

## **Arthel Lane (Doc) Watson** **Doctor of Letters**

Vocalist, guitarist, banjoist, and recording artist, Doc Watson has brought the folk music of North Carolina to a national and international audience. A native of Deep Gap in Watauga County, he made his first appearance at a fiddlers' conference in Boone. He went on to perform throughout the world, including appearances at the White House, Carnegie Hall, and the Newport Folk Festival. His albums (many with his son, Merle) include "Southbound," "Red Rocking Chair," "The Guitar Album," "Riding the Midnight Train," "Portrait," "Songs for Little Pickers," and "On Praying Ground." He is a five-time Grammy Award winner.

Doc was born into a family with a rich musical tradition. His early instrumental experience was with a harmonica and a homemade banjo, but at age 13 he taught himself the chords to "When the Roses Bloom in Dixieland" on a borrowed guitar. Doc's father was so pleased that he helped Doc buy his very own \$12 Stella guitar the next day. Doc's music blends traditional Appalachian folk music with blues, country, gospel, and bluegrass. He is credited with being the first to play mountain fiddle tunes on the flattop guitar. In 1995, the New York Times called him "a living museum of American roots music."

Doc Watson began his public performing career in 1953, when he joined Jack Williams' roackabilly/swing band, a style that Doc revived in his latest album, "Docabilly." The folk revival of the 1960s propelled him to national prominence. In 1961 he appeared at a Friends of the Old-Time Music concert in New York, and performed alone for the first time in 1962 at Gerde's Folk City in Greenwich Village. After fascination with folk music waned in the late 1960s, Doc and his son Merle toured extensively, bringing their music to Europe and Japan. Doc stopped playing briefly after Merle died in a 1985 accident, but he stills accepts some engagements. For several years he has hosted the Merle Watson Memorial Festival in Wilkesboro.