived as being safe, wholesome environments.

We love the scenery and it's a great place to bring the kids and have fun as a family. I don't have to worry about them here. They're down playing in the creek catching crayfish.

### **Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day**

These sites are also places where children can learn valuable lessons.

It's a great place to bring the kids. It's safe, and they get to learn something. You see all these people making things, and what people had to do to survive, and you get a sense of how resourceful people have been and how resourceful they can be. It's a good thing to learn; now more than ever we need to be learning how to be self-sufficient.

**John C. Campbell Folk School**



John C. Campbell Fall Festival 2010

Photo courtesy of John Poltrock

**“You get a sense of how resourceful people have been and how resourceful they can be.”**

*John C. Campbell Folk School audience member*

## Economic Analysis

Analysis conducted by Hans Vogelsong, PhD  
East Carolina University  
Institute for Coastal Science and Policy and Recreation and Leisure Studies Department

### Analysis Summary

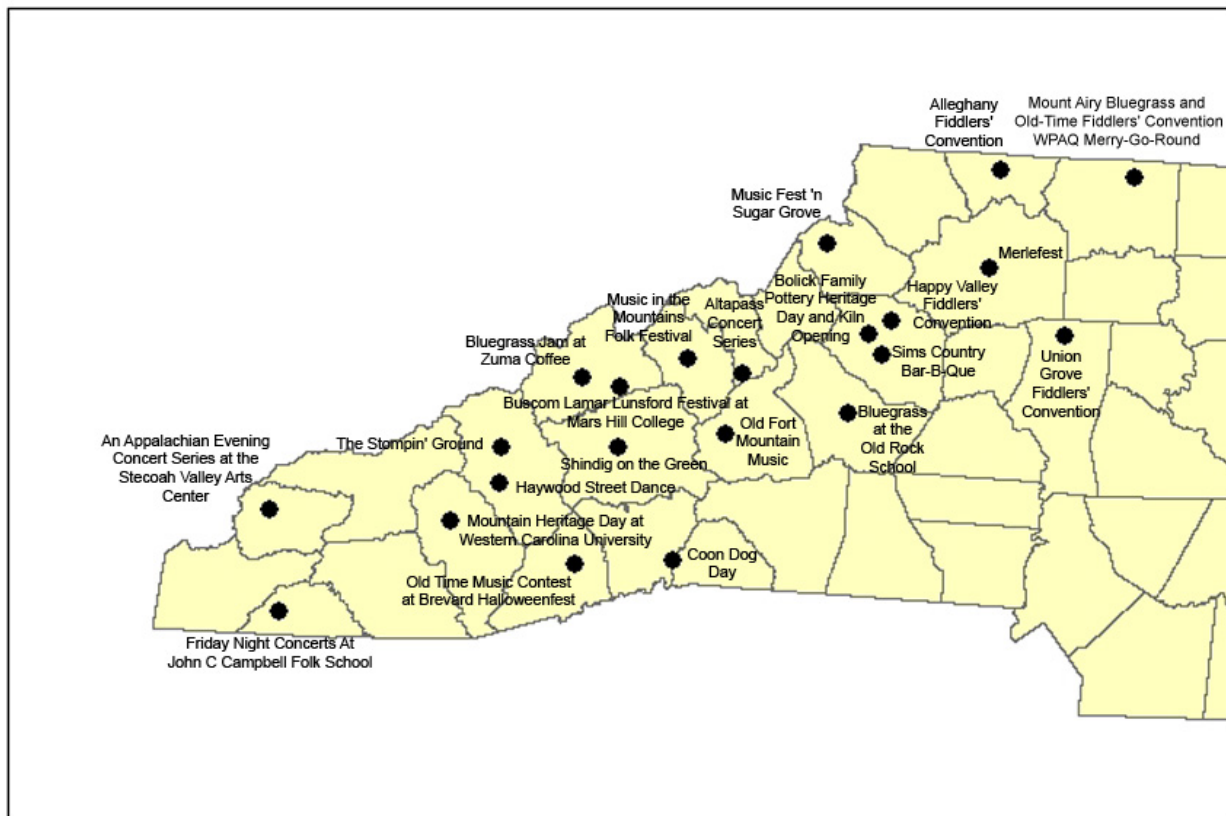
The economic analysis was conducted on responses to a survey distributed to audience members at Blue Ridge Music events held in 18 western North Carolina counties during spring, summer, and fall, 2011. The survey was designed to understand and measure the behavior of visitors to Blue Ridge Music venues. A total of 512 surveys were completed by visitors to 26 separate Blue Ridge Music events. This is a sampling from the more than 116,000 estimated total attendees at these events. The vast majority of attendees are at Merlefest, which hosts approximately 80,000 people each year. Selected findings include the following:

- Nearly 70% of survey respondents indicated that they were full time residents of N.C., and nearly 40% indicated that the primary purpose of their visit was to specifically attend the music event where they were surveyed. However, residents from 10 different states were represented in the sample. Visitors from outside the venue location spent an average of 2.9 nights in the region while attending the events where they were surveyed.
- Respondents tended to be mature with over 50% being older than 55 years old and nearly 75% being older than 45. They were also fairly highly educated with well over half the sample having at least a 4 year degree, and over 25% having an advanced degree. Nearly all sample members (95%) reported their ethnicity as Caucasian.
- Findings indicate a high level of satisfaction in terms of how respondents stated their intended behavior to return to the same event next year. Overall 99% of the sample stated that they intended to return to the same event the following year, and for each individual event at least 93% indicated that this was true. This certainly indicates a high level of satisfaction with the events themselves. Similarly high numbers (96.9%) of individuals indicated that they would attend a similar event at a different venue. Although not as high as the first question, these responses are also indicative of a high level of satisfaction with the events themselves. The differences between these two measures may indicate that the respondents not only liked the events, but also were pleased with the venues/communities where they were held.
- The majority of the sample indicated that they participated in the arts/music, and were also influenced by North Carolina's musical traditions.
- The \$18,616,090 of direct economic impacts, along with the \$972,611 of indirect impacts, and the \$1,200,937 of induced impacts combine for a total of \$20,789,638 of total economic impacts associated with these 26 events. This is certainly a substantial sum within the region.
- Since all of the spending that was reported on the surveys was associated with the events, not holding these events would have resulted in a loss of 65% of the impacts or \$13,513,265 to economies of the various communities that hosted the events
- 84.5% of the respondents indicated that the source of information that was important to their decision to attend was not an advertising or promotional effort. These most important sources of information included word of mouth (40.9%), previous experience with this event or a Blue Ridge Music Trail venue (25.6%).

## Introduction

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The primary goal of the analysis was to determine the economic impact that these events have on the communities that host them, and on the region overall. Each of these events is quite different from one another in many ways. Although they all featured music that is connected to N.C. traditions, the events varied greatly in size, location, type of venue, and duration. Figure 1 provides a map of the region and the location of each venue where surveys were collected.



**Figure 1. Event Locations within the Study Region**

## Sampling

Sampling for this project took place during spring, summer, and fall, 2011. During this time frame, folklorists collected data from event goers at 26 different folk music events held in western North Carolina. Table 1 provides a summary of the number of visitors surveyed at each event, as well as the estimated attendance for each event.

