GREG'S INSIDER GUIDES

to Live Music Near You



The Top 20

Music Festivals Near You

October 2026 - June 2027

DC · Maryland · Virginia · Delaware · West Virginia

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Researched October 7, 2026 · Confirm dates and lineups before you buy

How this list was built

I looked for the best music festivals in DC, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware and West Virginia between now and June 2027, favoring the **longest-running** events and those with the **most complete lineups** already published. The 20 are in date order so you can plan the year.

A reality check on lineups: as of early October 2026, only the fall festivals have full lineups. Most spring and early-summer festivals announce between November and April. For those, each page shows last year's lineup as a preview of the caliber to expect, and when the new lineup usually drops.

● **Lineup complete** ● **Lineup partly announced** ● **Not yet announced** – last year shown as preview

At a glance

#	Festival	State	When	Track record	Lineup
1	Richmond Folk Festival	VA	Fri-Sun, Oct 9-11, 2026	22nd year	● Complete
2	Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival	DE	Thu-Sun, Oct 15-18, 2026	37th annual	● Complete
3	True Blue Jazz Festival	DE	Thu-Sun, Oct 15-18, 2026	14th annual	● Complete
4	Blue Ridge Folklife Festival	VA	Sat, Oct 24, 2026 – 10 AM to 5 PM	52 years running	● Partly announced
5	Annapolis Jazz & Roots Festival	MD	Two weekends: Nov 6-8 & Nov 13-15, 2026	5th edition	● Complete
6	Ocean City Springfest	MD	Thu-Sun, Apr 22-25, 2027	36th annual	● Not yet announced
7	Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival – 100th	VA	Apr 23 – May 2, 2027	100th festival	● Not yet announced
8	Virginia Arts Festival – 30th Season	VA	Spring 2027	30th season	● Not yet announced
9	M3 Rock Festival	MD	Early May 2027	18+ years	● Not yet announced
10	Vandalia Gathering – 50th	WV	Memorial Day weekend 2027	50th gathering in 2027	● Not yet announced
11	DelFest	MD	Memorial Day weekend 2027	19th annual in 2027	● Not yet announced
12	Rooster Walk 17	VA	Memorial Day weekend 2027	17th annual	● Not yet announced
13	Maryland Deathfest	MD	Thu-Sun, May 27-30, 2027	22nd edition	● Partly announced
14	Project GLOW	DC	Sat-Sun, June 5-6, 2027	From Club Glow, DC's dance-music promoter for 20+ years	● Not yet announced
15	West Virginia State Folk Festival	WV	Third weekend of June 2027	Founded 1950	● Not yet announced
16	Norfolk Harborfest	VA	June 2027	51st in 2027	● Not yet announced
17	AFRAM	MD	Juneteenth weekend 2027	51st in 2027	● Not yet announced
18	Clifford Brown Jazz Festival – 40th	DE	Expected June 2027	40th edition in 2027	● Not yet announced
19	Hampton Jazz & Music Festival	VA	Last weekend of June 2027	57th annual in 2027	● Not yet announced
20	Smithsonian Folklife Festival – 60th	DC	Summer 2027	60th anniversary in 2027	● Not yet announced

#1 Richmond Folk Festival — VA

WHEN	Fri–Sun, Oct 9–11, 2026	**WHERE**	Downtown Richmond riverfront, incl. Brown's Island – Richmond, VA
TRACK RECORD	22nd year (grew out of the National Folk Festival, held here 2005–07)	**ADMISSION**	FREE – donations welcome

LINEUP COMPLETE

The biggest free folk festival in the region: about 200,000 people, six stages and 30+ acts from around the world, all on the James River.

The lineup

Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials (Chicago blues) – Dr. Michael White Quartet (New Orleans jazz) – **The Chuck Brown Band (DC go-go)** – Wyatt Ellis (bluegrass) – Seth Spell & Cajun Strong – Sons of Promise and the Legendary Ingramettes (gospel) – El Laberinto del Coco (Puerto Rican bomba) – Mamadou Diabate & Percussion Mania – Mariachi Mariposas – Reverie Road (Irish) – Joe Troop's Whirlwind – El Khat – plus "Soul of the City: Richmond Celebrates D'Angelo."

