

Letting the folk fly at the Belcourt

Todd Snider gathers up the gang for a good cause

What the Folk's happening at the Belcourt.

Yup, it's country/folk/rock songwriter Todd Snider's What the Folk? weekend, a two-day music event kicking off tonight with fellow singer-songwriters Hayes Carll, Adrienne Young and Jeff Austin of the Yonder Mountain String Band taking the stage alongside Snider. Austin, Carll and Tommy Womack will round out tomorrow's lineup.



Singer-songwriter Todd Snider is the force behind the What the Folk? concerts this weekend at the Belcourt.

Snider curated the event to benefit the Country Music Hall of Fame, and it's the continuation of an annual charity series he used to run when he lived in Memphis.

Songwriter/guitarist/producer "Keith Sykes jokes and says, 'They needed to throw a benefit for you when you did the first benefit,' " Snider says. "I never kept track of (how many we did) — the T-shirt of the last one, I think, said fifth- or sixth-annual on it."

Each event went to benefit a different charity in Memphis. The now east Nashville resident (a 'hood he pays titular respect to on his clever, John Prine/Kris Kristofferson-esque 2004 East Nashville Skyline album) hadn't made plans to have one here, but a party at country superstar Vince Gill's house convinced him it was time.

"(He) plied everybody with alcohol and hit us up for money," Snider says, laughing. "And you know, it was for the Hall of Fame. . . . I can't remember the speech he made, but it made sense at the time. And so I thought, 'This year we'll do that for Vince and we'll just call it What the Folk? again.' "

Each artist will play an individual set, and Snider hints that some of his cohorts will make contributions to his set. "I think maybe even some other special guests may show up," he says.

Both shows start at 8 p.m. at Belcourt Theatre (2102 Belcourt Ave., 383-9140), and tickets are \$24.50, with all proceeds going to the hall.

— *Nicole Keiper*, Staff Writer