



STEPHEN IDE photos/The Patriot Ledger

■ Richard Shindell, a warm singer, guitarist and a songwriter with an acute eye for detail, will perform at the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival in New York in July.

Warm melodies

Bluegrass, folk festivals on tap in New England



Ricky Skaggs performs at the Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival in July.



■ James Nash of The Waybacks returns to the Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival in New York July 15-18.

By **STEPHEN IDE**
The Patriot Ledger

Each summer brings an amazing collection of quality folk and bluegrass musical talent to festivals in the Northeast.

This summer is no exception, with performances by popular contemporary singer-songwriters like Ellis Paul, Greg Brown and Eliza Gilkyson and legends like banjo great Earl Scruggs, Crosby, Stills & Nash and Richie Havens.

Rhode Island Irish group Pendragon and Canadian songwriter James Keelaghan will perform at the New Bedford Summerfest, fast becoming *the* festival to attend in New England.

The July 3-4 Summerfest gathers talent of all walks, from Celtic acts to singer-songwriters, on small stages spread through the historic downtown of New Bedford. At \$14 for the weekend and more than 30 performers, this show is a steal.

Banjo stylist Earl Scruggs will be a featured act at the July 15-18 Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival, clearly the premiere bluegrass show in the Northeast. Many folks today may know Scruggs' "Beverly

Hillbillies" theme song, performed with Lester Flatt. The three-finger picking style used by most bluegrass musicians today was developed by Scruggs, a first-generation bluegrassers who once played with Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys. Scruggs is a must-see.

Grey Fox, hewn from a hay field in tiny Ancramdale, N.Y. (near where Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York meet), plays host to traditional and progressive bluegrass bands. This

year marks the return of jam bands Railroad Earth and The Waybacks, along with a surprise entry: '70s throwbacks acoustic Hot Tuna, featuring Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady.

While it's in the neighborhood, Hot Tuna also has a show planned for the July 16-17 Green River Festival in Greenfield, Mass. Country-folk phenoms Gillian Welch and David Rawlings will perform on July 17 at the festival. If you've never seen or



■ Canadian fiddler and dancer Natalie MacMaster returns to the Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival.

Folk, Bluegrass festivals scheduled for summer

heard the duo before, they are a treat. Welch-Rawlings have the ability to make new songs sound old, with Rawlings enigmatic guitar picking weaving between Welch's tender vocals.

Highlighting the roster at the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival is '60s folk legend Richie Havens, whose 27th album (excluding numerous collaborative works), "Grace of the Sun," is due out just before the show. Havens, who rose to prominence after his memorable spirited performance at Woodstock in 1969, still plays music with verve and conviction.

Though significantly smaller in scale than its Texas counterpart, Falcon Ridge has become the Kerrville of the Northeast for folk

musicians and fans. Nestled on a farm in Hillsdale, N.Y., it is known for its all-night campfire sing-alongs and multiple stages, where musicians swap songs and share music each day.

Closer to home, The Lowell Folk Festival, which

bills itself as the largest free folk festival in the nation, offers a selection of world music and more you are unlikely to hear elsewhere. This year's show, July 27-29, features a Puerto Rican salsa band; Anglo-American gospel music; Irish, Quebecois and polka bands; an Armenian ensemble and bluegrass great J.D. Crowe.

Young families enjoy the Lowell fest and not just because it's free. Children are drawn to the rhythms and unusual sounds of world music, and craft demonstrations help keep young minds occupied. And you never know who might emerge as the next big act; before achieving international fame, bluegrass group Alison Krauss and Union Station played Lowell.

Crosby, Stills & Nash take top billing on Aug. 7 at the Newport Folk Festival (You can catch them earlier at the Fleet Pavilion on July 22 or the Cape Cod Melody Tent on Aug. 3). The show is part of this legendary group's 2K4 USA Tour. Along with Neil Young in the '70s, the group bridged the gap between folk and rock and helped inspire a generation of songwriters and musicians.

There are plenty of performers of note at this prestigious festival, including Lucinda Williams, Steve Earle and Wilco. But don't miss legend Doc Watson, the North Carolina blind Grammy winner steeped in old-timey, bluegrass and country styles – and one of the fastest acoustic guitar flatpickers around.

Texas balladeer and rocker Robert Earle Keen is a natural for Labor Day weekend's Rhythm & Roots Festival, which offers a variety of music, from rock to reggae to zydeco. Keen's observant songs are about everyday



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Contemporary singer-songwriter Lucy Kaplansky, shown at the Falcon Ridge Folk Fest, will perform in September at the Boston Folk Festival.



Tom Paxton, an endearing political and social commentator and musician, will appear at the Boston Folk Festival in September.

people faced with life's daily challenges, about families and their peculiarities, hard luck, tough times and feel-good songs about enjoying the ride.