Insider tips

- It's **this weekend**. Friday evening and Sunday morning are the easiest times to move between stages; Saturday afternoon is the crush.
- Free admission works because of donations – volunteers circulate with buckets. A few dollars per day keeps it free.
- The Chuck Brown Band is a rare chance to hear the godfather of go-go's band outside DC.
- Bring a folding chair or blanket and plan on walking: park downtown and stroll to the riverfront.

Plan it

Stay downtown (Shockoe Slip or the Canal Walk area) so you can walk in. Festival food stalls are part of the fun; for a sit-down soul-food meal, Mama J's Kitchen in Jackson Ward is a local institution.

Source: venturerichmond.com; richmondfolkfestival.org/performers

#2 Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival — DE

WHEN	Thu–Sun, Oct 15–18, 2026	**WHERE**	Rehoboth Beach, Lewes & Dewey Beach, DE (six venues)
TRACK RECORD	37th annual (since 1990)	**ADMISSION**	Ticketed shows ~$79–$179; free and $10 shows too

LINEUP COMPLETE

The region's flagship smooth-jazz and R&B weekend, with 20+ shows and national headliners. Proceeds support Beebe's Tunnell Cancer Center.

The lineup

Boney James - Brian Culbertson (solo piano and full band) - Najee with Regina Belle & Alex Bugnon - Gerald Albright with Keiko Matsui - Damien Escobar - Acoustic Alchemy - Stanley Jordan & Diego Figueiredo - Walter Beasley - Michael Lington & Paul Taylor - the 2026 All-Stars - Sunday Grand Jam.

Insider tips

- FREE: Reggie Harris at the Historic Lewes Farmers Market, Sat 10 AM.
- $10: Rusty Rudder Deck in Dewey, Sat 1–4 PM (Club Phred + the Blues Brothers Horns, then Deanna Bogart). Cash at the door, no advance sales.
- Tickets are final sale; small rooms (Epworth, Cambria) sell out first.
- Full schedule, restaurants and a sample weekend are in **Insider Guide Vol. 1**.

Plan it

See Vol. 1 for dining picks. Book dinner this week; festival weekend fills the better rooms.

Source: rehobothjazz.com 2026 schedule; delawarebeaches.online

#3 True Blue Jazz Festival

DE

WHEN	Thu–Sun, Oct 15–18, 2026	WHERE	Downtown Rehoboth Beach, DE (Boardwalk Plaza Hotel, Rehoboth Fire House, restaurants)
TRACK RECORD	14th annual	ADMISSION	Shows $35–$85; many restaurant sets free

LINEUP COMPLETE

The straight-ahead jazz festival running the same weekend as Rehoboth Jazz Fest – legends in small rooms, plus free sets all over town.

The lineup

Monty Alexander "Jamaica to Jazz" (Fri 7 & 9 PM, $60) – Pat Bianchi Organ Trio (Sat 7 & 9 PM, $50) – Benny Benack III with Kieran Brown (Thu, $45) – Smokin' Hot Firehouse Big Band Jazz Marathon (Sat noon–6, $35) – Two Gals Swingin' with Peggy Raley & Jackie Johnson (Sun 1 PM, $85) – "Local & Live" restaurant sets: Dale Melton Trio, Christy Taylor Plus, Jeff Knoettner Combo, Budsea Bros., JAZZMEN.

Insider tips

- Monty Alexander in a hotel room for $60 is one of the best values of the year.
- The Local & Live sets are traditionally free – check truebluejazz.org for which restaurant hosts each act.
- Easy to pair with Rehoboth Jazz Fest on the same trip.

Plan it

Boardwalk Plaza Hotel (2 Olive Ave) is home base – breakfast at Victoria's in the hotel is a festival-weekend tradition.

Source: truebluejazz.org/festival; truebluejazz.org/more-jazz

#4 Blue Ridge Folklife Festival — VA

WHEN	Sat, Oct 24, 2026 – 10 AM to 5 PM	**WHERE**	Ferrum College, Ferrum, VA (Franklin County)
TRACK RECORD	52 years running	**ADMISSION**	FREE admission (new this year) – parking $20 per car

LINEUP PARTLY ANNOUNCED

A half-century celebration of Blue Ridge mountain culture: four stages of traditional and contemporary Blue Ridge music with storytelling, crafts and old-time farm contests.

