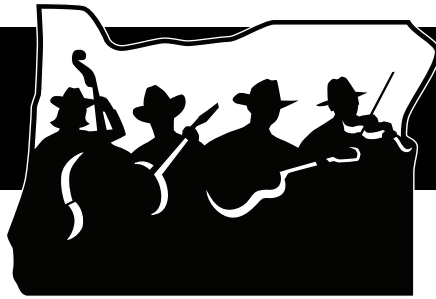


Vol. 34 No. 4
Oct Nov Dec
2014



INSIDE THIS ISSUE!
Practice Tips by Ken Chapple,
a Tale of Two Fiddle Contests,
Nikki Bears!, and More....



\$5.00

Oregon Bluegrass Association
www.oregonbluegrass.org

Bluegrass Express

THE CLEVENGERS

Calm and Creativity in Salem, Oregon

by Claire Levine

If you've ever been to a jam in the Mid-Willamette Valley, you've probably met the Clevengers. Whether it's a hot session with accomplished bluegrass musicians or a slow beginners' jam, Nikki and Clyde show up to sing, play and encourage.

But labeling them musicians who love bluegrass hardly begins to describe the Clevengers – their creativity and craftsmanship; their far-reaching interests; their dedication to their amazing extended family; and their giant hearts.

With Clyde several years into retirement and Nikki starting her first school-less autumn (both Clevengers worked for the Salem-Keizer School District), they have more free time to follow their many interests. Fortunately for the bluegrass community, that means more festivals and more opportunities to meet Nikki and Clyde.

If you haven't connected with them yet, consider this your introduction.

The German seeds of a bluegrass love

Nikki grew up listening to her mom play the piano and her dad play any kind of wind instrument and always, always singing. Although one of her first albums was Flatt & Scruggs' Bonnie & Clyde sound track (\$3!), bluegrass wasn't a big part of the family's eclectic music tastes.

on an Army base in Germany. Every chance they got, she said, "We'd play and pick." (Nikki was playing guitar at the time.)

Nikki eventually left Germany for Idaho to be near her mother, who had relocated from the Midwest. It was there, she said, "I was in Kmart and I saw a guy wearing an Apple Valley



Bluegrass Festival jacket. We chatted about it."

And that was that. She went to the festival, "and I picked my brains out. I was helpless from then on, totally addicted and jam hungry."

By the early 1990s, she owned her first bass and was playing in bands: first Rare Mountain Aire, then Windfall.

Eventually, she joined the Barley Brothers, which

The bluegrass bug didn't hit until Nikki met a banjo player when she was living

later became Prairie Flyer.

Continued on Page 7



WINTERGRASS

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

February 26 - March 1, 2015

Hyatt Regency, Bellevue WA

"How Can I Keep From Singing?"

www.wintergrass.com

Aofie O'Donovan (Sat/Sun)

Birds of Chicago (Sat/Sun)

Blueberry Hill (Th/Sat)

Caleb Klaunder Country Band (Fri/Sat)

Dale Ann Bradley (Sat/Sun)

Del McCoury (Fri)

Della Mae (Sat)

Don Julin & Billy Strings (Th/Sat)

Dust Bowl Revival (Fri/Sat)

Cahalen Morrison & Eli West (Th/Sat)

G Burns Jug Band (Fri/Sat)

I Draw Slow (Th/Fri)

Jayme Stone & the Lomax Project (Th/Fri)

Jeff Scroggins & Colorado (Th/Fri)

Laurie Lewis & the Right Hands (Sat)

Kathy Kallick & Laurie Lewis (*Vern & Ray tribute*) (Th/Fri)

Matuto (Fri/Sat & special appearance on Sunday)

Mr. Sun (Darol Anger, Joe Walsh, Grant Gordy, Ethan Jodziewicz) (Sat/Sun)

Patchy Sanders (Fri/Sat)

Sarah Jarosz (Sat/Sun)

The Steel Wheels (Fri/Sat)

The SteelDrivers (Fri/Sat)

True North (Fri/Sat/Sun)

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Nikki Clevenger keeps on driving bluegrass.



Joe Grez competes in the instrument contest at Stevenson



Photos from the OBA Picker's Fest at Zigzag Mountain Farm



Oregon Bluegrass Association
www.oregonbluegrass.org

Bluegrass Express

Bluegrass Express is a quarterly newsletter dedicated to informing members of the Oregon Bluegrass Association about local, regional and national bluegrass issues, events and opportunities.

