

Hardly Strictly's 7-Year Itch

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San Francisco's Hardly Strictly Bluegrass festival returns to Speedway Meadow in Golden Gate Park for its seventh annual free party October 5-7, bringing together the biggest names in bluegrass, alt-country and, as usual, throwing in a few genre-bending surprises.

Ranging from [Earl Scruggs](#), [Doc Watson](#) and perennial headliner [Emmylou Harris](#) to the Mekons, [Nick Lowe](#) and Boz Scaggs, organizers of biggest annual bash by the Bay have locked in more than 70 performers on five stages over three days. And as in years past, it's a free, non-ticketed, non-sponsored event thanks to the generosity of bluegrass fan, financier and philanthropist Warren Hellman.

The Wells Fargo Bank magnate, an omnipresent fixture at HSB in his jeans, denim jackets and boots, will also be a performer this year too - he'll be plucking away on banjo with his band The Wranglers.

The festival will, as in years past, open on a Friday with special programs for school kids from 10:30 a.m. to noon. This year, the educational program with The Abrams Brother and PMW are part of the Daniel Pearl World Music Days, an event honoring the slain journalist.

During the educational program, thousands of local school children will not only be entertained but also receive information about Daniel Pearl World Music Days, now in its fifth year. Musicians worldwide are invited to participate in the global event and "use the power of Daniel's love of music to help spread a message of hope and unity." For the second year running, there will be a special Friday afternoon performance for the grownups. This year's Day 1 lineup features [Buddy Miller](#), T-Bone Burnett and [Wilco](#)'s Jeff Tweedy, according to organizers - a crew spearheaded by the staffs of Slim's and the Great American Music Hall.

Hardly Strictly Bluegrass began as "strictly bluegrass" in 2001 with eight acts, and most of those original artists have returned every year as the festival has expanded to include and encourage creative collaborations between artists, becoming the premier (if not the only) event of its kind on the West Coast.

Though this year's installation sports no superstars as it has in recent outings with the likes of Costello and Dolly Parton, the lineup still impresses with regulars including Steve

Earle; the Del McCoury Band; Austin Lounge Lizards; Gillian Welch; Hazel Dickens; Guy Clark and Verlon Thompson; Poor Man's Whiskey; Buddy Miller; and Alison Brown Quartet, to name just a few.

They'll be joined in 2007 by Bela Fleck & The Flecktones featuring Victor Lemonte Wooten; The Flatlanders featuring Joe Ely Jimmie Dale Gilmore & Butch Hancock; James McMurtry; Jimmy LaFave; John Prine; Keller Williams; Railroad Earth; The Knitters; Los Lobos; Michelle Shocked; Robert Earl Keene; Shana Morrison; the subdudes; T-Bone Burnett; Jim Lauderdale; Bill Kirchen and Hammer of the Honky-Tonk Gods; Charlie Louvin; Dave Alvin & The Guilty Men and the New Lost City Ramblers.

Also on tap are special performances by Ricky Skaggs and Bruce Hornsby with Kentucky Thunder; David Grisman Bluegrass Experience with special guest Curley Seckler; Doc Watson with David Holt & Richard Watson; Jorma Kaukonen, Kevin Welch, Kieran Kane & Fats Kaplin, and a Songwriter's Circle featuring Chris Smither, David Olney, Ray Wylie Hubbard & Steve Young.

That's a lot of twang. And a lot of not so much, too.

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