Endearing political and social commentator Tom Paxton makes his first appearance at the Boston Folk Festival in September. The king of the self-proclaimed "short-shelf-life song" always gets folks laughing and singing along. His songs, like "The Marvelous

Toy" and "Can't Help But Wonder Where I'm Bound" have touched the hearts of children and adults for decades.

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Shows kick off locally with Irish Connections

June 11-13: Irish Connections Festival, Irish Cultural Centre, 200 New Boston Drive, Canton; 781-821-8291, www.irishculture.org/festival. Many cultural events and displays, and more than 25 acts, including Robbie O'Connell & Aoife Clancy, Randolph button accordionist Joe Derrane – recent recipient of The National Endowment for the Arts Heritage Fellowship, the nation's highest honor in folk and traditional arts – Alison Brown, Frances Black, the Sharon Shannon Band, a Touchstone reunion and more. \$30 weekend pass for adults and children 4 and older (includes amusement rides); or \$12 a day.

June 25-27: The 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 Michael Cooney and Priscilla Herdman. On-site camping. All festival tickets \$80, \$65 before June 5, youths \$50, \$40 before June 5. Per-day prices available.

July 3-4: New Bedford Summerfest Folk Festival, New Bedford Historical Whaling National Park & State Pier. E-mail: helene@barrel-of-music.com, <http://www.barrel-of-music.com/>. More than 30 acts, including Chris Smither, Pendragon, Ellis Paul, Patty Larkin, The Kennedys and more. The festival wristband price is \$7 a day.

July 15-18: Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival, Rothvoss Farm, Ancramdale, N.Y., 888-946-8495, <http://www.greyfoxbluegrass.com/>. More than 40 acts, including Railroad Earth, The Kruger Brothers, Del McCoury, Hot Tuna, Natalie MacMaster, Ricky Skaggs and Earl Scruggs and more. On-site camping. Full-festival tickets: \$140, \$125 by June 30. 12 and under free. Day tickets available.

July 16-17: The Green River Festival, Greenfield Community College, Greenfield 413-586-8686, <http://www.greenriverfestival.com/>. More than a dozen acts, including Gillian Welch, Hot Tuna, Rosie Ledet, Old Crow Medicine Show, Lori McKenna, Donna the Buffalo and more. Tickets \$30 until July 11, under 12 free. Balloon rides \$175, includes



Grammy award winner Doc Watson will perform in August at the Newport Folk Fest.

festival admission.

July 22-25: The Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, Long Hill Farm, Hillsdale, N.Y., 860-364-0366, E-mail: info@falconridgefolk.com, falconridgefolk.com. More than 50 acts, including Richie Havens, Tracey Grammer, Greg Brown, Ellis Paul, Brave Combo, Eliza Gilkyson, John Gorka, Richard Shindell and more. On-site camping, \$110; \$90 through July 1; ages 12-16, \$40. Under 12 free. Day and no-camping tickets available.

July 23-25: Lowell Folk Festival, 67 Kirk Street, Lowell, 978-970-5000, 978-970-5002 (TDD), <http://www.lowellfolkfestival.org/>. A dozen acts including The Abyssinians, J.D. Crowe and The New South, Mark Halata and Texavia and more, plus crafts and activities. Free.

Aug. 6-8: Apple & Eve Newport Folk Festival, Fort Adams State Park, Newport, R.I., 401-847-3700, <http://www.newportfolk.com>. Many acts, including Crosby, Stills & Nash, Wilco, Lucinda Williams, Doc Watson, Rufus Wainwright, Joan Osborne, Steve Earle and more. Tickets \$95 for Aug. 7-8, children \$10; children under 2 free. Aug. 6 Hotel Viking show \$25. Day tickets available.

Sept. 3-5: The Rhythm & Roots Festival, Ninigret Park, Charlestown, R.I., 888-855-6940, rhythmtix@aol.com, <http://www.rhythmndroots.com/>. On-site camping. More than 25 acts, including Donna The Buffalo, Peter Rowan & Crucial Reggae with Burning Spear Horns,

Leftover Salmon, Robert Earl Keen, CJ Chenier & the Red Hot Louisiana Band, Rosie Flores and many more. Full-festival camping tickets \$95 through June 30. Non-camping tickets available and day tickets available; 12 and under free.

Sept. 17-19: Boston Folk Festival, University of Massachusetts, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, 617-287-6911, folkfest@umb.edu, www.wumb.org/folkfest. More than 25 acts, including David Bromberg, Sam Bush, Lucy Kaplansky, Erin McKeown, Natalie MacMaster, Tom Paxton, Dar Williams and more. Tickets: \$50, 2-day; ages 6-14, \$10; under 6 free. Day tickets available; discounts for WUMB members.

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