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OBA Membership & Ad Information

The OBA Board

Membership Information

The OBA Board of Directors invites you to join the OBA and to participate in its many activities. Our membership benefits include a subscription to the quarterly Bluegrass Express, frequent mailings about events, and ticket discounts to Northwest bluegrass events. Annual membership dues are \$25 for a General Member, \$50 for Supporting Performers, and \$125 for Contributing Business Sponsors, as well as other options. To join, complete the application on the back cover and mail with your check to:

Oregon Bluegrass Association
P.O. Box 1115
Portland, OR 97207

Website

Features include an interactive calendar that allows you to post your own events, excerpts from past issues of the Bluegrass Express, and links for local bands. Come visit us online! Visit the OBA web page today!

www.oregonbluegrass.org

Article and Editorial Submissions

The OBA Board invites you to submit letters, stories, photos and articles to The Bluegrass Express. Published files remain in our archives and art is returned upon request.

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Advertise in the Express!

Your Express advertising will reach over 500 households of bluegrass enthusiasts, while helping the OBA to continue publishing this valuable resource. We appreciate your support of the Oregon Bluegrass Association. For information about placing an ad for your music-related business please contact Pat Connell via email at: obaexpressads@comcast.net or (971) 207-5933.

AD RATES AND DIMENSIONS

Published quarterly:

Winter (January, February, March)

Mailed on January 2

Reserve by Dec. 1, Copy deadline Dec. 15

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Mailed on April 1

Reserve by March 1, Copy deadline March 15

Summer (July, August, September)

Mailed on July 1

Reserve by June 1, Copy deadline June 15

Fall (October, November, December)

Mailed October 1

Reserve by September 1, Copy deadline September 15

SIZE	DIMENSION	COST	TWO OR MORE ISSUES
Full Page	7.5 x 9.5"	\$150.00	\$130.00
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Half Page vertical	3.75 x 9.5"	\$90.00	\$80.00
Quarter page	3.75 x 4.50"	\$60.00	\$50.00
Eighth page	3.75 x 2.25 (2 1/4)"	\$40.00	\$30.00

The OBA prefers to receive advertising payment in advance. For one year contracts, we request payment six months in advance and we will bill for the next six months. Payment may be made online via PayPal at www.oregonbluegrass.org/bgexpress.php or you may send a check payable to The Oregon Bluegrass Association and mail to PO Box 1115, Portland, OR 97207.

When submitting an advertisement to the OBA, please be sure the file is black and white, 300 dpi and in either PDF, TIFF, or JPEG. If you have questions about your file please email Christine Weinmeister at cjuliawein@gmail.com.

The OBA holds board elections each April as individual terms expire. The Board of Directors invites you to join our monthly meetings. We welcome your visit and ideas, opinions and proposals. Or, just come to see what we're doing! We generally meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. The location is subject to change. Call us or email any board member for time, location and directions.

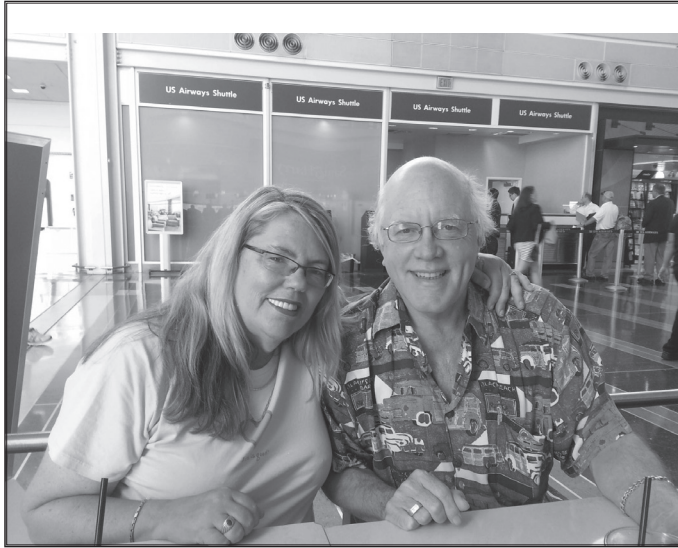
President's Message

Hello Oregon Bluegrassers!

I hope this finds you stuffed with music after a summer full of jams, festivals, concerts and picking parties.

