Describing the appeal of traditional Appalachian music, banjo player Kinney Rorrer of the New North Carolina Ramblers says, “This music is so authentic, it’s so real, and it’s a true reflection of the people who worked in the mills, in the tobacco field, in the coal mines … There’s so much fakery now and so much plastic in our world, that it’s nice to see something, like this music, that’s real and isn’t just a veneer.”

This appreciation for the music traditions of western North Carolina infuses *Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina*, a detailed guide to events and venues where visitors can hear traditional music. Much more than just a guidebook, it also features profiles of traditional musicians and sidebars on various topics related to western North Carolina culture and history.

The book is divided geographically into six regions. Each section begins with an overview of the region, followed by a listing of events and venues by county. Events range from MerleFest in Wilkesboro, which draws tens of thousands, to much smaller events such as the *Christian Harmony* hymn sing in Etowah. The book also features venues that host regular musical events, such as the Maggie Valley Opry House, home of the well-known banjo player Raymond Fairchild, and a barber shop in Drexel that hosts a weekly jam session. The range of events described—from large to small, formal to informal—is remarkable. Musical styles represented include bluegrass, old-time, gospel, blues, and string band music. There is an emphasis on this music as a living tradition that continues to grow and change. Many of the events, such as jam sessions, are participatory for those who choose to join in, and there are also events where attendees can dance to live music. Detailed information is given on each event, including dates and times, location (with driving directions), admission fee, contact information, and websites with further information.

*Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina* is an excellent travel guide but is also enjoyable and informative to read cover to cover because of the wealth of information and stories about traditional music and other aspects of Appalachian culture. There are sixteen profiles of contemporary musicians scattered throughout the book, each of whom comes at traditional music from a different perspective. Interviewees include Uwe Krüger, who grew up in Switzerland and discovered American folk music through Folkways Records; Donna Ray Norton, who comes from a long line of ballad singers and took up the family tradition as a teenager; and Alfred and Maybelle Welch, who sing hymns in the Cherokee language. There are also sidebars on famous North Carolina musicians such as Doc Watson and Earl Scruggs, as well as the origins of well-known folk songs and other topics that enrich the reader’s understanding of western North Carolina culture.
The book has a detailed index and is accompanied by a compact disc with recordings by many of the musicians featured in the book, which greatly enhances the reader’s appreciation for the music being described. Fred C. Fussell is also the author of the 2003 book *Blue Ridge Music Trails: Finding a Place in the Circle*, portions of which are adapted for this book. The book is recommended for academic and public libraries that collect books on travel, music, or traditional culture.

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