

Asleep at the Wheel returns to Lee's PAC on Feb. 27

When Asleep at the Wheel first played at Lee College four years ago, a sold-out crowd packed into the Performing Arts Center (PAC) to hear their Grammy Award-winning, critically acclaimed take on the classic western swing style born in Texas.

With a second show set for 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 27 — and a set list featuring new songs inspired by western swing originators Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys — Asleep at the Wheel is hoping to repeat its PAC success. Tickets are \$45-65 and available for purchase online at www.lee.edu/pac, or by calling the Box Office at 281.425.6255. Act quickly, as seats are filling fast.

It all started for Asleep at the Wheel when Ray Benson, Floyd Domino and Lucky Oceans — along with Vermont farm boy Leroy Preston, Chris O'Connell of Virginia and Gene Dobkin, a bass player and Benson's classmate from Antioch College in Ohio — joined forces in West Virginia. They began with a simple goal: to play and help revive American roots music.

In 1970, the band landed a gig opening for Alice Cooper and Hot Tuna in Washington, D.C., at the height of Vietnam, when many Americans were using their choice of music to express their stance on the conflict.

"We wanted to break that mold," said front man Benson, who received the Texas Medal of the Arts in 2011. "We were concerned more with this amazing roots music, which we felt was being lost amid the politics. We were too country for the rock folks, and we were too long-haired for the country folks. But everybody got over it once the music started playing."

Since their inception 45 years ago, Asleep at the Wheel has won nine Grammy awards, released more than 25 studio and live albums, and charted more than 20 singles on the Billboard country charts. They've criss-crossed Texas, gotten their kicks on Route 66, collaborated with everyone from The Avett Brothers and Old Crow Medicine Show to Willie Nelson and George Strait, and been lauded by Reuters as "one of the best live acts in the business."

"It's been an amazing ride. From Paw Paw to San Francisco to Austin, we've seen it all," Benson said. "But, rest assured, there is still so many exciting projects in the works ... The Wheel keeps rolling!"