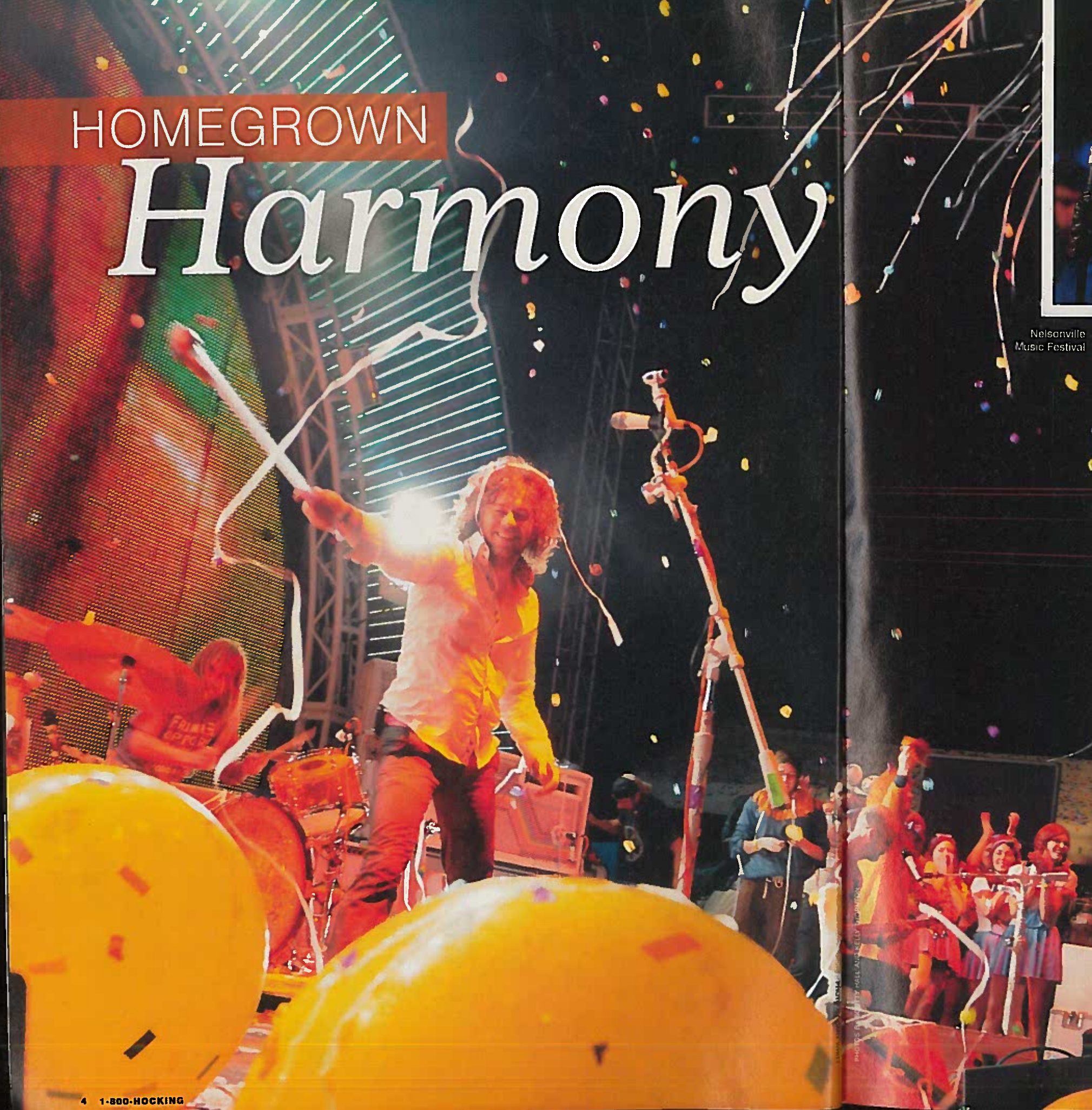


HOMEGROWN

Harmony



Nelsonville Music Festival



Stuart's Opera House

By Rich Warren

THERE'S HARMONY in the Hills! A vibrant music scene is yet another reason to head for the Hocking Hills.

Perhaps best-known to music lovers are the annual festivals that draw thousands to the region each year. Over Father's Day weekend, the streets of Logan are awash with washboards. The popular Washboard Music Festival features the region's best bluegrass and folk performers, with each act requested to incorporate a washboard into its musical lineup. Learn to play one yourself at the nearby Columbus Washboard Company, where old and young can tour and take impromptu lessons.

The Nelsonville Music Festival in early June showcases upwards of 70 musical acts, ranging from up-and-comers to nationally known names like Willie Nelson, Loretta Lynn, Wilco and Mavis Staples. Several stages, including one repurposed from an old box car, allow festival goers to wander at whim, enjoying musicians of every genre all day long.

Music is an important part of the mix at Lilyfest, held in mid-July in the bewitching Bishop Educational Gardens. Musical acts range from Appalachian style to New Age, while elsewhere on site dozens of artists and craftspersons peddle their wares in the lushly landscaped gardens.

Local talent

Not all Hocking Hills musicians are imported from elsewhere. Troubadours that call the area home include singer-songwriter Jesse James Russell, who's

opened for national acts like Toby Keith; Micah Kesselring, who was a finalist at the International Blues Challenge in 2016; and guitarist Audie Wykle, who's performed with Ricky Skaggs, Dolly Parton and Merle Haggard.

"Those of us who've decided to live and work in this area are involved in all kinds of music projects," says Russell. "A lot of us have Appalachian roots, but there's also some bluegrass, some American folk music, even some rock. We're an eclectic mix." It's talent like that you'll find gracing the stages in the Hocking Hills!

Venues offering live music all year long include the venerable Stuart's Opera House in Nelsonville, built in 1879 and drawing musicians from across the nation to perform in its intimate 395-seat theater that guarantees close proximity to the artists. At Logan's The Bowen House, a community cultural arts center, regular instrumental old-time jams and folk song sing-alongs take place, in addition to occasional concerts ranging from nostalgic swing bands to children's choruses.

Elsewhere, sip wine and savor some songs at Hocking Hills Winery, Shade Winery and Rockside Vineyards, which regularly book musical acts. Millstone Southern Smoked BBQ offers outdoor concerts three times a week during warm-weather months. The new Casual Friday event at the Inn & Spa at Cedar Falls combines a farm-to-table menu with accompanying live acoustic musicians. Weekly summer concerts are also held in Downtown Logan.



Concert in Downtown Logan