The lineup

Four music stages of traditional and contemporary Blue Ridge music plus Henry Lee Law & Friends storytelling. Individual performers weren't posted at press time. Also: horse pulls, mule jumping, coon dog contests, log skidding, 100+ artisans, demonstration stills, vintage tractors and the Thunder in the Blue Ridge Car Show.

Insider tips

- Admission is free for the first time, so expect bigger crowds – arrive at 10.
- Parking is per car ($20), so carpool. Pre-sale parking passes are coming to the Ferrum site.
- It's always the fourth Saturday of October, right at peak leaf season.

Plan it

Base yourself in Rocky Mount or at Smith Mountain Lake, and make a weekend of the Blue Ridge Parkway foliage.

Source: ferrum.edu/brim/blue-ridge-folklife-festival

#5 Annapolis Jazz & Roots Festival

MD

WHEN	Two weekends: Nov 6-8 & Nov 13-15, 2026	**WHERE**	Eastport & Annapolis, MD (Maryland Hall, Peerless Rens Club, library, Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum)
TRACK RECORD	5th edition	**ADMISSION**	Mostly free; a few ticketed shows

LINEUP COMPLETE

The newest festival on this list, earning its spot with a complete, thoughtful lineup that ties jazz to Maryland history.

The lineup

Makaya McCraven (progressive jazz) - Akua Allrich's tribute to Miriam Makeba & Nina Simone - Perkutao (Afro-Peruvian jazz) - Muneer Nasser Band - Vanessa Racci (Italian contributions to jazz) - U.S. Naval Academy Band Superintendent's Combo (Miles Davis tribute) - David & Ginger Hildebrand - Uhwachi-Reh - "Jazz Genius: Coltrane, Miles & Weston" program.

Insider tips

- Reserve the free daytime events (library, 11 AM Nov 14; Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum, 2 PM Nov 14) - organizers strongly advise it.
- Peerless Rens Club has two shows on Nov 7 (4:00 and 6:30). Maryland Hall's Nov 8 concert is ticketed through marylandhall.org.
- A good early-season date-night idea that's 30-45 minutes from Howard County.

Plan it

Walk Eastport's waterfront between shows. Downtown classics like Middleton Tavern and Chick & Ruth's Delly are a short drive or water-taxi ride away.

Source: annapolisjazzandrootsfestival.com; mannpublications.com (2025)

#6 Ocean City Springfest

MD

WHEN	Thu–Sun, Apr 22–25, 2027	WHERE	Inlet Parking Lot, south end of the Boardwalk – Ocean City, MD
TRACK RECORD	36th annual	ADMISSION	FREE festival; headline concerts ticketed in past years

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

Ocean City's official kickoff to the season: four days of free music on two stages, Eastern Shore food and juried crafts at the Inlet.

The lineup

2027 free-stage acts and ticketed headliners are "coming soon" on the official site. Typically announced in winter.

Insider tips

- Skip the hunt for downtown parking: take the Beach Bus to the Inlet, or use the West Ocean City Park & Ride shuttle.
- It runs rain or shine. Hours have been about 10 AM–6 PM daily.
- Headline-concert accessibility tickets put everyone in a seat, or you can use your own chair or wheelchair.

Plan it

Thrasher's fries on the Boardwalk are mandatory. April hotel rates are a fraction of summer's, so a midweek-to-Sunday stay is easy.

Source: oceancity.com/events/springfest-2027

#7 Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival – 100th

VA

WHEN	Apr 23 – May 2, 2027 (10 days)	WHERE	Winchester, VA
TRACK RECORD	100th festival (since 1924)	ADMISSION	Many free events; parades, concerts and galas ticketed

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

A once-in-a-century edition: 50+ events, concerts, celebrity guests and some of Virginia's biggest parades, drawing about 250,000 people.

The lineup

Centennial concerts and celebrity guests are not announced yet. Watch thebloom.com – advance tickets for signature events go on sale early.

Insider tips

- Book lodging now. The 100th will draw record crowds and Winchester's rooms sell out.
- Claim a curb spot early for the parades.
- A clear-bag policy is in effect at major events.
- Fill gaps with the Bloomin' Wine Fest on the Loudoun Street Walking Mall and orchard and cider tastings.

