



STEPHEN A. IDE photos/The Patriot Ledger



If you go to a music festival

June 27-29: The 23rd Annual Old Songs Festival of Traditional Music & Dance, Altamont Fairgrounds, Altamont, N.Y., 518-765-2815, E-mail: oldsongs@oldsongs.org, <http://oldsongs.org/festival/index.html>. More than 30 acts, including Fairport Convention, John McCutcheon. On-site camping. All festival tickets \$85, \$65 before June 7, youths \$50, \$40 before June 7. Per-day prices available.

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July 5-6: New Bedford Summerfest Folk Festival, New Bedford Historical Whaling National Park & State Pier. E-mail: helene@barrel-of-music.com, www.barrel-of-music.com. More than 30 acts, including John Gorka, Jonathan Edwards and Carol Noonan. An all-festival button is \$7, or \$25 (includes button) for a July 5 evening concert with Christine Lavin.

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July 17-20: Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival, Rothvoss Farm, Ancramdale, N.Y., 888-946-8495, www.greyfoxbluegrass.com. More than 20 acts, including Rhonda Vincent & The Rage, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Hot Rize reunion and the Sam Bush Band. On-site camping. Tickets: \$120, full-festival, \$110 by June 30. 12 and under free. Day tickets available.

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July 18-19: The Green River Festival, Greenfield Community College, Greenfield, www.greenriverfestival.com. A dozen acts, including Brave Combo and Slaid Cleaves. Tickets \$30, under 12 free. Balloon rides \$175-\$200.

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July 24-27: The 15th Anniversary Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, Long Hill Farm, Hillsdale,

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Pack your knapsack, pitch your tent, bring the kids and guitar picks

IT'S TIME TO strum ALONG

By **STEPHEN A. IDE**
The Patriot Ledger

So, you've fallen in love with bluegrass or folk and want to go to a music festival? From now through Labor Day and beyond, you can find a folk or bluegrass music festival to fill your weekend, or even most of your week, all within three hours of the South Shore.

Everyone has a favorite. Here are some of mine:

On a hillside in tiny Ancramdale, N.Y., 4,000 campers gather for the Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival every year during the third weekend of July.

For some, it's more than just the music. It's a gathering of old friends. People have been married there. Babies have been born there.

They come with tents and RVs, old and new trailers, rickety pickups or fancy Volvos. On the camping hill — really a mowed hayfield on the Rothvoss Farm — everyone gets used to the distinctive "lean." While the music is held

for only four days — a blend of traditional and progressive acts — some campers leave their gear at the bottom a month early and commute to work. Others gather days before the festival starts, beginning a weeklong party in a grass parking lot, calling the pre-festival event "The Rodeo."

The workshops let you get close to the artists, and fill up fast. Last year, Hazel Dickens, the aging, hard-scrabble songwriter from West Virginia, held court to hundreds.

Bring your rain gear along to any of these outdoor festivals. You never know. At Grey Fox, for instance, there has been more than one year in the past 10 when campers weren't allowed onto the hill because of the mud.

There are many annual festivals that have become institutions, like the renowned free Lowell Folk Festival, held the fourth weekend

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Aimee Mann, left, and Rhonda Vincent, top, both play regional music festivals this summer.

Music festival season is back

■ FESTIVALS

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of July, or the legendary – and not free – Newport Folk Festival, held Aug. 15-17 this year. And some newer, growing festivals are worthy of note.

Close to the South Shore is the Greater New Bedford Summerfest, scheduled this year for July 5-6. The first time I attended, I was amazed that so much music (this year has more than 30 acts, from singer-songwriters like Michael Troy and Jonathan Edwards to English rockers Little Johnny England) could be provided for a \$7 button.

Along the New Bedford waterfront and spidering a short way into the historic city central, music tents are scattered and packed. Bring good walking shoes, unless you plan to forgo the vendors' booths and sit in one tent all afternoon. If you want to see someone close up, get to that tent early. Fans of almost any kind of music can find something to suit their taste here. Though it's in the heart of the city, the festival is well-patrolled and secure.