The 7th Annual OBA Picker's Fest (September 12-14) turned out to be a huge success in its new location at the Zigzag Mountain Farm. With perfect sunny and warm weather, just over 75 people came out, brought their kids and spent a delightful weekend playing, attend-

ing workshops, soaking in the hot tub and enjoying an open mic with Fred Coates presiding. An unanticipated bonus was meeting some new people. In addition to the regular Portland crowd, we welcomed people from all over Oregon as well as a couple who came from Alberta, Canada. Speaking as an intermediate player, I felt completely comfortable wandering around and playing in several different jams. I also loved hanging out, listening



to the 'monster pickers' play. The meals that the farm offered were delicious, affordable and healthy. They served 60 dinners on Saturday night. Pending the final decision at the next board meeting, my guess is that we'll be back at the farm next year on Sept. 11-13. Watch the website for details. So now that Tygh Valley is over, it's time to put the camping gear away and look forward to a winter that is chock full of bluegrass. The Eastside concert series is back after its summer hiatus. The Eastside ad in this issue has the lineup for the next few months. Taborgrass is also back from taking the summer off. In case you aren't aware, Taborgrass is a weekly group class and jam session geared toward the beginning and intermediate players of all bluegrass instruments. For more information, visit the Taborgrass website at taborgrass.com.

There is literally a jam on almost every day of the week throughout the state, ranging from the Roseburg jam on the third Sunday of the month to the Off-Key Easy Jam every Sunday at Biddy McGraw's. The Oregon Bluegrass Association's website lists them all and so does this issue of the Express.

If you want to see national bands: On October 12, Del McCoury and David Grisman are playing at the Aladdin Theater, followed by Hot Rize on December 11. In between are some not quite bluegrass artists, such as Red Molly and the Old Crow Medicine Show. The Alberta Rose Theater is another venue that hosts lots of bluegrass. And it's not too early to think about your Wintergrass tickets. The dates in 2015 are February 26 through March 1.

There are also many taverns that offer a regular rotation of good bluegrass. The Laurelthirst offers The Sam Yale Band or Jackstraw most Tuesdays during happy hour. The Muddy Rudder has The Sleepy Eyed Johns and Slipshod every month. There are more.

So even though we're not listening or playing out under the trees, the bluegrass community still finds ways to get together to play or listen. A click of a mouse on the OBA website will guide your journey during the rainy days of winter. It's been an awesome summer and my first as president. I've never had so much fun and I look forward to the next 18 months.



What's Playing on the Radio?

Local Radio Bluegrass and Country Listings

Albany/Corvallis - KBOO

Broadcast from Portland, can be heard at 100.7 FM. See under Portland, below

Astoria - KMUN 91.9 FM

Some syndicated programming
503-325-0010

"Cafe Vaquera"

Tuesdays 9-11pm, Bluegrass/Old Timey
Western/Folk with Calamity Jane
CafeVaquera@hotmail.com

"Shady Grove" Saturdays 7-9pm

Regular folk program

Monday thru Friday 10am - noon
with bluegrass included

Columbia Gorge - KBOO

broadcast from Portland. Can be heard at 92.7 FM. See under Portland below

Corvallis - KOAC 550 AM

Syndicated public radio with some
bluegrass included in regular
programming
541-737-4311

Eugene - KLCC 89.7 FM

Local broadcast 541-726-2224
Mixed format "Saturday Cafe"
Saturdays 11am - noon
"The Backporch"
9 - 10pm Saturdays

Eugene - KRVM 91.9 FM

"Routes & Branches" 3 - 5pm Saturdays
"Acoustic Junction" 5 - 7pm Saturdays
"Miles of Bluegrass" 7 - 9pm Mondays
www.krvm.org 541-687-3370

Pendleton - KWHT 104.5 FM

"Bushels of Bluegrass" 9 - 11pm Sundays
contact Phil Hodgen 541-276-2476

Portland - KBOO 90.7 FM

"Music from the True Vine"
9am - noon Saturdays

Santiam Canyon - KYAC 94.9 FM

"Ken 'til 10" 6-10am M-F

Additional Bluegrass Programming
Streaming and Schedule: www.kyacfm.org



ALADDIN THEATER

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DAVID GRISMAN AND DEL MCCOURY



SUNDAY OCTOBER 12

ELEPHANT REVIVAL



FRIDAY OCTOBER 31 &
SATURDAY NOVEMBER 1



w/ Melody Walker & Jacob Groopman

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 22



HOT RIZE

THURSDAY DECEMBER 11



The Clyde side

While Nikki was growing up in Minnesota, Clyde was making his mark on the Southwest. (They were both military brats.) He grew up in Texas and Arizona. Singing was a part of his life from such an early age that he says, "I think I was singing when I arrived."

