



## **NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2017**

### **Article 3: Booking the Kerrville Folk Festival**



# Booking the Kerrville Folk Festival



Songwriting – like poetry, like painting, like dance – is a gift from the muses. It is art. How can one look at a Van Gogh and a Michelangelo side by side and say one is better than the other? Both speak to us. Both evoke emotion, thoughts, truths. This regard for art is the essence of the festival's booking philosophy.

# Booking the Kerrville Folk Festival

Artists who play the festival know, regardless of their “status,” industry ranking, or any other yardstick, at the Kerrville Folk Festival all artists are equally compensated.

The festival pays a base rate to the songwriter, and an additional stipend for each band member. To the audience, this may seem irrelevant, but to the artist, it is an important principle.



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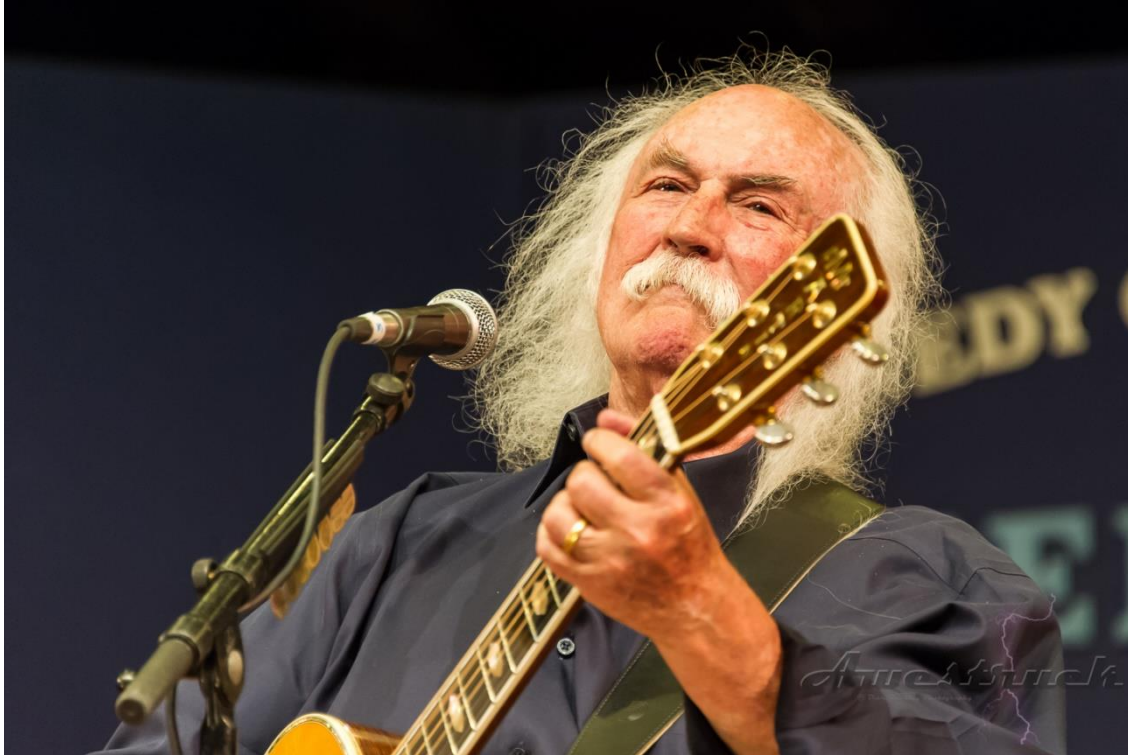
Those who have achieved celebrity and return to play the festival do so as an homage to this community who nourished them when they were emerging. This practice is in honor of the art, but it is a two edged sword.

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The one exception in the festival's history was made a couple of years ago when a donor offered to underwrite the artists' fees for a duo of songwriters, EmmyLou Harris and Rodney Crowell, and a household name single, David Crosby. It was an experiment to see if booking nationally known songwriters would draw attendees who would discover the magic of "Kerrville." We all know this story – rain washed out the entire night Emmy Lou and Rodney were scheduled to play.



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The last Saturday of the festival when David Crosby played was well attended, but this single shot effort did not translate into a new influx of ticket buyers.

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In the aftermath of the 2015 experiences, the festival community continues to offer many artist suggestions for booking. Virtually every artist or act offered is performing original music. This affirms that the community does embrace and continues to commit to supporting songwriting.

However, the part of the story the community does not know is that virtually every artist or act suggested has been invited to play the festival ... and many have!

Sharing the offers and negotiations with specific artists is unprofessional. This aspect of booking must remain behind the curtain.

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In the short term, it is incumbent upon the Kerrville Folk Festival Foundation to build a healthy infrastructure. To that end, business practices are being adjusted to make the festival financially sustainable. More aggressive marketing strategies are being implemented. New funding sources are being pursued. And, of all the processes being reviewed, booking practices are the backbone of the festival.

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As always, your thoughts and insights are welcome. However, understand this – the best support to developing a strong line up is for us all to assure that the artists who perform here experience the magic we all cherish.

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When there is a name you don't know on the line up, that is not the time to stay at camp; that's the best time for you to show up and discover the artists emerging today. Sharing the magic with them is what will be their incentive to tell their management team five years down the line, "book the Kerrville Festival anytime I'm invited to play."

