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Head to Steelville to mark major anniversaries with The Ozark Mountain Daredevils and Wildwood Springs Lodge

This fall, the band and the lodge will celebrate in tandem. On November 4 and 5, the Daredevils—now in their 50th year—will close out the concert season at the Wildwood Springs Lodge—now in its 100th year.

BY DEAN NELSON OCTOBER 6, 2022 10:00 AM



COURTESY OF THE OZARK MOUNTAIN DAREDEVILS



COOKED diners and visiting rock stars. Or, they might just start humming “Jackie Blue.” Since the lodge first opened, it has hosted countless acts, but the [Ozark Mountain Daredevils](#) are perhaps the most consistent visitors. And this fall, the band and the lodge will celebrate major anniversaries in tandem. On November 4 and 5, the Daredevils—now in their 50th year—will close out the concert season at the Wildwood Springs Lodge—now in its 100th year.

This has been a heady year for the Daredevils. The band sold out the Grand Ole Opry in May and earned a standing ovation. Ozark Public Television aired a 90-minute documentary, *The Ozark Mountain Daredevils: Backstage*, about the band. And they have appeared on several music festival lineups.

But the Wildwood Springs shows are their favorite, band members say, because they’re reminiscent of their roots. “It feels like we’re performing in a living room,” says John Dillon, one of the band’s founders. “That’s how we began—just getting in a room and presenting our songs to our families.”

Mike “Supe” Granda, another original Daredevil and St. Louis native, says the closeness of the audience (the lodge can accommodate about 250 guests) fuels the concert. “It’s like we’re playing badminton with the energy of the fans,” he says. But the magic is more than just the intimacy of the event. “You can feel the history and the energy of the whole building.”



wa years in the 60s and early 70s.

In 1993, he and his family bought it and decided to bring it back to life. “My dad and I were barbecuing across the street one night, looking at the lodge, and we hatched a plan to buy it,” Bell says. “He was dedicated to the youth of Steelville and wanted to give them a place to work. It’s still that way.”



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF WILDWOOD SPRINGS LODGE

Wildwood Springs Lodge has had a connection to live music since first opening in the early 1920s.

In addition to welcoming guests interested in the local landscape, Bell made the lodge a shrine to great music. He brought in local legends Brewer and Shipley in 1995. Later, the venue also hosted Marshall Tucker Band, Head East, Three Dog Night, America, and many others. Since 2006, he has ended each concert season with the Daredevils. Fans come from as far away as Australia and Japan to hear them play.

“You walk in the front doors, and you encounter a completely different vortex,” Bell says. “By the end of the

look out at the audience and realize these people have been with you from the beginning,” he says. “These songs mean as much to them as they do to us. That’s why we keep going.”

A Day in Steelville

Planning a trip to see the Ozark Mountain Daredevils at Wildwood Springs Lodge? Consider hopping on I-44 a little early to explore.

Visit

Helen Jonas donated the longtime Jonas family home on Main Street to the city of Steelville in 2000, and the [Day Lark Jonas Museum](#) now houses a collection of antiques and artifacts. Admission is free, but keep an eye on the clock. The museum is only open from 1–4 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

Eat

Local burger joint [Rich’s Famous Burgers](#) has been “stackin’ ’em high since 1955.” The place is full of character, and the menu includes favorites like a Jam Burger with peanut butter and homemade hot pepper strawberry jam and four types of fried cheese curds.

Shop

Step into a time gone by at the family-run [Lange General Store](#), which stocks nostalgic candies, vintage toys, tons of home goods, and all sorts of gifts. Don’t forget to hit



The [Steelville Bike Park](#) mountain bike trail system, built in 2021, is a great way to pack in some outdoor time before a show. The park features five directional downhill lines for various skill levels, as well as a climb trail that brings you back to the trailhead.

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