Introducing the Oxford American’s North Carolina Music Issue

The 160-page magazine and 28-song soundtrack will be on newsstands Nov. 20, 2018

LITTLE ROCK, AR — The Oxford American presents its 20th annual Southern Music Issue, featuring more than 25 stories exploring the history and legacy of North Carolina music. Among the many notable contributors to this year’s Southern Music Issue are novelists Jonathan Lethem, Jill McCorkle, and Wiley Cash, and the beloved North Carolina musicians Rhiannon Giddens and Tift Merritt. Tryon-native Nina Simone, one of the most important artists of the twentieth century, graces the cover in a portrait by Jim Blanchard; Simone is the subject of a feature essay about artistic influence and identity, written by poet Tiana Clark.

Also featured: Benjamin Hedin examines the spiritual milieu of John Coltrane’s High Point upbringing; Lauren Du Graf unpacks the gospel roots of Charlotte’s r&b superstars Jodeci; L. Lamar Wilson spends a day with Rapsody in the rapper’s hometown of Snow Hill; and Will Blythe pays tribute to fellow Chapel Hill-native James Taylor.

The North Carolina Music Issue comes with a 24-song CD sampler (plus accompanying digital download with four bonus tracks) of recordings by North Carolinians sourced across nearly a century, from 1924 to 2018. The compilation highlights music from NC legends like Simone, Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane, Earl Scruggs and Doc Watson, James Taylor, and Elizabeth Cotten, plus a wide-ranging host of others, including Tift Merritt, Rapsody, Superchunk, Sylvan Esso, Joe & Odell Thompson, Alice Gerrard, Mitchell’s Christian Singers, Etta Baker, and Malcolm Holcombe. This showcase of North Carolina music also includes a new recording of Ella May Wiggins’s 1929 protest song “Mill Mother’s Lament” by Shannon Whitworth, made exclusively for the Oxford American at the iconic Asheville studio Echo Mountain in September. Accompanying the sampler in the issue are detailed liner notes and essays on the songs by Rhiannon Giddens, Wiley Cash, Ron Rash, Michael Parker, Laura Ballance, David Joy, Mark Powell, David Menconi, Randall Kenan, and others.

In the magazine, readers will encounter thoughtful essays, profiles, and paeans to North Carolina musicians by preeminent writers on the subject, including: Jonathan Lethem on the dB’s; Jill McCorkle on Beach Music; Dasan Ahanu on 9th Wonder; Dave Tompkins on George Clinton; Tom Rankin on Big Boy Henry; John O’Connor on Link Wray; and Abigail Covington on Liquid Pleasure.

Plus: Lumbee historian Malinda Maynor Lowery recounts her parents’ baptisms in Robeson County; Sarah Bryan chronicles the town of Kinston’s immense legacy; Lina María Ferreira Cabeza-Vanegas examines Charlotte’s
Latinx music scene; and OA deputy editor Maxwell George compares Ryan Adams and Thomas Wolfe. The issue also contains North Carolina poems by Benjamin Naka-Hasebe Kingsley, Nickole Brown, Tyree Daye, C. L. White, and Zachary Lunn.

In addition to writing and music, the issue features photography and artworks by North Carolinians, including Romare Bearden, Minnie Evans, Sandlin Gaither, David Holt, Scott Hazard, and Hatty Ruth Miller. The CD sleeve art is by Charlotte-based muralist Nico Amortegui.

The North Carolina Music Issue & Sampler was made possible by the generous support of the OA's Heralds of North Carolina: North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and North Carolina Arts Council, Visit North Carolina, ArtsGreensboro, and North Carolina Humanities Council.

To order a single copy of the North Carolina Music Issue (OA103, Winter 2018), visit your local bookstore or newsstand, or purchase a copy at OxfordAmericanGoods.org. The issue will mail to subscribers on November 6, 2018 and will be available in our online store and on newsstands nationwide on November 20, 2018. For bulk orders, contact info@oxfordamerican.org or 501-374-0000 x 206. Oxford American editors and contributors are available for interviews. Please contact editors@oxfordamerican.org for more information, or to request a review copy.

To celebrate the issue’s release, the Oxford American will embark on a North Carolina live tour of stories and songs featuring contributors to the issue and beloved North Carolina musicians, from Monday, November 26–Saturday, December 1, 2018, in Raleigh, Durham, Charlotte, and Asheville. This weeklong celebration, co-presented by Hillsborough, North Carolina-based Yep Roc Records, and designed in partnership with North Carolina-native singer-songwriter Tift Merritt, will be comprised of concerts featuring a Statewide Singing Circle and literary readings highlighting stories from the issue. The week kicks off with a reception at the Governor’s Mansion on Monday, November 26. Visit OxfordAmerican.org/NC2018 for more information and to purchase tickets.