

The Piedmont Blues Festival

Hats off to WPCC for staging first blues festival

Our hats are off to Western Piedmont Community College for undertaking the first Piedmont Blues Festival, tonight and tomorrow, an event certain to bring music lovers from all over this region to the college campus and to a cluster of local restaurants.

Noted guitarists, singers and recording artists well respected in the genre of music known as the "Piedmont Blues" will be on hand both to perform and to teach.

Of course, none is more highly regarded than Morganton's own Etta Baker, exceptionally known for her two-fingered picking style that characterizes the Piedmont Blues. Ms. Baker, the first recipient of the North Carolina Folk Heritage Award - presented by the N.C. Arts Council, has earned a reputation for quality performance throughout the country; it is she, primarily, who has helped attract many of the other outstanding performers. We are indeed fortunate to have an artist of her ability and celebrity in our midst.

The "Piedmont Blues" is one of three majors styles of blues music recognized as uniquely American. The others are the "St. Louis Blues" style and the "Delta (or New Orleans) Blues."

What better location to stage such a celebration of musical talent than the home of one of the Piedmont Blues' most renowned musicians.

Tonight (and again late Saturday night) a variety of restaurants here and in Blowing Rock will host individual visiting artists, including Scott Ainslie, Charles Bristol, Bruce Piephoff & Graham Ferrell, our own Etta Baker

Editorial

& Walter Liniger, John Dee Holeman, Cascade Street Blues Band with Sheila Carlisae, Curtis Southall & Rachel Nelson and Wanda Lu Greene. Also performing at the festival will be Frets Guitar Band and Marshall Ballew.

The main event will be Saturday on the WPCC campus, with an afternoon performance, 1-6 p.m., and an evening show, 6-10 p.m. Costs are minimal: \$5 for restaurant cover charges and \$7 for the WPCC shows.

What's exceptional about the festival is the educational aspect Saturday when many of the performers will give workshops and demonstrations on their particular gifts and skills at WPCC's Phifer Learning Resources Center.

The workshops are significant because they will help novices and young performers learn some of the elementary skills of this particular artform, and as a result, help perpetuate the Piedmont Blues for future generations to enjoy.

The News Herald is proud to be among the sponsors of this celebration. Along with co-sponsors NationsBank, N.C. Visiting Artists Consortium, Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. of Hickory, WMNC AM/FM-Cable TV and the Western Piedmont Foundation, we strongly commend this two-day musical gala to each of you.

(A detailed schedule of the festival agenda is on Page 3B in today's News Herald. To register for the Saturday workshops, call 438-6104, or for specific information on the festival, call 438-6000.)