



Kerrville Folk Festival 46 Years of Family Friendly Fun by Joe Herring

Beginning in 1972 as a part of the festivities surrounding the Texas State Arts and Crafts Fair, the Kerrville Folk Festival has seen many changes in its history. In fact, it survived the event of which it was a part; the Arts and Crafts Fair ended years ago. The festival was founded by the late Rod Kennedy, it is now produced by the very capable Dalis Allen. The festival is overseen by a diverse board of directors from several states.

If your experience is like mine, whenever I tell people where I'm from, especially people from Texas, the first thing they mention is the Kerrville Folk Festival. When I was interviewed on a different topic several weeks ago by a Wall Street Journal reporter, he wanted to talk about the Kerrville Folk Festival.

The festival is widely known, and it makes a giant economic impact on our community. During its eighteen day run, tens of thousands of visitors stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants, buy gasoline and groceries, and spend money. The tax revenues from their visits help fund needed projects in our city and county, and we all benefit from the event.

Strangely, though, our community tends to turn its back on the festival. I have noticed, when reminding audiences or meetings of the upcoming festival, locals tend to smirk. They conjure up images of some of the more eccentric members of the Kerrville Folk Festival group of visitors and assume (quite wrongly) that Quiet Valley Ranch becomes the hub of the hippie universe for three weeks. Local folks tend to judge the festival without having visited the festival.

Those who have actually gone to the Kerrville Folk Festival have learned something that might surprise those who haven't been. While there are plenty of 'colorful' attendees at the Kerrville Folk Festival, there are more than a few other folk there, too. Doctors, teachers, preachers, booksellers, cooks, executives, working folk and students all go to the Kerrville Folk Festival. The crowds I've seen don't look that much different than crowds you'd see in Antler Stadium for a Friday night football game.

I attended the very first Kerrville Folk Festival in 1972, when I was 10 years old. That first event was held in the Kerrville Municipal Auditorium, which had concrete floors and rows of folding chairs. The acoustics were just terrible.

But the performers were talented and fun, and the crowds were enthusiastic. Even Lyndon Johnson, Ladybird Johnson, and Darrell Royal attended that first concert.

From such humble beginnings a great event was born.

I hope you'll find your way to the Kerrville Folk Festival this year.



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