Another worthy destination is the Green River Festival, held July 18-19 on the grounds of Greenfield Community College.

Began as a balloon festival 17 years ago, it has become a key music event in western Massachusetts, with folk, Texas swing, cajun, zydeco music and more. And yes, they still launch balloons.

Up the road from Grey Fox, a week later in Hillsdale, N.Y., is the four-day Falcon Ridge Folk Festival. Like Grey Fox, attendees are usually return customers, camping atop an enormous hill and taking buses to the music. The lineups include traditional folkies and cutting edge artists like Dar Williams and Lucy Kaplansky.

Workshop stages often feature "in-the-round" performances, where many

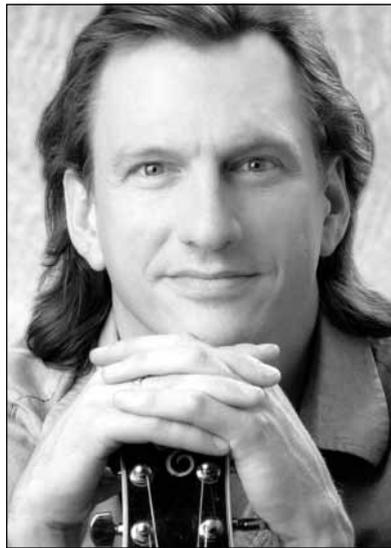
artists sit side by side and share songs and sometimes join in with others.

While the music is top-notch and professional, amateur musicians can be found jamming almost all day and night at campsites (I've seen people jamming on the roofs of converted buses), and there's always the all-night campfire song swap, where participants often pass around a guitar.

Most of the festivals have a full schedule of events for children. Many also have a dance floor – often filled to capacity – where you can bring a partner or find a willing person willing to shake it in the summer heat.

Cajun dancing is popular at Grey Fox and Falcon Ridge, though it's likely you also can find lessons for kids and adults in traditional clogging or step dancing.

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Ellis Paul, left, plays the Apple & Eve Newport Folk Festival and Dar Williams is expected at the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival in Hillsdale, N.Y.



Many venues close to South Shore

■ FAVORITES

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N.Y., 860-364-0366, E-mail: info@falconridgefolk.com, falconridgefolk.com. More than 50 acts, including Arlo Guthrie, Richard Shzindell, Dar Williams and Patty Larkin. On-site camping, \$100, full festival; \$85 until July 1. Day tickets available. Under 12 free.

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July 25-27: Lowell Folk Festival, 67 Kirk Street, Lowell, 978-970-5000, 978-970-5002 (TDD), www.lowellfolkfestival.org, free. More than 20 acts including Old Blind Dogs, Donna the Buffalo and the Boston Chinese Youth Dulcimer Ensemble.

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Aug. 15-17: Apple & Eve Newport Folk Festival, Fort Adams State Park, Newport, R.I., 401-847-3700, www.festivalproductions.net/folk. More than 40 acts, including Guy Clark, Ani DiFranco, Ellis Paul, Aimee Mann, John Hiatt and John Prine. Tickets \$85 for Aug. 16-17, children \$10; Aug. 15 Hotel Viking show \$30. Day tickets available.

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Aug. 29-31: The 6th Annual Rhythm & Roots Festival, Nini-gret Park, Charlestown, R.I., 888-855-6940, www.rhythmandroots.com. On-site camping. More than 30 acts, including Paul

Geremia, Little Feat, Sonny Landreth and the Goners and Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys. Tickets \$85 full-festival through June 30. Non-camping tickets available and day tickets available; 12 and under free.

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Sept. 19-21: Boston Folk Festival, University of Massachusetts, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, 617-287-6911, www.wumb.org/folkfest. More than 25 acts, including Emmylou Harris, Greg Brown, Paul Brady and Tom Rush. Tickets: \$50, 2-day; ages 6-14, \$10, unlimited days; under 6 free. Day tickets available.

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