**Table 1. Number of Surveys Collected and estimated attendance at Each Event**

<b>Event</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Survey #’s</b>	<b>Estimated attendance</b>
Alleghany Fiddler’s Convention	Alleghany	13	3,000*
Alleghany Jubilee	Alleghany	12	125
Shindig On The Green	Buncombe	28	3,000*
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	Burke	10	300
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	Caldwell	10	300
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	Caldwell	10	150
Happy Valley	Caldwell	50	3,000*
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	Clay	10	250
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	Clay	24	5,000*
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	Graham	13	175
Haywood Street Dance	Haywood	12	200
Stompin’ Ground	Haywood	10	40
Union Grove Fiddlers’ Convention	Iredell	20	3,000*
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	Jackson	30	5,000*
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	Madison	13	85
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	Madison	17	500
Old Fort Mountain Music	McDowell	15	150
The Orchard at Altapass	Mitchell	19	300
Coon Dog Day	Polk	15	3,000*
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers’ Convention	Surry	38	5,000*
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	Surry	10	75
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	Transylvania	28	250
Music Fest ‘n Sugar Grove	Watauga	22	3,000*
Merlefest	Wilkes	51	80,000
WKBC Hometown Opry	Wilkes	10	40
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	Yancey	22	275
<b>Total</b>		<b>512</b>	<b>116,215</b>

\* indicates a vague estimate of audience size

As Table 1 indicates, a total of 512 surveys were completed by visitors to the events and are a sampling from more than 116,000 attendees. The vast majority of the estimated audience for the combined surveys was attendees at Merlefest. Individual site/event samples ranged from a low of 10 at several of venues to 51 at Merlefest. On average just under 20 surveys were completed by respondents at each study site. It should be noted that while the 512 total

surveys completed provide adequate statistical power to infer results to a broader audience, none of the individual sites had a large enough sample to reliably represent the audiences that they were derived from. Thus, while many statistics in this report are provided on a per venue basis, caution should be taken in avoiding placing too much credibility on results from very small samples.

### Visit Characteristics

In an effort to understand the extent that music events played in motivating people to visit the study region, one survey question asked respondents to indicate from among nine choices, which best represented the primary reason for them being in the study site. The results of this question are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Primary Reason for trip**

<b>Primary Trip Reason</b>	<b># of responses</b>	<b>%</b>
I am a full time resident/I live in NC	250	48.8
I am a part time resident	31	6.1
I am here specifically to attend this event	198	38.7
I am here on vacation	57	11.1
I am here to conduct business	2	.4
I am here for a combo of business & pleasure	13	2.5
I am here to conduct personal business	3	.6
I am here to visit friends/relatives who live here	32	6.3
Other	8	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>116.1</b>

Although respondents were asked to select only one response, several of them actually choose several primary trip purposes. Almost half of the respondents (48.8 percent) indicated that they were full time residents of N.C. However, that certainly does not exclude them from considering themselves visitors within the state. Although very few respondents indicated that their primary trip purpose was business related, several of them were on vacation, and of particular interest to this project, nearly 40 percent indicated that the primary purpose of the visit was to specifically attend the music event where they were surveyed. These responses were further broken down by event, and are provided in Table 3.

As indicated in Table 3, the influence that the events had on travel behavior varied widely across the events. While no respondents indicated that the *Friday Night Concert Series* or *Sims Country Bar-B-Que* events were their primary purposes for being in the area, 85 percent of respondents at the *Alleghany Fiddlers' Convention* indicated that it was the prime purpose for their being in the area. Other events that appear to be high motivators of travel were Bluegrass at the Old Rock School (50 percent), Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening (50 percent), Coon Dog Days (53 percent), Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention (55 percent), Alleghany Jubilee (58 percent), Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention (58 percent), and Merlefest (63 percent). Overall, the responses to this question are important when attributing the economic expenditures made by visitors to the events.

**Table 3. Primary Purpose of Trip to Specifically Attend Event by Venue**

<b>Event</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>% of respondents indicating event was primary purpose for visit</b>
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	Alleghany	85%
Alleghany Jubilee	Alleghany	58%
Shindig On The Green	Buncombe	29%
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	Burke	50%
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	Caldwell	50%
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	Caldwell	0%
Happy Valley	Caldwell	36%
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	Clay	0%
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	Clay	29%
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	Graham	15%
Haywood Street Dance	Haywood	17%
Stompin' Ground	Haywood	40%
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	Iredell	55%
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	Jackson	20%
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	Madison	39%
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	Madison	24%
Old Fort Mountain Music	McDowell	40%
The Orchard at Altapass	Mitchell	32%
Coon Dog Day	Polk	53%
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	Surry	58%
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	Surry	20%
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	Transylvania	46%
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	Watauga	41%
Merlefest	Wilkes	63%
WKBC Hometown Opry	Wilkes	10%
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	Yancey	18%
<b>Total</b>		<b>39%</b>

Other items related to visit characteristics are the number of people in each visitation party and the number of nights respondents spent on their visit. As depicted in Table 4, the average number of nights that respondents stayed during their visit to the event was about one and a half, and on average each respondent had 2.8 people including themselves within their travel party. The event that attracted the largest travel parties was Coon Dog Days with an average travel party size of 5.4 people. The events that people spent the most number of nights visiting were the Haywood Street Dance, and the Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest where respondents respectively indicated they spent 2.91 and 2.92 nights away from home to attend.



**Table 4. Visit Characteristics (travel party size and # of nights visiting)**

<b>Event</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Mean # people in party</b>	<b>Mean Nights visiting</b>
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	Alleghany	3.38	1
Alleghany Jubilee	Alleghany	2.5	0.14
Shindig On The Green	Buncombe	3.1	2.68
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	Burke	3.1	0.2
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	Caldwell	3	1.8
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	Caldwell	4.3	0.5
Happy Valley	Caldwell	2.44	0.89
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	Clay	1.6	0.75
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	Clay	3.13	0.35
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	Graham	2.38	1.27
Haywood Street Dance	Haywood	2.75	2.91
Stompin' Ground	Haywood	3	0
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	Iredell	2.4	2.8
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	Jackson	2.27	1.42
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	Madison	3.77	0.75
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	Madison	2.18	0.53
Old Fort Mountain Music	McDowell	2.13	0.92
The Orchard at Altapass	Mitchell	3.11	0.75
Coon Dog Day	Polk	5.4	2.57
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	Surry	2.74	1.92
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	Surry	1.9	0.88
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	Transylvania	2.43	2.92
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	Watauga	2.55	2.65
Merlefest	Wilkes	3.05	2
WKBC Hometown Opry	Wilkes	1.6	0.56
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	Yancey	3.23	0.26
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.51</b>

Respondents were also asked to choose between three options given the scenario that the event they attended was not happening. The results of this question are summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5. Impact of Event not happening**

Event	If this event were not happening, would you have traveled to another community to attend a similar cultural experience?		
	No, I would have skipped altogether	No, I would have replaced it with something nearby	Yes, I would have traveled elsewhere
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	1	1	11
Alleghany Jubilee	0	0	11
Shindig On The Green	5	6	17
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	4	0	6
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	4	0	5
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	4	1	5
Happy Valley	5	7	37
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	2	2	6
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	5	1	17
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	4	1	8
Haywood Street Dance	4	5	3
Stompin' Ground	1	2	6
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	4	3	13
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	9	4	17
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	2	3	8
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	2	3	12
Old Fort Mountain Music	1	0	14
The Orchard at Altapass	4	4	10
Coon Dog Day	4	4	7
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	14	6	18
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	2	3	5
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	6	4	18
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	1	3	18
Merlefest	7	6	35
WKBC Hometown Opry	2	1	6
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	2	4	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>328</b>

As the data in the above table indicates, attending these particular events was important to event attendees, and they were unable to identify local substitutes that may fill their needs. In fact 65 percent of the respondents indicated that they would have traveled elsewhere to gain a similar experience if the event they attended were not happening. This suggests that a corresponding 65 percent of the economic impacts derived from the events would also be lost to the communities where the events were held. Only attendees at the Mount Airy event indicated that they were more likely to either skip the event or replace it with another local event than travel outside the community to replace it.

