

Calendar

Rustic Acoustics

Fourth Annual SongFest

The come-on seems straightforward enough. "Performers Receive FREE FOOD, DRINKS & FREE CAMPSITE," says the flyer for the Fourth Annual SongFest at the Rancho Corrido RV Resort & Campground in Pauma Valley. But "Yukon Jack" Lohman, the event's cofounder and its emcee, hedges when asked what exactly the free food will be.

"It'll be something like pizza — something easy to get in there."

"There" is described by Yukon Jack as "a beautiful place for music."

LOCAL EVENTS

Encircled by mountains, it's "a natural, acoustic bowl." The SongFest public address

system "carries the music through the whole valley," he claims. "You feel like you're in the Rocky Mountains in this place, and you're only 60 miles from downtown San Diego."

Since it's an overnight, is breakfast part of the deal?

"Well, no. We'll feed them one meal only, not the whole tribe for the weekend. They can come up and camp free on Friday night, then eat and play on Saturday. One campsite, one night. If they want to stay longer, they have to pay."

It's interesting that performers are enticed by such meager rewards — if, in fact, they are enticed...?

Literally, yes, the rewards are meager, Yukon Jack agrees, but potentially, there's something bigger at stake. "If she likes you, you'll get paid when you play there on Saturday nights in the summer."

"She" is Linda Birch, owner of the 31-acre campsite and cofounder with Yukon Jack of what, perhaps, might be called a contest...?

Yukon Jack doesn't like the characterization. "It's not a contest. It's



Yukon Jack

a musicians' party, with people showing up to support the music and enjoy the day, and a chance for performers to audition at the same time."

As of last week, the list of performers who had committed themselves to the event so far numbered ten. It's an eclectic mix, including the Fabulous Dan Band, which plays Irish music; the Full Deck, a bluegrass band; the Funny Farmers, who play folk that ranges from contemporary to traditional; and husband-wife team Ron and Julia, who play classic pop songs as well as oldies, accompanying themselves on keyboard, banjo, guitar, and bass. At least one group is expected to play ridge music, says Yukon Jack. "That's O Brother, Where Art Thou?—type stuff."

Tony Taravella, former president of the San Diego Songwriters Guild, says the draw to SongFest for him is not the "free hotdogs and sodas," nor the "nice scenic drive" to a campsite he cannot use. He shows up because Rancho Corrido is "a place that books music." Taravella, who will play jazz guitar at SongFest this year, has been booked for

summer evenings by Birch in past years.

First-timer Linda Hummer, a soloist who performs original material with her acoustic, open-tuned guitar, was encouraged by Taravella to try SongFest, where she hopes to be chosen for a later, paying gig. "There aren't a lot of venues close to home," says Hummer, who lives in Julian. She appreciates the campsite offer but won't be staying over, either, because she performs at Wynola Pizza in Julian that evening.

Birch, for her part, says that what she looks for is "family-oriented music" for her 24 summer slots. "We have a lot of tent campers up here during the season and Boy Scout troops and church groups. So it has to be clean and in good taste — and something that can entertain both the young and the old."

Some groups, apparently, don't need to sing for their supper — nor for a shot at a booking. "We've invited the Shamrockers, which is a big, popular group in town, but they haven't responded," says Yukon Jack. "They're pretty well booked."

Do any rank amateurs ever perform at SongFest, hoping to be discovered?

"I don't recall anybody ever showing up that hasn't had any experience playing," says Yukon Jack, who is himself a performer with a CD out called *Acoustic Grass*. "But if they want to play, I'll put 'em up onstage."

They should know, though, that I don't have the capability for a lot of electrified music. If they have an electric guitar, they have to bring their own amp."

One other thing is required of performers: they must get there by 2:00 — an hour before the music begins. "That's when the schedule gets set."

And how long does each performer play? "The way it works is, depending on how many people show up, I'll divide the time. It's a purely mathematical process. We'll give everybody as much time as we can."

The show goes on, rain or shine. In case of bad weather, SongFest moves from its outdoor stage into the campground's large barn, which Yukon Jack describes as "acoustically great," just like the surrounding mountains.

— Jeanne Schinto

Fourth Annual SongFest
Saturday, April 27,
3:00-9:00 p.m.
Rancho Corrido
RV Resort & Campground
14715 Hwy. 76, Pauma Valley
(Take I-15 to Hwy 76 exit
Go East on 76 for 10.8 miles
Campground is on the right)
Cost for listeners: \$3
Cost for campsite: \$20-\$28
Performers sign-up:
619-204-2558
Info: 760-741-3755



Rancho Corrido

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