Plan it

About 75 minutes from Howard County. Old Town Winchester's Walking Mall is the hub for food and drinks.

Source: eventeny.com (100th festival listing); visitshenandoah.org

#8 Virginia Arts Festival – 30th Season

VA

WHEN	Spring 2027 (main concert season ~Feb-June)	**WHERE**	Hampton Roads: Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg, Newport News
TRACK RECORD	30th season	**ADMISSION**	Ticketed (vafest.org - 757-282-2822)

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

Hampton Roads' premier spring festival, with jazz, Americana and classical headliners across a dozen venues, and a milestone 30th season.

The lineup

2027 lineup not yet released. Last season's was announced Oct 30, 2025, so expect it within weeks. The 2026 preview: Christian McBride, Chris Thile, Cowboy Junkies, The Lone Bellow, Cecile McLorin Salvant with the Danish Radio Big Band, Joshua Bell with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Michael Mayo, New York Voices.

Insider tips

- The outdoor Perry Pavilion concerts in May and June are the festival's best atmosphere.
- Buy the day the season is announced; the small rooms (Attucks Theatre, Robin Hixon) sell out.
- Pair a show with a Norfolk weekend: Harborfest (#16) and Hampton Jazz (#19) are in the same region in June.

Plan it

Box office: 440 Bank St., Norfolk. Downtown Norfolk's Waterside District is convenient for pre-show dinner.

Source: visitnorfolk.com (2026 lineup); vafest.org

#9 M3 Rock Festival

MD

WHEN	Early May 2027 (2026 was Sat, May 2)	WHERE	Merriweather Post Pavilion, Columbia, MD
TRACK RECORD	18+ years	ADMISSION	Ticketed (GA lawn, reserved seats, VIP)

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

The East Coast's longest-running '80s hard-rock and hair-metal festival, right in Howard County.

The lineup

2027 not announced; 2026 tickets went on sale Dec 12, 2025, so expect news around December. The 2026 preview: Tom Keifer (Cinderella), Queensryche, Buckcherry, White Lion, Barry Goudreau's Engine Room, Faster Pussycat, Trixter, plus a Friday kickoff party with Quiet Riot.

Insider tips

- The Friday kickoff party and the VIP after-party are at the Merriweather Lakehouse Hotel. Get the VIP package if you want the extra shows.
- A lawn ticket plus a blanket is the classic Merriweather move. Bring layers for early May evenings.
- A local's pick: no hotel needed if you live in Howard County.

Plan it

The Merriweather District and downtown Columbia's lakefront have plenty of pre-show dining.

Source: blabbermouth.net (2026 lineup)

#10 Vandalia Gathering – 50th

WV

WHEN	Memorial Day weekend 2027 (expected Fri-Sun, May 28-30)	**WHERE**	West Virginia State Capitol Complex & Culture Center, Charleston, WV
TRACK RECORD	50th gathering in 2027 (49th was May 2026)	**ADMISSION**	FREE – free parking

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

West Virginia's signature celebration of old-time music, dance and storytelling, reaching its golden anniversary.

The lineup

Performers are announced in spring. The format: Friday awards concert, including the Vandalia Award (the state's highest folklife honor); Saturday fiddle, banjo and mandolin contests from 11 AM and a 7 PM concert in the Culture Center State Theater; Sunday gospel, local bands, square and flat-foot dancing, and the famous **Liars Contest** (2:30 PM).

Insider tips

- Join the dancing in the North Plaza – visitors are encouraged to jump in.
- The contests are where you hear the best players. Grab a spot by 11 AM Saturday.
- The 50th will likely add extras, so watch the WV Department of Arts, Culture & History site.

Plan it

Charleston's Capitol Market is the food stop. Stay downtown, about 1 mile from the Capitol.

Source: wvmetronews.com (49th gathering, May 2026)

#11 DelFest

MD

WHEN	Memorial Day weekend 2027 (expected Thu-Sun, May 27-30)	WHERE	Allegany County Fairgrounds, Cumberland, MD
TRACK RECORD	19th annual in 2027	ADMISSION	Multi-day passes with camping; day tickets

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

The region's top bluegrass festival, hosted by Del McCoury, with riverside camping and late-night picking.