### Visitor Profile

Several survey items were included to help create a socio-demographic profile of visitors who attended the music events in the project. These include age, level of education, household income, and ethnicity. The findings from these questions are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6. Visitor Demographics**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>		
<b>Younger than 18</b>	1	.2
<b>18 – 34</b>	74	15.3
<b>35 – 44</b>	53	11
<b>45 – 54</b>	91	18.8
<b>55 – 64</b>	149	30.8
<b>Older than 64</b>	116	24
<b>Education</b>		
<b>Less than high school</b>	3	.6
<b>High School</b>	92	18.7
<b>2 year college degree</b>	86	17.5
<b>4 year college degree</b>	171	34.8
<b>Masters degree</b>	101	20.6
<b>Doctoral degree</b>	38	7.7
<b>Household Income</b>		
<b>Less than \$40,000</b>	135	27.9
<b>\$40,000 - \$59,999</b>	95	19.6
<b>\$60,000 - \$79,999</b>	89	18.4
<b>\$80,000 - \$99,999</b>	51	10.5
<b>\$100,000 - \$119,999</b>	48	9.9
<b>\$120,000 or more</b>	66	13.6
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
<b>African American/Black</b>	3	.6
<b>Hispanic or Latino origin</b>	7	1.4
<b>Asian or Pacific Islander</b>	1	.2
<b>White</b>	462	94.5
<b>Native American</b>	7	1.4
<b>White and Native American</b>	9	1.8

As the results depicted in Table 6 show, respondents tended to be mature with over 50 percent being older than 55 years old and nearly 75 percent being older than 45. They were also fairly highly educated with well more than half the sample having at least a four year degree, and more than 25 percent having an advanced degree. Despite their age and

education level, they were surprisingly non-affluent. The household income category chosen by the most (27.9 percent) respondents was less than \$40,000, and only 23 percent of the respondents indicated that their household income was over \$100,000. In terms of ethnicity, the sample was very homogenous with 95 percent reporting that they were white (Caucasian). Of the variables included in this analysis, the age of the sample was thought to be the most interesting, and was then examined on a per event basis shown in Table 7. As the results indicate, only one person under 18 years old was included in the sample. This is not surprising considering that minors were not excluded within the survey protocols. Overall, it appears as if age trends are related to the size of the event, with younger visitors being more represented at larger audience events, and older visitors dominating the smaller venues. Once again, caution is urged in interpreting the results due to the relatively low numbers of surveys completed at some of these individual events.

Another variable of interest is where people come from. Survey respondents were asked to indicate their zip codes. These zip code data were then placed into a GIS program and a map (Figure 2) was generated to illustrate the origins of the sample.

As the map indicates the majority of respondents came from within the region of study (Western N.C.). However, 10 states were represented by attendees indicating that some of these events have enough appeal to get people to travel long distances to attend.

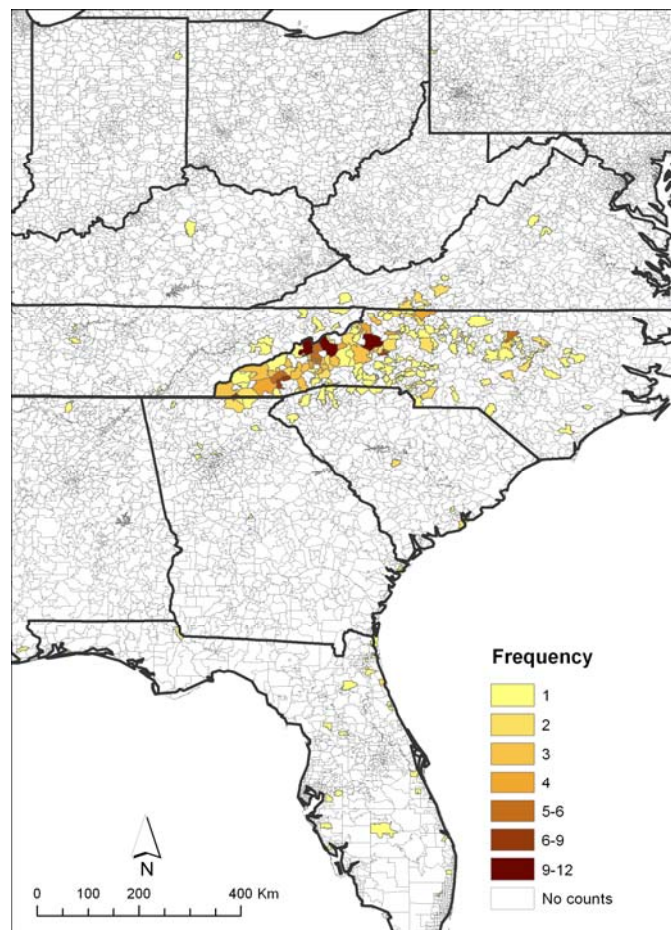


Figure 2. Distribution of Home Zip codes of sample members

Table 7. Age by Venue/Event

Event	Age Range in percentages					
	< 18	18-24	35-44	45-54	55-64	> 64
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	0	7.7	7.7	30.8	46.2	7.7
Alleghany Jubilee	0	9.1	0	18.2	9.1	63.6
Shindig On The Green	0	15.4	3.8	30.8	34.6	15.4
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	0	11.1	0	11.1	33.9	44.4
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	0	10	20	10	30	30
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	0	30	10	10	10	40
Happy Valley	0	22.4	6.1	24.5	26.5	20.4
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	0	30	0	10	20	40
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	0	0	4.8	28.6	38.1	28.6
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	0	0	25	0	41.7	33.3
Haywood Street Dance	0	0	25	16.7	33.3	25
Stompin' Ground	0	20	20	20	20	20
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	0	40	10	10	15	25
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	0	14.8	7.4	11.1	37	29.6
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	0	8.3	8.3	33.3	25	25
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	0	13.3	13.3	26.7	33.3	13.3
Old Fort Mountain Music	0	7.1	7.1	14.3	42.9	28.6
The Orchard at Altapass	0	11.1	22.2	5.6	16.7	44.4
Coon Dog Day	0	13.3	33.3	13.3	33.3	6.7
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	0	29.7	10.8	18.9	21.6	18.9
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	0	10	10	20	30	30
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	0	7.4	3.7	7.4	51.9	29.6
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	0	27.3	9.1	13.6	31.8	18.2
Merlefest	2.2	15.2	23.9	28.3	26.1	4.3
WKBC Hometown Opry	0	0	0	22.2	55.6	22.2
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	0	0	0	21.1	42.1	36.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>24</b>

In addition to the socio-demographic questions, the survey also contained questions related to respondent’s interest in the arts and music. The first two of these questions asked if attendees participated in the creation of art or music. If a respondent answered yes, they were then queried about the type of art or music they participated in. Table 8 provides a summary of the findings from this line of inquiry.

**Table 8. Participation in Arts and Music**

<b>Do you participate in Arts or Music?</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	300	61.3
<b>No</b>	189	38.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>What Arts/Music activities do you participate in?</b>		
<b>Play Music</b>	208	40.6
<b>Dance</b>	81	15.8
<b>Sing</b>	139	27.1
<b>Other performing or visual arts creation</b>	101	19.7

As the data in Table 8 indicates, well over half of the sample (61 percent) reported participating in the creation of arts and/or music. Approximately 40 percent of the sample indicated that they play music, and over a quarter of the sample reported that they were singers. In order to gauge the importance of North Carolina’s influence on their interest in these arts, respondents were also asked if the musical traditions of the state influenced their interest in the arts. Responses to this question are provided in Table 9.

