

Scots-Irish Festival features music, entertainment

BY GAYLE PAGE
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It's the final countdown – ticking off the last few days left until the Fourth Annual Scots-Irish Festival in Historic Downtown Dandridge.

Saturday, September 25, is the big day, and what a day it will be. It begins bright and early with a piping competition and a highland dance competition, then by 10 a.m. all the vendors offering their wonderful Celtic treasures and delectable goodies will open for business, along with the kids' playground and activities, the gathering of the clans and heritage organizations, and an exhibition of some handsome Scottish black-face sheep and highland coos to add their own traditional Scots-Irish flavor to the day.

The first entertainers are the Thistledown Tinkers, the musical duo of Trip Rogers and Tom Eure, seasoned music veterans from North Carolina who weave traditional Scottish and Irish music with original creations, and add a touch of southern swagger that sets the stage on fire. The two have mastered such instruments as guitar, fiddle, mandolin, banjo, dulcimer, and concertina, and their stage presence creates a rebel-rousing party that draws fans in and makes them feel like a part of the show. And not only are they first up on the entertain-

ment roster, but Trip Rogers of the Thistledown Tinkers will be one of the roving reporters for BBC, conducting interviews and collecting music and stories for the



folks in Ireland.

At noon, the opening parade and ceremonies are highlighted by the Knoxville Pipe and Drum corps, a marching band whose mission it is to broaden the knowledge of Scottish heritage in East Tennessee and surrounding regions through music.

The origin of bagpipes in Scotland is uncertain, but it's sure the lowland and highland clans developed and perfected the instrument to its highest level. The great pipes of the highlands were without equal anywhere, and not only did bagpipe music enliven feasts and festivals across the mountains and verdant glens, but their melodic

strains also summoned loyalist armies to battle. That was why in the 1700's, following the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie, kilts and bagpipes were outlawed – the pipes being classified as instruments of war.

The chanter and drone of Knoxville Pipes and Drums will stir souls and restore Gaelic pride in the hearts of all who hear and remember forefathers whose souls pined for a homeland across the sea, even as they tamed our own green hills of Appalachia.

Next, festival-goers will be entertained by Colin Grant-Adams, a musically-gifted balladeer who was born and raised in Winchester, England in a predominantly Scottish community. He gives an inspiring stage performance with fine guitar work and moving lyrics that make him one of the most popular and versatile Celtic musicians in America. His repertoire ranges from the traditional music of Scotland, Ireland and American bluegrass, to his own highly-acclaimed original compositions.

No one will want to miss the Martin Family Band from Pennsylvania. This group brings new gusto to Celtic music and dance, featuring Irish and American fiddle tunes, along with numerous Irish step dance routines. The musical ability of five of the Martin children, ranging in age from 9 to 18, is extraordinary, and is

accompanied by their parents on guitar and bass. Although the fiddle is the dominant instrument in the Martins' performances, their shows also include other instruments such as the Irish whistles, concertina, mandolin, bagpipes, and percussion.

Hold onto your hats when Cutthroat Shamrock takes the stage. They are rowdy. They are rambunctious. This multi-talented Sevier County group hails from the land of blue smoke and white lightening, and they somehow manage to meld the traditions of Ireland, the rhythms of Appalachia and the driving energy of punk rock into every song they play and sing. Five talented acoustic musicians rife with a raw passion for music and mischief, Cutthroat Shamrock is blazing a trail in Appalachian Celtic Punk. Metropulse calls them a 'regional phenomenon' and anyone who hears them will call them unforgettable.

Also in the entertainment lineup are award-winning champion highland dancer, young Claire Macmillan, as well as Irish Step Dancer Katie Carver. To close out a day of exciting music and dance is Celtic harpist and bagpiper Kelly Shiye.

"The distinctive styles of many modern-day American country, bluegrass and folk music performers can be traced directly back to the 18th century Ulster-Scots

or Scots-Irish settlers. And the dance tradition of the Appalachian region in the south eastern part of the United States has also very strong Ulster-Scots roots." (from Our Most Priceless Heritage, The Legacy of the Scots-Irish in America, by Billy Kennedy)

The entire Scots-Irish festival is presented to the community free of charge thanks to a host of wonderful sponsors and patrons, for which a debt of gratitude is certainly owed, as well as to the organizers and hosts, the Dandridge Main Street Program (Dandridge Community Trust Corp) an IRS Sec. 501 (c)(3) Non-Profit Charitable organization.

Following is a schedule of events and entertainment:

■ 8:00 a.m. - Registration of Individual Piping Competition, with competition beginning at 8:30 a.m. at Shepard's Inn

■ 9:30 a.m. - Registration of Highland Dance competitors, with competition beginning at 10 a.m. on Lowland Stage

■ 10:00 a.m. - Festival on Main Street opens for business & play – all activities vendors, clans, heritage organizations, kids playground, Highland Coo & Black faced sheep

■ 11:00 a.m. - Thistledown Tinkers - Highland (Main) Stage behind Town Hall

■ 12:00 Noon - Opening Parade & Ceremonies with Knoxville Pipes & Drums - Main

Street; Jefferson County High School Choral Group will perform National Anthems; Pipers will play on the Lowland Stage after opening ceremony

■ 12:20 p.m. - Colin Grant-Adams - Highland Stage

■ 1:00 p.m. - Martin Family Band - Highland Stage; Celtic Dance Demonstration - Lowland Stage

■ 1:45 p.m. - Cutthroat Shamrock - Highland Stage; Piping & Highland Dance Awards Presentations - Lowland Stage

■ 2:30 p.m. - Thistledown Tinkers - Highland Stage; Celtic Dance Demonstrations - Lowland Stage

■ 3:15 p.m. - Pipers On The Dike - On the top of the Dike behind the Highland Stage

■ 4:00 p.m. - Martin Family Band - Highland Stage; Dog Show (non sanctioned, just for fun, bring your pet) - Lowland Stage area

■ 4:45 p.m. - Colin Grant-Adams - Highland Stage

■ 5:30 p.m. - Cutthroat Shamrock - Highland Stage

EVENING

6:30 p.m. - Knoxville Pipes and Drums, Thistledown Tinkers, Claire Macmillan, Highland Dancer & Katie Carver, Irish Step Dancer, Colin Grant-Adams, Claire & Katie, part 2, The Martin Family Band, and finally at 9 p.m. there will be a Special Closing with the Lone Piper On The Dike, Kelly Shiye.