

Mark Pucci Media

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Aiken & Friends Music Fest Brings Three Days of Music & Workshops to Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg, New Jersey, on September 20-22

Proceeds Go to Scholarships for Students and Music Education

BRANCHBURG, NJ – Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter Mike Aiken, whose new CD, *Wayward Troubadour*, is generating rave reviews and solid radio airplay, will once again present his “Aiken & Friends Music Fest – North Branch,” a three-day program of music and workshops, at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg on September 20-22. Proceeds go toward scholarships and programs for the students, in keeping with Aiken’s mission to support music education.

“It started with my desire to start an original music festival that would feature mostly Americana and acoustic music ... from bluegrass, blues to singer/songwriter,” Mike Aiken says about the festival’s origin. “Geographically, the location needed to have a good vibe of its own. As I’ve traveled and toured, I’ve kept my eyes and ears open for the right locale.

“The first twelve years, the Fest had a home in Smithfield, Virginia. In 2017, we added a new Fest location in Branchburg, New Jersey. Aiken & Friends Music Fest – North Branch is rooted on the Community College campus of RVCC – Branchburg, New Jersey. Under the guidance of Arts Director, Alan Liddell, we look forward to many years continuing to support and promote original music.”

The three-day event will feature a number of different musical shows by Mike Aiken, as well as other solo artists and groups, starting with a residency at 1:00pm on Thursday, September 20, with the M.S.G. Acoustic Blues Trio, discussing the evolution of the Piedmont Blues style, how it reflected life at that time and how it has influenced music styles since. MSG will perform a few songs along with a Q&A session.

Workshops on Friday, September 21, include techniques of guitar, songwriting and indie music promotion, followed by a Songwriter In-the-Round concert at the RVCC Arts Nash Theatre at 7:30pm.

On Saturday, September 22, Raritan Valley Community College will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a day-long schedule of events. Several college departments will showcase their programs around campus with the music festival continuing on the quad during the afternoon, and in the Nash Theatre that evening. In addition to the music and special events, there will be local artisans, food, and new this year, a children's area.

Events Schedule:

Thursday, Sept.20

Residency at 1 pm with M.S.G. Acoustic Blues Trio: Evolution of Piedmont Blues, Q&A and music.

Friday, Sept. 21

Workshops 12 pm – 1pm - Open to the public, students from RVCC, as well as local high schools. Pre-registration required.

Guitar Workshop - Brian Ashley Jones, Nashville session player

<http://www.brianashleyjones.com>

Songwriting Workshop - Mike Aiken www.mikeaikenmusic.com

Indie Music Promotion Workshop - Amy Aiken, President, Northwind Records

7:30 pm Songwriter In-The-Round Concert in the RVCC Nash Theatre

Mike Aiken, Brian Ashley Jones, Sally Jaye (<http://www.sallyjaye.com>)

Saturday, Sept. 22

RVCC is celebrating their 50th anniversary and the day will be built around the festival.

Outdoor Stage - art vendors, food, kids area

2:00 pm Last year's open mic winner, local artist Phil Swanson (<https://www.philswanson.com>)

2:30 pm Last year's open mic winner, local artist Jo Stones

(<https://jostonesmusic.bandcamp.com>)

3:00 pm MSG Acoustic Blues Trio (from Hampton, VA <http://www.acousticbluesmsg.com>)

4:00 pm Banjo Nickaru and Western Scooches (from NYC <http://banjonickaru.com>)

5:00 pm Session Americana (from Boston <http://www.sessionamericana.com>)

7:30 pm Mike Aiken Band - Tall Tales & Troubadours Show closes the festival in the Nash Theater

Tickets:

Tickets are available for each individual day or as a Weekend Pass. To purchase tickets, go to <http://www.aikenandfriendsfest.com/tickets/>. Or call the box office Monday-Friday, 11am-4 pm at 908-725-3420.

Website: www.AikenAndFriendsFest.com; email: info@AikenAndFriendsFest.com

Mike Aiken Photo: <http://www.markpuccimedia.com/Mike-Aiken-Photo-by-Jeff-Fasano.jpg>

About Mike Aiken

If anybody has earned the title of “Wayward Troubadour,” Mike Aiken has. He ran away as a kid to play music. He became a licensed USCG Captain, has sailed over 30,000 Bluewater miles on his own sailboat and logged countless miles on the road performing in North America and Europe.

“Mike Aiken’s new release, *Wayward Troubadour* (Northwind Records), is one of those summertime Americana ‘kick back and hang out’ collections perfect to pop in the stereo and launch into the season.” – *Americana Highways*

“With so much fake country music hogging the airwaves, it’s downright refreshing -- like a cool mountain breeze -- to hear such a Wayward Troubadour as Mike Aiken.” – *Aquarian Weekly*

“Mike Aiken delivers an album rooted in traditional country, with moments of Western Swing that will fit very nicely in your summer playlist... These are songs that will have you smiling and head-bobbing and generally feeling carefree. Sounds good, doesn’t it? Just wait until you hear this album.”
- *Parcbench.Live* – New York City

“Mike is something of a John Prine crossed with Ry Cooder.” - *Sail Magazine*