**Table 9. Influence of N.C.’s musical tradition on music/arts interest**

<b>Did N.C.’s musical traditions influence your interest in music, dance, and singing?</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	416	85.8
<b>No</b>	69	14.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>100</b>

As the data in Table 9 indicate, the musical traditions of N.C. did indeed influence many of the attendees. In fact, more than 85 percent of those who responded to the question stated that they were influenced by the traditions of the state.

**Interest in music, dance and singing was influenced by North Carolina’s musical traditions for more than 85 percent of those who responded to the question.**

The last question in the survey instrument that dealt with respondents’ musical lives asked them to estimate the annual amount of money that they spend on musical interest each year. This was explained to include items such as attending concerts, recordings, instruments, repair, and instruction. Table 10 contains the results of this question broken down by the event where people were surveyed.

**Table 10. Annual Music related expenditures**

	<b>Average Annual Expenditures</b>
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	\$1,754.56
Alleghany Jubilee	\$828.57
Shindig On The Green	\$604.58
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	\$650.00
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	\$441.67
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	\$335.71
Happy Valley	\$846.21
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	\$167.22
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	\$359.78
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	\$713.46
Haywood Street Dance	\$271.43
Stompin' Ground	\$641.67
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	\$1,209.38
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	\$612.50
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	\$776.92
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	\$536.33
Old Fort Mountain Music	\$880.77
The Orchard at Altapass	\$511.54
Coon Dog Day	\$448.21
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	\$2,995.83
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	\$540.00
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	\$469.17
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	\$775.00
Merlefest	\$747.96
WKBC Hometown Opry	\$1,375.00
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	\$392.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$875.03</b>

On average, respondents reported that they spent just over \$875 on their musical interests each year. This is a relatively high number that equates to 1.25% of their gross household income (based on median reported household income of approximately \$70,000). The amount reported also varied considerably by venue, with attendees at the Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School reporting \$167 spent annually compared to the Mount Airy event attendees who reported spending almost \$3,000 annually on their musical interests.

### Promotional Efficacy

One goal of the project was to determine what sources of information about the various events were most influential in recruiting people to attend. With this in mind, respondents were presented with a list of potential sources of information about the events and were asked to choose the one that had the most influence on their attendance. Table 11 provides a summary of the results.

**Table 11. Sources of most influential information**

<b>Source of information</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Blue Ridge Music Trails website	3	.7
Blue Ridge Music Trails guidebook	1	.2
Blue Ridge Music Trails on the NC Arts Council website	2	.5
N.C.'S reputation with traditional music	35	8.6
Visitor info from tourism offices/visitor bureaus	11	2.7
Previous experience with this event or a Blue Ridge Music Trail venue	104	25.6
Article in newspaper or magazine	38	9.4
Television	5	1.2
Radio	6	1.5
Other Advertising	14	3.4
Word of mouth	166	40.9
Blue Ridge National Heritage area visitor brochure	0	0
Other rack cards/promotional materials	3	.7
Other websites*	18	4.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>100</b>

\*other websites included: MerleFest.org, Fiddlers' Grove website, Mt. Airy Mayberry RFD, Old Fort Mountain Music, Visit NC, Happy Valley Fiddlers' Website, Hometown Opry Facebook page, Mars Hill College, Arts Council, Valdese website, Augie Blaybock, Balsam Range

The findings summarized in Table 11 indicate that paid promotional efforts did little in attracting sample members to the events where they were surveyed. In fact, 84.5 percent of the respondents indicated that the source of information that was important to their decision to attend was not an advertising or promotional effort. The most important sources of information included word of mouth (40.9 percent), previous experience with this event or a Blue Ridge Music Trail venue (25.6 percent), article in newspaper or magazine (9.4 percent), and N.C.'s reputation with traditional music (8.6 percent). No single paid promotional effort was listed by more than 3.4 percent of the population.

In a further effort to examine the importance of different sources of information, the results from this question were broken down by select demographic variables and examined via chi-square analysis to determine if different segments of the population use different information sources. The results of these analyses are provided in Table 12.



**Table 12. Importance of information source by demographics**

Promotion Type	Age*		Education		Income	
	< 45	45 & up	< 4 yr degree	4 yr degree or greater	< \$80,000	\$80,000 & up
<b>NC Reputation</b>	7.5%	8.9%	11.0%	7.4%	9.7%	6.3%
<b>Previous Experience</b>	19.8%	27.9%	21.3%	27.6%	25.9%	25.2%
<b>Article in newspaper or magazine</b>	3.8%	11.4%	6.6%	11.3%	7.7%	12.6%
<b>Word of mouth</b>	57.5%	35.4%	47.1%	37%	41.7%	40.9%
<b>Other</b>	11.3%	16.4%	14.0%	16.3%	15.1%	15%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

\* Chi square is significant at .002

As shown in Table 12, there are very few differences in the sources of information that were used about the events between different demographic categories. The only significant relationship occurring between the age groups was that younger people relied more on word of mouth to learn about the events than older people did.

### Satisfaction

Although there were no survey questions that directly asked respondents how satisfied they were with the events they attended, two questions in the instruments could be used as a proxy for satisfaction. These were: Based on your experience would you return next year and attend a similar event at another venue. The results of these two questions are included in Table 13.

The results in Table 13 indicate a high level of satisfaction in terms of how respondents stated their intended behavior to return to the same event next year. Overall 99 percent of the sample stated that they intended to return to the same event the following year, and for each individual event at least 93 percent indicated that this was true. This certainly indicates a high level of satisfaction with the events themselves. Similarly high numbers (96.9 percent) of individuals indicated that they would attend a similar event at a different venue. Although not as high as the first question, these responses are also indicative of a high level of satisfaction with the events themselves. The differences between these two measures may indicate that the respondents not only liked the events, but also were pleased with the venues/communities where they were held.

**Overall 99 percent of the sample stated that they intended to return to the same event the following year and 96.9 percent indicated they would attend a similar event at a different venue.**

**Table 13. Stated Behavior**

	Based on your experience would you...	
	Return next year	Attend similar event at different venue
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	100.00%	100.00%
Alleghany Jubilee	100.00%	100.00%
Shindig On The Green	100.00%	100.00%
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	100.00%	100.00%
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	100.00%	100.00%
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	100.00%	80.00%
Happy Valley	100.00%	100.00%
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	100.00%	88.90%
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	95.80%	95.70%
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	100.00%	100.00%
Haywood Street Dance	100.00%	91.70%
Stompin' Ground	100.00%	88.90%
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	100.00%	100.00%
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	100.00%	100.00%
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	100.00%	100.00%
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	94.10%	100.00%
Old Fort Mountain Music	100.00%	100.00%
The Orchard at Altapass	100.00%	100.00%
Coon Dog Day	93.30%	92.90%
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	94.60%	97.40%
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	100.00%	100.00%
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	100.00%	100.00%
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	100.00%	100.00%
Merlefest	100.00%	90.00%
WKBC Hometown Opry	100.00%	90.00%
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	100.00%	95.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99.00%</b>	<b>96.90%</b>

## Economic Impacts

One of the primary purposes of this analysis was to measure and demonstrate the economic impacts that musical events can have on the communities where they are held. To accomplish this, respondents were asked to estimate the amount their traveling parties spent on nine different categories in connection with the events where they were surveyed. These categories were:

1. Admission/tickets to this event
2. Refreshments and/or snacks purchased while at this event
3. Food, drinks, or meals purchased before or after this event
4. Souvenirs, gifts, books, recordings and/or art and craft
5. Clothing or accessories specifically for this event
6. Local transportation (e.g., gas, parking, rental car, taxi, or bus fare)
7. Child care specifically for this event
8. Overnight accommodations because of this event
9. Costs of outdoor gear, fees/permits, guides in the area
10. Other

These estimates were then divided by the reported number of people in each travel party to determine an estimate of per person expenditures connected with each event. All nine categories of spending were then summed and extrapolated to the estimated total audience size provided in Table 1. These data are provided in Tables 14a to 14c, and are an estimate of total direct spending (direct economic impact) for each event included in the study.