The lineup

2027 not yet announced. In 2025 the initial lineup came in mid-November, so watch for it soon. The 2026 preview: Alison Krauss & Union Station featuring Jerry Douglas, Punch Brothers, The Infamous Stringdusters, Sierra Hull, The Del McCoury Band & The Travelin' McCourys, Mountain Grass Unit, Shadowgrass.

Insider tips

- Multi-day passes include riverside camping. RV passes are the first to go.
- The DelFest Academy offers workshops for players - a great add-on if you play.
- Rooster Walk (#12) and Maryland Deathfest (#13) are the same weekend - choose your adventure.

Plan it

About 2.5 hours from Howard County. Downtown Cumberland's pedestrian mall has food and hotels if you'd rather not camp.

Source: liveforlivemusic.com (2026 lineup)

#12 Rooster Walk 17 — VA

WHEN	Memorial Day weekend 2027 (dates TBA)	**WHERE**	Pop's Farm, Martinsville, VA
TRACK RECORD	17th annual (nonprofit)	**ADMISSION**	Weekend passes with camping

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

A beloved jam-band, Americana and soul campout that drew 5,000+ fans from 35 states and nine countries in 2026.

The lineup

2027 artists not yet announced; the 2026 initial lineup was released Oct 21, 2025, so it could come any week. The 2026 preview: St. Paul & The Broken Bones, moe., Keller Williams, John Brown's Body, Daniel Donato's Cosmic Country, Kitchen Dwellers, Eggy, Yarn, plus the Rooster Walk House Band.

Insider tips

- "Blind Faith" tickets for 2027 are on sale now, before the lineup - the cheapest way in.
- Family-friendly and laid back, with camping on the farm.
- Same weekend as DelFest - Rooster Walk leans jam and soul, DelFest leans bluegrass.

Plan it

Uptown Martinsville is minutes away for supplies and food.

Source: liveforlivemusic.com (Rooster Walk 16 recap)

#13 Maryland Deathfest — MD

WHEN	Thu–Sun, May 27–30, 2027	**WHERE**	Downtown Baltimore: Market Place, Power Plant Live, Nevermore Hall, Soundstage, Angels Rock Bar
TRACK RECORD	22nd edition	**ADMISSION**	4-day passes (early-bird on sale)

LINEUP PARTLY ANNOUNCED

The most important extreme-metal festival in North America, with a big share of its 2027 lineup already announced.

The lineup

First wave (23 of about 90+ bands): **Enslaved** (Vikingligr Veldi in full), **Candlemass**, **Voivod** (old-school deep cuts), Exhumed (Gore Metal in full), Akercocke (Choronzon in full), Demolition Hammer, Obscura, Naglfar, Sabbat, Vreid, Saturnus, Cruciamentum, Ancient Death, Coscradh, Fleshless, Funebrarum, Gorerotted, Ingrowing, One of Nine, Sadistic Intent, Thulcandra, Ceremonium, Cerebral Effusion.

Insider tips

- The early-bird 4-day pass is the best price, and the most complete lineup on this list.
- All venues are walkable around Power Plant Live and the Inner Harbor, so stay downtown and skip the car.
- More waves are coming over the next few months.

Plan it

Hotels near the Inner Harbor book fast for this weekend. Downtown and Little Italy are close by for food.

Source: metalinsider.net (2027 first wave)

#14 Project GLOW

DC

WHEN	Sat-Sun, June 5-6, 2027	**WHERE**	RFK Festival Grounds, Washington, DC
TRACK RECORD	From Club Glow, DC's dance-music promoter for 20+ years	**ADMISSION**	Ticketed (projectglowfest.com)

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

DC's biggest music festival in this window: two days of major electronic and dance acts on the RFK grounds.

The lineup

2027 lineup not yet announced. Lineups usually drop in winter. 2026 ran May 30-31.

Insider tips

- Take Metro to Stadium-Armory (Blue, Orange and Silver lines) - it's right at the grounds.
- Check the age policy and bag rules before you buy.
- Early-bird tiers are the cheapest - sign up for the presale.

Plan it

The H Street NE corridor and Capitol Hill's Barracks Row are close for pre-game food.

