

'Lost' musicians ramble tonight with new CD



March 04, 2007 - If The Lost Ramblers have anything to do with it, one could mistake the Poconos for the Southern Appalachians. Set to release their new CD today at the Deer Head Inn, Delaware Water Gap, their music evokes a feeling of changin' times.

Together since 1978, they have played on either side of the Gap, including the West End Fair, the Garlic Festival and a number of other venues. They specialize in bluegrass and old-timey music, a forerunner to country bluegrass that answers to a simpler, more back-to-the-woods call.

The band incorporates jazz, polka and Celtic, as well as Klezmer, a genre filled with expressive melodies harmoniously reminiscent of the human voice.

The original band was formed by John Updike and Neil Morris while at a festival in Shade Gap. Updike was from Wooster, Ohio, and Morris from Nazareth, but the connection was unmistakable.

Updike plays the five-string banjo, and Morris, whose hometown is the birthplace of Martin Guitar Co., plays guitar.

Then came Pete Pappalardo. Raised along the Delaware River in Shawnee, he and his family were displaced while plans were under way to dam the river. It didn't happen, and the land became Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, but he couldn't live there anymore. The ordeal left him with a strong interest in the environment.

He left to study at Duke University, where he was

influenced by country blues and old-timey music. He learned finger-picking guitar and then began playing bass fiddle with the Ramblers in the early '80s.

"The Lost Ramblers' influence for the bluegrass world is a hard-driving traditional style that was especially popular 30 or 40 years ago," Updike says. "Of course, many other sounds have entered the band's repertoire — too many to mention — but they remain a hardcore, good-time musical force and have managed to keep their sound fresh after all these years."

"During the run of the Ramblers many fine musicians have joined the group, learned to play in their special ensemble style, and then moved on to other successes," Updike says. ▪

About the Band:

The new "Ramble On" CD is The Lost Ramblers' third studio production in 15 years. Their sound has remained pretty much the same over time — purely acoustic, with strong Appalachian and bluegrass influences. There's also a liberal sprinkling of western swing, jazz and Celtic styles with an emphasis on improvisation.

JOHN UPDIKE: Five-string banjo

NEIL MORRIS: Guitar

PETE PAPPALARDO: Bass fiddle

ANTHONY HANNIGAN: Friend and collaborator, plays mandolin and other instruments on various tracks.

COLEMAN SMITH: Fiddle prodigy, originally from Texas, does most of the violin work. He's been playing with the Ramblers steadily for the last three years and, as Updike says, "adds fire and excitement to the group's acoustic sound."

KENT HECKMAN: Recorded additional players at Red Rock in Sciota

BOB DOROUGH: Plays piano on two tracks, sings on "Petticoat Funktion"