As shown in the tables, the combined audience of all the events included in this study is estimated to have spent more than \$18,000,000 in the region connected to these events. This is certainly a significant sum that has created economic benefits to western N.C. The vast majority of this spending (> \$17,000,000) occurred at the Merlefest event due to the enormity of the crowd size. Certainly the events with the greatest amount of connected spending had the largest audiences. The Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention, The Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention, and the Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove, all had large audiences and contributed greatly to the local economies. Conversely, smaller sized audiences such as the Stompin' Ground and WPAQ Merry-Go-Round had a much more modest impact. It is also important to note that expenditure data traditionally varies quite a bit from individual to individual. The small number of visitors who completed surveys at each site further compounds this. Thus these expenditure estimates are best used for demonstration purposes rather than for predicting actual economic gain to communities that may be considering hosting an event.

A more realistic estimate of how visits to these events impact the region can be determined by eliminating the largest (Merlefest) and smallest (Stompin' Ground and WKBC Hometown Opry) from the analysis and then measure what an "average" visitor to a "typical" Blue Ridge Music event spends. This analysis derives a per person spending amount of \$41.91 or a direct economic impact of \$4,191 per hundred visitors to an event. Since this average is based on multiple events that are not skewed by outliers it is most likely a better planning tool that could be used to project impacts for future events within the region. For example, if a new event were to be held within the region that would attract an anticipated audience size of 2,000 people, then it would be estimated that these people would spend \$83,820 in the region. Of course, these types of projections require accurate estimates of anticipated crowd size. In addition, the amount that people spend visiting an event is highly dependent on variables such as the duration of the event, whether or not they are spending the night, the

distance that they travel to attend the event, and opportunities for spending money while at the event (i.e. presence of restaurants, souvenir shops, etc.).

**Table 14a. Travel Expenditures in dollars and cents**

Event	Average Per Person Expenditures				
	Admission /tickets	Event snacks	Food and Drinks not at event	Souvenirs, gifts, crafts	Clothing
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	\$7.40	\$8.33	\$9.03	\$1.06	\$1.98
Alleghany Jubilee	\$4.00	\$0.83	\$6.75	\$0.17	\$4.24
Shindig On The Green	\$0.00	\$2.71	\$12.66	\$2.08	\$0.06
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	\$15.61	\$0.50	\$9.68	\$3.47	\$0.00
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	\$0.00	\$2.30	\$38.38	\$12.25	\$0.00
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	\$5.09	\$6.56	\$6.67	\$2.08	\$1.11
Happy Valley	\$5.64	\$7.42	\$5.56	\$5.37	\$1.98
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	\$2.25	\$0.00	\$4.65	\$8.05	\$0.00
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	\$3.76	\$4.65	\$4.41	\$10.88	\$1.22
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	\$23.46	\$6.27	\$5.50	\$7.55	\$0.58
Haywood Street Dance	\$0.00	\$4.31	\$24.58	\$12.50	\$8.33
Stomp'n' Ground	\$4.10	\$1.15	\$5.20	\$1.67	\$5.00
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	\$39.91	\$6.54	\$15.33	\$1.83	\$0.50
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	\$0.69	\$6.29	\$3.16	\$25.66	\$0.86
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	\$0.00	\$4.23	\$9.12	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	\$0.58	\$5.41	\$3.09	\$7.25	\$0.56
Old Fort Mountain Music	\$0.00	\$2.74	\$5.59	\$1.94	\$1.13
The Orchard at Altapass	\$0.26	\$2.23	\$7.64	\$4.01	\$2.08
Coon Dog Day	\$0.05	\$8.10	\$6.15	\$3.63	\$1.24
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	\$11.98	\$7.39	\$11.75	\$12.16	\$1.42
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	\$1.00	\$1.30	\$7.28	\$2.55	\$0.00
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	\$2.74	\$5.46	\$25.07	\$12.33	\$0.60
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	\$19.00	\$10.73	\$9.62	\$4.98	\$0.91
Merlefest	\$108.53	\$26.04	\$20.67	\$29.50	\$7.34
WKBC Hometown Opry	\$14.00	\$0.00	\$2.65	\$2.50	\$0.00
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	\$14.22	\$4.00	\$4.73	\$2.23	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17.54</b>	<b>\$7.23</b>	<b>\$10.81</b>	<b>\$9.31</b>	<b>\$1.88</b>

**Table 14b. Travel Expenditures in dollars and cents**

Event	Average Per Person Expenditures				
	Local transportation	Child care	Overnight lodging	Other	Outdoor recreation
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	\$7.28	\$0.00	\$26.00	\$0.56	\$0.00
Alleghany Jubilee	\$5.19	\$0.00	\$29.20	\$0.00	\$0.00
Shindig On The Green	\$3.73	\$0.00	\$25.55	\$0.00	\$0.18
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	\$3.47	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	\$13.00	\$0.00	\$40.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	\$0.78	\$0.00	\$6.39	\$0.11	\$0.00
Happy Valley	\$7.60	\$0.00	\$5.16	\$0.00	\$0.21
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	\$50.50	\$0.00	\$40.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	\$0.86	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	\$5.13	\$0.00	\$9.23	\$0.26	\$0.00
Haywood Street Dance	\$0.00	\$8.75	\$23.61	\$0.56	\$0.00
Stompin' Ground	\$3.22	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	\$16.87	\$0.00	\$5.00	\$8.75	\$1.67
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	\$3.09	\$0.00	\$1.72	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	\$2.24	\$0.00	\$0.70	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	\$0.59	\$7.94	\$0.00	\$10.74	\$0.00
Old Fort Mountain Music	\$10.12	\$0.00	\$4.33	\$0.00	\$0.00
The Orchard at Altapass	\$6.95	\$0.00	\$0.92	\$1.68	\$0.00
Coon Dog Day	\$9.86	\$0.00	\$6.67	\$0.76	\$0.00
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	\$14.75	\$0.68	\$12.38	\$0.00	\$5.64
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	\$0.50	\$0.00	\$3.33	\$0.00	\$0.00
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	\$12.94	\$0.00	\$27.69	\$0.00	\$0.00
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	\$24.72	\$0.00	\$9.92	\$1.14	\$0.00
Merlefest	\$18.16	\$0.00	\$40.69	\$7.00	\$2.01
WKBC Hometown Opry	\$6.00	\$0.00	\$10.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	\$1.92	\$0.00	\$2.38	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9.53</b>	<b>\$0.53</b>	<b>\$13.15</b>	<b>\$1.59</b>	<b>\$0.77</b>

**Table 14c. Total Travel Expenditures in dollars and cents**

Event	Average Per Person Expenditures	
	Estimated Attendance	Total Direct Expenditures
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	3,000	\$146,725
Alleghany Jubilee	125	\$4,927
Shindig On The Green	3,000	\$110,337
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	300	\$8,144
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	300	\$26,684
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	150	\$4,665
Happy Valley	3,000	\$93,295
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	250	\$20,377
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	5,000	\$103,131
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	175	\$8,294
Haywood Street Dance	200	\$13,101
Stompin' Ground	40	\$654
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	3,000	\$238,981
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	5,000	\$162,192
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	85	\$1,385
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	500	\$18,080
Old Fort Mountain Music	150	\$3,041
The Orchard at Altapass	300	\$7,731
Coon Dog Day	3,000	\$86,313
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	5,000	\$310,999
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	75	\$957
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	250	\$21,707
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	3,000	\$182,679
Merlefest	80,000	\$17,036,757
WKBC Hometown Opry	40	\$1,139
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	275	\$3,795
<b>Total</b>	<b>116,215</b>	<b>\$18,616,090</b>

The \$18,616,090 total travel expenditures are the direct impacts resulting from spending by the estimated 116,215 visitors. There are also additional economic impacts as described below:

**Indirect impacts:** Result from the businesses that make purchases from other businesses as a result of the initial spending.

