



Country Music Concert Review
Walnut Valley Festival gets Magical
Winfield, Kansas, September 13, 2006
Reviewed by Corinne Brown

If Oz exists, it's at the Walnut Valley Festival National Flat Picking Championships, a magical place where new artists emerge and musical greats mingle with the fans.

Now in its 35th year and billed as the Walnut Valley Reunion or "Picker's Paradise," three days at this fest proved why it's a mecca for lovers of bluegrass, finger style and flat pick guitar.

According to Rex Flottman, public relations director of the festival, 35 acts filled the schedule, chosen from 300 applicants. Originally, the festival grew out of bluegrass, the primary style of many of its original founders, but over time audiences wanted more diversity.

Performers returning this year included the Byron Berline Band, Misty River, The Waybacks, Andy May, Chris Jones & The Night Drivers, Steve Kaufman and Dan Crary & Thunderation. First timers were Cadillac Sky, mandolinist Bruce Graybill, Hot Strings and Mountain Smoke.

The bluegrass lineup featured Pat Flynn, Buddy Green & Friends, The Greencards, Marley's Ghost, The Wilders and Spontaneous Combustion. **Traditional Irish or "green grass" featured the Celtic sounds of The David Munnely Band, direct from Dublin.**

For lovers of Western music, "cowgrass" included Bluestem, plus Roz Brown and Bill Barwick of Denver, and newcomer Dave Stamey, a California artist. Instrumental composers / performers included Stephen Bennett, Tommy Emmanuel and Pete Huttlinger, while cross-over entertainers featured Tim O'Brien, Small Potatoes, and Still on the Hill.

Bluegrass band The Wilders proved repeatedly why they drive fans to a frenzy: a cross between rockabilly and traditional bluegrass, the excitement of their almost Cajun music has to be heard to be believed.

The absolute highlight was the tightly woven David Munnely band from Ireland, also featuring American born tap dancer, Nick Gareiss, who lit fire to the stage with his air born feats, and fiddler, Daire Bracken, who absolutely stole the show.

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