Source: technoairlines.com (2027 listing); projectglowfest.com

#15 West Virginia State Folk Festival

WV

WHEN	Third weekend of June 2027 (expected Thu-Sun, June 17-20)	**WHERE**	Glenville, Gilmer County, WV
TRACK RECORD	Founded 1950 – the oldest festival on this list	**ADMISSION**	Check site; many events free

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

Founded in 1950 by folklorist Patrick Gainer, this is real Appalachian music in a small college town.

The lineup

Performers are announced in spring. Expect fiddle and banjo contests, jam sessions, live bluegrass, Holt House tours, craft demonstrations, the parade and car show, and food contests, including pepperoni rolls.

Insider tips

- The jam sessions are the heart of it. Bring an instrument or just pull up a chair.
- Activities run until about 8 PM each day.
- Lodging is scarce in Glenville, so book early nearby.

Plan it

Look at Weston or Sutton (Flatwoods, off I-79) for hotels. It's about a 4-hour drive from the DMV.

Source: wdtv.com (2026 festival); wvencyclopedia.org

#16 Norfolk Harborfest — VA

WHEN	June 2027 (dates TBA; 2026 was June 19-21)	**WHERE**	Downtown Norfolk waterfront, VA
TRACK RECORD	51st in 2027 (50th anniversary was June 2026)	**ADMISSION**	Confirm before you go

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

One of the East Coast's oldest waterfront festivals: national and regional music acts, tall ships and fireworks every night.

The lineup

2027 acts not announced. Patti LaBelle headlined the 50th in 2026, alongside a VA250 fleet of 60+ tall ships.

Insider tips

- Stay for the fireworks over the harbor - they close each day.
- Military demonstrations and ship tours make this the most family-friendly stop on the list.
- Pair it with the Virginia Arts Festival (#8) or Hampton Jazz (#19) for a Hampton Roads music weekend.

Plan it

The Waterside District is right on the festival grounds for food and drinks. Downtown Norfolk hotels are walkable.

Source: virginialiving.com; thenewjournalandguide.com

#17 AFRAM

MD

WHEN	Juneteenth weekend 2027 (expected June 18-20)	WHERE	Druid Hill Park, Baltimore, MD
TRACK RECORD	51st in 2027 (50th anniversary was 2026)	ADMISSION	FREE – all ages

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

Billed as the largest free African American-focused festival on the East Coast, with major R&B and hip-hop headliners.

The lineup

2027 not announced; last year's lineup was revealed in May. The 2026 preview: Charlie Wilson, SWV, The Lox, Mario, Tamia, PJ Morton, Normani, Chloe Bailey, J Brown, Lil Mo, Ultra Nate, Brandon Woody, plus Baltimore and DMV up-and-comers.

Insider tips

- Headliners play the evening slots, so stake out your spot by late afternoon.
- It's free, so crowds are huge. Bring a blanket, water and sunscreen.
- It doubles as a Juneteenth and Black Music Month celebration with family programming all day.

Plan it

Hampden's 36th Street ("The Avenue") is the nearby food strip. Ride-share in and out to avoid park traffic.

Source: soulbounce.com (2026 lineup); aframbaltimore.com

#18 Clifford Brown Jazz Festival – 40th

DE

WHEN	Expected June 2027 (2026 moved to Aug 2-8 for the World Cup)	WHERE	Rodney Square, Wilmington, DE
TRACK RECORD	40th edition in 2027	ADMISSION	Historically free - confirm

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

A week of world-class jazz honoring Wilmington's own trumpet legend Clifford Brown. The 40th should be special.

The lineup

2027 not announced. The 2026 preview: Marcus Miller, Ledisi, Nicholas Payton, Sheila E., and the KES Band, plus local and regional artists.

Insider tips

- Bring lawn chairs or blankets, and leave umbrellas and tents at home.
- Before each main-stage set, the Jersey Surf Mobile Music Lab runs hands-on drum circles - great with kids.
- There's food-truck row and live painting on the square.

Plan it

The Wilmington Riverfront has restaurants within walking distance. It's about 90 minutes from Howard County.