**Induced impacts:** Reflect the increases in household spending resulting from increases in compensation.

For example, the total money spent to eat in restaurants is the *direct* impact. The local expenditures made by the restaurant as a result of the increased customers such as additional groceries needed by the restaurant or additional laundry expenses represent the *indirect* impact. The additional compensation received by the employees of the restaurant also causes additional purchases in the local economy resulting in the *induced* impact.

For this project, the indirect and induced impacts were calculated through the Implan® software package. This software incorporates an input/output social matrix model that takes into account the types of industries within individual counties and estimates indirect, and induced impacts due to increases in demand for locally produced products and services. Table 15 provides a summary of the total economic impacts resulting from the musical/cultural events included in the study.

The \$18,616,090 of direct impacts, along with the \$972,611 of indirect impacts, and the \$1,200,937 of induced impacts combine for a total of \$20,789,638 of total economic impacts associated with these 26 events. This is certainly a substantial sum within the region.

**Not holding these events would have resulted in a loss of more than \$13.5 million to the economies of the various communities that hosted the events.**

As reported in the discussion of Table 5, 65% of respondents indicated that if these events were not held they would have traveled to another community to attend a different event. Since all of the spending that was reported on the surveys was associated with the events, not holding these events would have resulted in a loss of 65% of the impacts or \$13,513,265 to the economies of the various communities that hosted the events.

**Every 100 visitors to a Blue Ridge Music event can be expected to support a direct economic impact of \$4,191.**

**Table 15. Total Economic Impacts**

Event	Total Direct Impacts	Total Indirect Impacts	Total Induced Impacts
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	\$146,725	\$3,473	\$3,478
Alleghany Jubilee	\$4,927	\$72	\$83
Shindig On The Green	\$110,337	\$14,791	\$22,252
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	\$8,144	\$694	\$759
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	\$26,684	\$1,938	\$2,290
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	\$4,665	\$362	\$444
Happy Valley	\$93,295	\$7,233	\$8,883
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	\$20,377	\$949	\$1,325
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	\$103,131	\$5,054	\$4,159
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	\$8,294	\$164	\$199
Haywood Street Dance	\$13,101	\$1,422	\$1,937
Stompin' Ground	\$654	\$60	\$78
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	\$238,981	\$14,223	\$15,133
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	\$162,192	\$17,070	\$30,060
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	\$1,385	\$63	\$55
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	\$18,080	\$322	\$330
Old Fort Mountain Music	\$3,041	\$204	\$357
The Orchard at Altapass	\$7,731	\$440	\$747
Coon Dog Day	\$86,313	\$4,397	\$6,173
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	\$310,999	\$28,098	\$38,887
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	\$957	\$128	\$124
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	\$21,707	\$1,852	\$3,030
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	\$182,679	\$21,079	\$29,970
Merlefest	\$17,036,757	\$848,262	\$1,029,913
WKBC Hometown Opry	\$1,139	\$45	\$71
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	\$3,795	\$216	\$200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,616,090</b>	<b>\$972,611</b>	<b>\$1,200,937</b>

In an attempt to identify factors that may lead to increased spending at events, a series of Pearson's correlations were used to determine what relationships exist between the total average per person spending for each event and several other variables including the number of jobs in creative occupations for each county where the events were held, the percentage of the workforce in each county that was made up of creative workers, the per capita income in each county, the mean number of nights respondents reported staying overnight at each event, and the estimated crowd



size at each event. The results of these analyses are summarized in Tables 16a and 16b.

**Table 16a. Relationship Between Expenditures and County Variables**

Event	Total Average Per Person Expenditures	# of jobs in creative occupations (per county)	% of workforce in creative jobs (per county)	Per capita income (per county)
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	35.64	164	4.0	29,325
Alleghany Jubilee	21.18	164	4.0	29,325
Shindig On The Green	21.4	7004	6.3	34,774
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	32.73	1900	5.76	29,710
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	65.93	978	3.13	27,969
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	22.4	978	3.13	27,969
Happy Valley	34.77	978	3.13	27,969
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	65.45	141	3.43	28,119
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	25.79	141	3.43	28,119
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	48.74	94	2.67	26,089
Haywood Street Dance	59.03	956	3.82	31,552
Stompin' Ground	20.34	956	3.82	31,552
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	91.4	2400	3.41	32,171
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	39.75	1158	5.95	29,674
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	15.6	369	4.13	27,823
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	36.16	369	4.13	27,823
Old Fort Mountain Music	21.53	500	2.92	25,797
The Orchard at Altapass	24.86	274	4.55	26,418
Coon Dog Day	29.8	326	3.80	39,659
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	65.74	1002	3.40	30,508
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	12.63	1002	3.40	30,508
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard				34,207
Halloweenfest	60.07	630	5.25	
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	71.1	1633	7.30	32,1930
Merlefest	219.25	929	3.65	31,374
WKBC Hometown Opry	25.15	929	3.65	31,374
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	27.1	260	3.91	24,807
Pearson's correlation statistics		r = .007 p = .974	r = -.032 p = .877	r = -.164 p = .422

**Table 16b. Relationship Between Expenditures and Other Variables**

Event	Total Average Per Person Expenditures	Mean nights stayed	Estimated crowd size
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	35.64	1.00	3000
Alleghany Jubilee	21.18	.14	125
Shindig On The Green	21.4	2.68	3000
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	32.73	.20	300
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	65.93	1.80	300
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	22.4	.50	150
Happy Valley	34.77	.89	3000
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	65.45	.75	250
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	25.79	.35	5000
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	48.74	1.27	175
Haywood Street Dance	59.03	2.91	200
Stompin' Ground	20.34	.00	40
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	91.4	2.80	3000
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	39.75	1.42	5000
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	15.6	.75	85
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	36.16	.53	500
Old Fort Mountain Music	21.53	.92	150
The Orchard at Altapass	24.86	.75	300
Coon Dog Day	29.8	2.57	3000
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	65.74	1.92	5000
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	12.63	.88	75
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard		2.92	250
Halloweenfest	60.07		
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	71.1	2.65	3000
Merlefest	219.25	2.00	80000
WKBC Hometown Opry	25.15	.56	40
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	27.1	.26	275
Pearson's correlation statistics		r = .445 p = .023*	r = .874 p = <.001*

\* indicates a relationship which is statistically significant

As the data summarized in Table 16a indicates, there were no statistical relationships between county demographic and workforce variables and average spending at events. However, Table 16b indicates that both estimated audience size and the number of nights stayed by respondents were positively correlated to spending - the longer people stayed and the larger the crowd size, the more average spending increased. This is logical, because the longer people stay in an area the more opportunities and need they have to spend money at that area. Also larger audiences are more attractive to vendors, merchants, and civic organizations when making decisions as to what venues they should choose to peddle their wares.

