

Asleep at the Wheel sure to wake up crowd

Saturday's headliner just one group among many sure to stir things up

By **GARY DEMUTH**
Salina Journal

Don't call it western swing unless you see a fiddle and steel guitar.

That's the musical gospel according to Ray Benson, whose band Asleep at the Wheel is considered the foremost interpreter of western swing.

"Western swing is a hybrid form of music that's part jazz, swing, blues and Big Band," he said. "The difference is, you've got to have a fiddle, maybe two, a steel and electric guitar, cowboy hats and western dress."

Asleep at the Wheel has been following Benson's formula since the band was formed in 1970 in Austin, Texas. Their first album, "Comin' Right At Ya," was released in 1973. More than 30 albums followed.

After 37 years, the band shows no



Courtesy photo

Asleep at the Wheel performs at 8:30 p.m. Saturday on the Eric Stein Stage in Oakdale Park.

sign of slowing down. In 2006, they released three albums: a new CD, "Reinventing the Wheel;" a Christmas album, "Santa Loves to Boogie;" and a greatest hits package, "The Best of Asleep at the Wheel."

Asleep at the Wheel will be the Saturday headliner at this year's Smoky Hill River Festival. The band will perform at 8:30 p.m. Saturday on the Eric Stein Stage at Oakdale Park.

Other headlining acts are River

Festival veterans Mingo Fishtrap, a horn-fueled funk band from Denton, Texas, performing at 8:30 p.m. Friday on the Stein Stage; Justin Roberts, a hip kids' singer/songwriter, who performs at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Friday on the Children's Stage; and NeedFire, a Celtic-influenced band from Dallas that was a surprise hit at last year's festival. NeedFire closes this year's festival at 3:30 p.m. Sunday on the Eric Stein Stage.

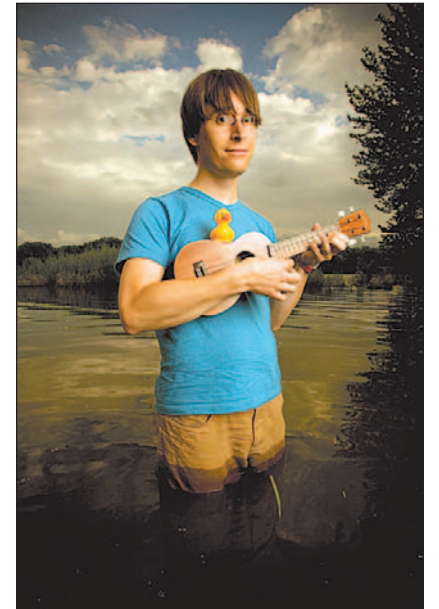
For lovers of traditional Big Band music, Bobby Layne & His Orchestra, featuring vocalist Trudy DuMay, returns at 7 p.m. Friday at the Bicentennial Center.

Opened for Dylan

Asleep at the Wheel last played in Salina in 2000, when the group opened for Bob Dylan's concert at the Bicentennial Center.

Previously, the band performed at the 1986 Smoky Hill River Festival, playing at the Oakdale Park Gazebo. The gazebo now sits in Jerry Ivey

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Courtesy photo

Justin Roberts, a Smoky Hill River Festival veteran, is returning this year with his hip songs for kids. He will perform at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Friday on the Children's Stage.

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Summer Activities

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Zoo Brew June 29, July 27, August 24
An adult-only evening at the Zoo with entertainment, food and fun!

Summer Splash July 4
Kids receive free Zoo admission when accompanied by an adult. Water games and activities

Check our website for more events and activities



Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure

625 N. Hedville Rd. Salina, KS www.rollinghillswildlife.com

Six miles west of Salina on I-70 to exit 244