Source: delawarepublic.org (2026 festival)

#19 Hampton Jazz & Music Festival — VA

WHEN	Last weekend of June 2027 (expected June 25-27)	**WHERE**	Hampton Coliseum, Hampton, VA
TRACK RECORD	57th annual in 2027	**ADMISSION**	Ticketed by day (Ticketmaster)

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

One of the longest-running festivals of its kind in the country, with three themed nights of R&B, soul, gospel and jazz under one roof.

The lineup

2027 not announced; last year's was revealed in early April. The 2026 preview: Fri "No Skips" - Jagged Edge, Dru Hill, 702, Next, Lil' Mo. Sat "Soul Food" - Kirk Franklin, Jodeci, Pokey Bear & Tonio Armani, Marcus Anderson. Sun "Sunday Dinner" - The Isley Brothers, Charlie Wilson, El DeBarge, Marion Meadows & Alex Bugnon.

Insider tips

- Buy single days for the night you want most. Sunday is usually the grown-folks headline night.
- Hotels across Hampton Roads fill for this weekend, so book when the lineup drops.
- It's indoors and air-conditioned - a plus in late June.

Plan it

Produced by the City of Hampton and Hampton University, with the lineup curated by the Black Promoters Collective. Phoebus and downtown Hampton are close for dinner.

Source: soulbounce.com; home.hamptonu.edu

#20 Smithsonian Folklife Festival – 60th

DC

WHEN	Summer 2027 (dates TBA; traditionally late June–early July)	WHERE	National Mall, Washington, DC (traditional home)
TRACK RECORD	60th anniversary in 2027	ADMISSION	FREE

LINEUP NOT YET ANNOUNCED

The nation's living-culture festival hits 60 in 2027 – the one to watch in DC next summer.

The lineup

Theme and dates not announced. In 2026 the festival went national for the 250th anniversary, partnering with about 40 festivals across the country, with a smaller program in DC.

Insider tips

- Evening concerts on the Mall are the hidden gem – cooler and less crowded.
- Take Metro to Smithsonian station, and go early in the day to beat the heat.
- Confirm the 2027 format: the 60th may bring the full festival back to the Mall.

Plan it

Free museums next door make great midday cool-downs. The Mitsitam Cafe in the National Museum of the American Indian is a local favorite.

Source: smithsonianmag.com (Feb 2026)

On my watch list

These are well-known regional festivals that didn't make this list, and why.

- **Capital Jazz Fest (Columbia, MD)** – Founded 1993, normally June at Merriweather. As of May 2026, no 2026 lineup or tickets had been announced, and the organizer faces a Maryland Attorney General refund complaint. Watch for news before buying anything.
- **Washington Folk Festival (Glen Echo, MD)** – 43rd edition, free – but it now runs in late August (Aug 23, 2026), outside this window.
- **Charm City Bluegrass Festival (Baltimore)** – On hiatus since 2024; no return date announced.
- **DC JazzFest** – Labor Day weekend, so outside this window. Look for it in the next guide.

Coming next in Greg's Insider Guides

Full Rehoboth-style weekend guides (schedules, free shows, restaurants and a sample weekend) for each festival once its lineup is complete. Already published: **Vol. 1 – Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival 2026**. Next up: Richmond Folk Festival and Annapolis Jazz & Roots.

Sources

- richmondfolkfestival.org; venturerichmond.com
- rehobothjazz.com (2026 schedule); delawarebeaches.online
- truebluejazz.org
- ferrum.edu/brim (Blue Ridge Folklife Festival)
- annapolisjazzandrootsfestival.com; Mann Publications
- oceancity.com (Springfest 2027)
- eventeny.com (100th Apple Blossom); visitshenandoah.org
- visitnorfolk.com (Virginia Arts Festival 2026)
- blabbermouth.net (M3 2026)
- wvmetronews.com (Vandalia 2026)
- liveforlivemusic.com (DelFest 2026; Rooster Walk 16)
- metalinsider.net (Maryland Deathfest 2027)
- technoairlines.com (Project GLOW 2027)
- wdtv.com (WV State Folk Festival)
- virginialiving.com; thenewjournalandguide.com (Harborfest)
- soulbounce.com (AFRAM 2026; Hampton Jazz 2026)
- delawarepublic.org (Clifford Brown 2026)
- smithsonianmag.com (Folklife 2026)
- metromontage.com (Capital Jazz Fest status); baltimore.org; glenechopark.org