An additional hypothesis related to spending patterns was that per person spending at these events would be positively correlated to the total amount of spending that respondents indicate they spend on their interest in music every year. Once again Pearson's correlation was used to test this hypothesis. The outcome of this analysis ( $r = .069$ ,  $p = .153$ ) indicates that although positive, the relationship between these variables is very weak and statistically insignificant. This is not surprising considering that much of the spending at these events is not necessarily related to music.

Two items on the survey can be used as a proxy for distance traveled:

- whether or not the event is the specific reason for their visit.
- whether or not at least one night in the region was spent specifically because of the event.

Tables 16c and 16d compare the expenditure data across these different responses. Visitors who were specifically in the region to attend the event spent more than those who indicated otherwise. Also, visitors who spent at least one night in the region because of the event spent far more than those who did not stay or were local and did not need to stay.

**Table 16c. Travel Expenditures by Event-Related Overnight Stay**

Event	Average Per Person Expenditures by overnight stay			
	Stayed Overnight		Did not stay overnight	
	N	Average spent	N	Average spent
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	5	47.65	4	29.59
Alleghany Jubilee	1	107.66	6	21.08
Shindig On The Green	4	62.63	24	14.53
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	1	32.75	8	32.74
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	5	103.80	5	28.07
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	2	68.15	7	9.33
Happy Valley	19	57.84	23	19.39
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	1	513	7	5.21
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	3	17.92	14	30.72
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	5	39.50	6	46.61
Haywood Street Dance	5	134	6	6.39
Stompin' Ground	0	NA	6	29.67
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	13	110.23	7	56.43
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	5	46.38	20	39.40
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	3	22.27	9	14.18
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	2	173	13	19.44
Old Fort Mountain Music	2	35.75	11	21.49
The Orchard at Altapass	4	37.68	12	11.17
Coon Dog Day	6	39.99	8	25.07
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	29	80.59	9	17.88
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	3	20.28	5	13.10
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard Halloweenfest	13	99.62	11	24.50
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	9	91.61	11	35.91
Merlefest	29	312.73	18	85.73
WKBC Hometown Opry	1	215	8	4.56
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	4	37.81	15	26.14
Total	174	116.73	273	27.35

**Table 16d. Travel Expenditures by Primary Reason for Being in Region**

Event	Average Per Person Expenditures by primary reason for visit			
	Here specifically for event		Other primary reason	
	N	Average spent	N	Average spent
Alleghany Fiddler's Convention	10	39.45	2	16.57
Alleghany Jubilee	7	25.38	5	15.30
Shindig On The Green	8	34.75	20	16.07
Bluegrass At The Old Rock School	4	43	5	24.53
Bolick Family Pottery Heritage Day and Kiln Opening	5	73.97	5	57.90
Sims Country Bar-B-Que	0	NA	9	22.40
Happy Valley	17	36.61	30	73.21
Friday Night Concerts at John C Campbell Folk School	0	NA	10	65.45
John C. Campbell Fall Festival	7	32.48	17	23.03
An Appalachian Evening Concert Series at the Stecoah Valley Arts Center	2	19.08	11	54.14
Haywood Street Dance	2	200	10	30.83
Stomp'n' Ground	3	17.74	6	21.64
Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention	11	97.89	9	83.46
Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University	6	38.42	23	40.09
Bluegrass Jam at Zuma Coffee	5	11.05	8	18.44
Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival at Mars Hill College	4	11.25	13	43.82
Old Fort Mountain Music	6	27.56	9	17.51
The Orchard at Altapass	6	37.64	13	18.95
Coon Dog Day	8	35.69	7	23.06
Mount Airy Bluegrass And Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention	22	75.02	5	57.90
WPAQ Merry-Go-Round	2	18	8	11.29
Old Time Music Contest At Brevard	12	55.26	15	63.92
Halloweenfest				
Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove	9	74.96	13	68.42
Merlefest	32	248.76	19	169.55
WKBC Hometown Opry	1	7.50	9	27.11
Music In The Mountains Folk Festival	3	32.42	18	26.21
Total	192	82.84	310	44.57

### Economic Impact within the Context of the Region

While the total economic impacts of the musical events that were included in the study represent what appears to be a considerable sum to the host communities, it may be valuable to examine them relative to other economic impacts that occur within the region. Therefore a web-based review of similar economic impact studies was completed to look for additional findings that may be useful in placing the current results into a regional context. The two studies that were chosen for comparative analysis were as follows:

*Economic Impact of the Craft Industry in Western North Carolina* conducted in 2008 by DESS Business Research LLC and *Economic Impact Study of Organized Youth Camps in Western North Carolina* conducted in 2011 by North Carolina State University.

Comparing the results of economic impact studies is difficult in that there are no standardized survey instruments or methodologies used to measure tourism driven economic impacts, nor standardized ways in which the results are reported. Nonetheless, Table 17 provides some data that may be useful in examining how the economic impacts compare.

**Table 17. Comparison of Economic Studies**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Average # of nights stayed</b>	<b># of visitors</b>	<b>Spending</b>	<b>Total Direct Economic Impact</b>
<b>Traditional Music Events Sample</b>	1.51	116,215	\$59.21 per person	\$18,616,090
<b>Craft Industry Consumers</b>	3.71	586,909	\$146.86 per person, per day	\$31,478,262
<b>Organized Youth Camps</b>	4	49,665 families	\$2,096 per family	\$104,097,840

As Table 17 indicates, the events included in this study did not have as much of an economic impact to the region as did the other industries that were previously studied. This is to be expected due to the fact that tourists associated within the comparative studies stayed much longer in the region, and were here primarily to purchase goods or services (arts and crafts, and organized camping for their children). As mentioned earlier, the longer that tourists stay in a region the greater the economic impact they will produce, and visitors to many of the musical events were not required to purchase tickets or other goods. Therefore spending from visitors to musical events is much more likely to be incidental to their trip rather than purposive. It is also important to keep in mind that the vast majority of the economic impacts from the Blue Ridge Music events were derived from the Merlefest event. By adding an additional event with similar scope and size, music events in the region could potentially top the economic impacts from the entire craft industry visitation. Conversely, if this single event is lost or no longer offered, the entire economic impact of the music event industry would pale in comparison to other tourism driven industries.

### Optional Questions

Two optional questions were included in the survey instrument. The first of these asked respondents if this was their first trip to the N.C. Mountains. Table 18 provides a summary of the results that indicate that very few (3.9%) members of the sample were first time visitors to the region. This was hardly surprising considering the high number of respondents who

indicated that the most important source of information they had about the event they attended was from a previous experience in the region.

**Table 18. Previous experience with mountain region**

<b>Is this first trip to NC Mountains?</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	18	3.9
<b>No</b>	440	96.1
<b>Total</b>	458	100

The other optional question asked respondents to indicate what other activities they participated in while visiting the mountain region. Results are provided in Table 19.

It appears as if slightly over half of the respondents participated in other recreational/leisure activities while on their trips to the region. Not surprisingly, the most frequent activity participated in was attending special events/festivals, which is where all respondents were interviewed. The remaining responses indicate that the sample enjoyed a combination of art/cultural activities (galleries, museums, historic sites) and natural resource based activities (hiking, visiting national/state parks and forests, rural sightseeing). The fact that relatively few respondents indicated that they participated in attending theme parks and or urban sightseeing indicate that they were attracted to the region by its natural and historically rural cultural attributes more so than by modern man made comforts and attractions.

