

First bluegrass and country music festival in Bulgaria!

The weekend of the 29th and 30th June brought both excitement and happy memories for Bulgaria's bluegrass and country music scene. The country hosted its first festival – "Country West Fest"! it took place at the American pub "Saloon" in the town of Bankya, near the capital Sofia.



Visitors enjoyed an outdoor concert on Saturday in the sunshine, with performances by Lilly of the West (bluegrass/swing), Kaliana (country-folk), Tony Serkedjiev (blues/rock and roll) and Anatoli Iliev (trad. country).



A highlight of the program was the performance of mandolin virtuoso and singer Martino Coppo from Italy. He is the main musician of Europe's leading bluegrass band "Red Wine" and a board member of the European Bluegrass Music Association (EBMA). Martino showcased his solo repertoire, which included songs from Red Wine's latest CD "Red". Later, he was joined by "Lilly of the West" for a set including; classic bluegrass songs, such as: "Molly & Ten brooks", "Think of what you've done", "Long journey home", "Blue night" and many others.



Visitors enjoyed a variety of music, excellent American cuisine as well as other entertainment

such as horse riding, kid's program, Black Jack games and raffle tickets with numerous prizes.



On Saturday, Country West Fest was attended by the mayor of Bankya – Rangel Markov and his deputy – Plamen Simeonov. The shows emcee was Bulgarian radio legend – Tom Sprostranov.



On Sunday, the festival continued with full power, despite the rain. It was moved indoors and offered a cozy, warm atmosphere. The program featured Lilly of the West, Roy Sturn & Stetson (hot country), Cash only (Johnny Cash tribute) and Martino Coppo (mandolin, octave mandolin, vocals). Martino invited also musicians from Lilly of the West on stage for a performance of classic bluegrass and country hits.



The show continued with games, raffles, excellent food and drinks and people stayed until late, enjoying the happy and positive mood.

The festival was a true milestone for the development of bluegrass and country music in Bulgaria. All involved should be proud of their achievements which received lots of positive feedback, and hopefully will become regular tradition on the events calendar in Sofia.