### Visitors were attracted to the region by its natural and historically rural cultural attributes.

**Table 19. Activity Participation While on Visit**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Special Events/festivals</b>	272	53.1
<b>Local cuisine/dining</b>	268	52.3
<b>Art/Craft Galleries</b>	234	45.7
<b>Hiking/backpacking</b>	219	42.8
<b>State/National Parks or forests</b>	215	42
<b>Rural Sightseeing</b>	206	40.2
<b>Visiting friends</b>	188	36.7
<b>Historic Sites/Churches</b>	179	35
<b>Museums</b>	176	34.4
<b>Camping</b>	161	31.4
<b>Shopping</b>	158	30.9
<b>Wildlife viewing</b>	115	30.3
<b>Farm Tours/Agritourism</b>	139	27.1
<b>Gardens</b>	126	24.6
<b>Theater</b>	120	23.4
<b>Visiting Relatives</b>	111	21.7
<b>Nature Tour/Ecotouring</b>	106	20.7
<b>Wine Tasting/Winery Tour</b>	100	19.5
<b>Urban Sightseeing</b>	58	11.3
<b>Theme Park</b>	25	4.9

## Summary Recommendations

The sites included in this study are diverse, ranging from intimate, local spaces to some of the largest music festivals in the country. The audience also ranges from teenagers trying to pick up the fiddle to flat-footers in their 90s; from first-time visitors to our country to people who have lived in the same community for generations. People go to hear music in the mountains to be entertained. But they are also seeking to express themselves, to create community, or to have an authentic cross-cultural experience. This music touches people, motivating them to cross great distances, even to move to the region.

Bluegrass and old-time music communicate a sense of place, and people want to travel to the place where the music came from. People in this study have said that the music of western North Carolina is an important part of the state's cultural and historical identity, as well as their own. An additional benefit that these events have is the creation of satisfying experiences to both visitors and local community members. Respondents indicated that they planned to return to the same events next year and were happy with the event venues/locations, indicating that these events were satisfying to those who attended them. Blue Ridge Music experiences provide an important service to local residents attending the events, and also serve to initiate or provide a positive orientation to first time visitors to the host communities.

The events that were included in this study play an important role within the western North Carolina/Blue Ridge Mountain region. Not only do they have a significant economic impact on the communities that they host, but they provide additional individual and community benefits as well. The more than \$20 million total economic impact to the region is significant. However, the vast majority of this income is dependent on a single event (Merlefest) and attributing this scope of impacts to all the music venues may be somewhat misleading. Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

- Consider repeating the survey in future years with the following changes
  - Increase the number of surveys completed at each venue to a level that insures a higher level of confidence that the sample adequately reflects the population of attendees. At a minimum 50 surveys should be completed at the smaller events and it is recommended that 200 or more should be completed at the larger events.
  - Modify the survey instrument to provide more detail about where and what people are spending their money on while traveling to and from each event.
  - Modify the survey instrument to measure what factors motivate individuals to attend each event.
  - Modify the survey instrument to measure what other Blue Ridge Music events respondents have also attended. It would be useful to determine if single events are drawing visitors into the region, or if the agglomerative effect of multiple events within the region is an additional attraction.
  - Expand the methodology to include costs associated with hosting these events. The current methodology only measures economic impacts from the revenue standpoint. However, there are many costs to host communities that should also be considered.
- Attempt to broaden the audience at events through additional promotional efforts. The fact that very few current paid promotional efforts were being used by respondents as primary sources of information indicates that either current



promotional efforts are not reaching an interested audience or they are not effective in attracting new audience members.

- Attempt to broaden the audience through the addition of some music events that are meant to appeal to a younger audience. The average age of members in the sample was rather high. This, coupled with the fact that a large portion of the respondents were previous attendees, creates the possibility of natural attrition occurring with these events. A few events that are targeted to a younger audience may help the Blue Ridge Music experiences to remain sustainable over the long term.
- Attempt to couple the events with traditional arts and craft festivals/shows. Not only does this have the potential to increase the audience size at events, but it also provides additional opportunities for audience members to spend money and increase the economic impacts they have on the host communities.
- Communicate some of the findings of this survey to community decision makers. The findings that indicate visitors are highly satisfied with these events, along with the economic impacts that the events provide, both demonstrate that these events have value to their host communities and provide justification for continuance and expansion.
- Provide opportunities for sponsors and tourism related businesses to promote their goods and services at the events. Any activities that can lengthen the time that visitors spend within the region and provide additional opportunities for spending will further increase the positive economic impacts associated with the events.
- If increasing the positive economic impacts is a primary objective of supporting Blue Ridge music experiences, further development of venues should focus on large scale events that are multiple days in length and are located in communities that have the infrastructure available to host large audiences (>10,000). While the benefits of single day, small scale events are evident, the results of this study indicate that the larger an event is, the greater the economic impacts that it creates.
- Additional investigation into the values perceived at music events may be a useful line of future inquiry.

## Statistical References

### **N = Number of respondents:**

Total n's refer to the total number of respondents that provided an answer for a question, response n's refer to the number of respondents who provided a particular response to a question.

### **% = Percentage**

Percentages listed in tables and narrative form throughout this document generally refer to the percentage of the sample who provided a particular response to a question.

### **Mean**

The mean is the average response. It is calculated by adding all of the responses to a particular question and dividing by the n.

### **r = Pearson's correlation**

This statistic measures the degree that one numeric variable increases or decreases in relation to an increase or decrease in another variable that it is believed to be related to. The closer it is to zero the weaker the relationship is between the two variables. 1 is a perfect correlation where an increase in 1 in one variable equates to an increase of 1 in another variable.

### **X<sup>2</sup> = Chi Square**

Chi Square is a statistic that is meant to measure the relationship between two non-numeric variables. Essentially, it compares the cross tabulated findings between two variables with what the findings would be if there were absolutely no relationship between them.

### **P = Significance**

The significance statistic can be thought of in terms of how powerful the relationship between two variables (i.e. comparison between two or more groups) is. The three digit output is the probability that the relationship between the variables occurred purely by chance. For example when comparing the ages between males and females a significance level of .600 means that there is a 60% probability that any differences between ages of males and females occurs merely by chance. Generally speaking, a significance/probability level of 95% (less than .050) is required for a statistical relationship to be significant or accepted as not occurring by chance. The p score of <.001 indicates that there is less than one chance in a thousand that the relationship measured occurred merely by chance. For most analyses a p of .05 or smaller is considered to be statistically significant and can be used to confirm hypotheses.

## **Economic Analysis**

The economic analysis of the survey data was conducted by Hans Vogelsong, PhD, East Carolina University Institute for Coastal Science and Policy and Recreation and Leisure Studies Department

All variables were individually analyzed to provide statistics for each question:

- Questions 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 are all nominal variables and thus frequencies (counts and percentages) were provided for each question.
- Questions 3, 4, 5, 13 are all interval variables and descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were provided for each question.
- Question 5 responses were summed together to provide an overall spending per person per event, as well as for all of the venues combined. In addition Implan economic impact analysis was used to provide the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts from each event and from all venues combined.

Relationship testing was also conducted between variables that were thought to be related:

- Pearson's correlation was used to describe the relationship between total spending per person (Question 5 summed) and annual per person spending on musical interest (Question 14).
- Chi Square analysis was conducted to determine what populations of individuals (select visitor profile questions) are most likely to be influenced by different information sources (Question 16)
- Cross tabular analysis was used to identify other activities (Question 18) that are associated with Blue Ridge Music event attendance by venue.
- A comparison between Blue Ridge Music Event per person spending and spending in other Western N.C. studies was examined.
- Pearson's correlation was used to describe the relationship between the per person spending at events and other variables.
- The relationship between per person spending and the results of Question 10 will be explored to show the loss of economic impact to each venue community if the event were not held.