At age 11, he was the principal soprano in the church choir. "I could sing higher and louder than any woman in the choir.

"But at 11 and a half, I couldn't anymore." Voice changes happen.

Once things stabilized, he joined a high school ensemble that eventually was tapped to sing background music in one of the "spaghetti westerns" that were popular in the 1960s. With the tragic death of the high school choir director, the young men lost track of the movie's production – and their expectations of Hollywood careers.

Clyde's first guitar cost \$9 – the top promptly peeled off, and Clyde played it duct-taped together for years. He later fell in love with a 12-string ("I walked into the store, and it looked to me like this thing had a halo around it.")

"I bought it because it was the same as the guitar the Stone Ponies (Linda Ronstadt's first successful band) were playing. I don't recommend anybody buy a 12-string for their first real guitar."

When he joined the service, Clyde, too, met up with a banjo player. He bought an Ovation and started learning tunes like The Ballad of Jed Clampett.

"I remember I thought I was so good, and I think back on how bad I was. I was just wailing on that thing. I thought that's what I was supposed to do. But at this point, I'd never heard bluegrass."

Occasionally, Clyde and his buddies would sit in with a country band, which invited Clyde to join them as a singer and guitar player. The Tune Twisters – all GIs based in England – were so popular they were booked out for four years. "The British loved that music."

After a period as a photographer in Viet Nam, Clyde found his way to the Pacific Northwest. It was in Seattle's Inside Passage Bar, as well as monthly jams in Darrington, that he met many of the bluegrass musicians who keep the bluegrass faith to this day.

During that period, he also started playing with an Irish band that played the same bar on St. Patrick's Day for more than 30 years. (Ask Clyde about that some time.) You can also ask him about the band that kicked him out "because I was easier to replace than the banjo player."

Two irresistible forces

At Stevenson in 2000, Nikki remembers walking into a room where Clyde was singing, "Swinging Doors, a Jukebox and a Barstool" while walking his bass.

Nikki's tips for beginning bass players

1. Listen to CDs and learn to play along with them. It will fine tune your ability to hear key changes, timing, chords and song titles.
2. Move a body part while you're playing. It helps keep your timing sharp.
3. Keep your notes clean and simple. Don't let them ring too long or it'll sound muddy. A nice, steady rocking beat with an occasional passing note is not only pleasant to listen to, but it lets the lead players dance around it. Remember that you're not a lead player unless you're taking a break.
4. Tune your bass.
5. Learn where all the notes are on your bass and practice your scales in every key, every day.





"I thought, 'Wow!' He was so full of intense energy."

Nikki's sweetheart, Ru, who was an old friend of Clyde's, had recently passed away after fighting cancer for a long time. Clyde's marriage had broken up around the same time.

"So we started communicating and commiserating. And then we started flirting."

Nikki, who was still living in Idaho, remembers Clyde saying, "Come to Hood River. Sawtooth Mountain Boys are playing. It's half way between us." ("Hah!")

"And I did, and it was fun. And we've been having fun ever since."

A while later, Clyde said, "Come to Salem and be a school bus driver."

"And I did." Nikki said.

More than music

Music brought these two together, but they are both creative, skilled and artistic in many other ways.

The community first got a glimpse of this when they ran the Bluegrass Boutique. During four summers, they sold

"a lot of fun stuff" at festivals across the Northwest, including shirts, string-winders, mandolin straps and jewelry -- some handmade or designed by them, some bought from others.

"It was fun -- but it was also awful, because we'd spend 12 hours staffing the booth, and at the end of it we would be so tired we'd just want to go to bed. So we weren't playing any music," Clyde said.

And was it worth it? Well, Nikki said, "Bluegrass people are really cheap."

Since retirement, they both have more time to build on old skills or learn new ones. Nikki is a talented painter and cartoonist, as well as an inspiration for others who are trying out their art.

Clyde came late to woodworking, but he has excelled. His first project was a cradle for Hannah, his first grandchild. That was followed by a wagon and a rocking chair . . . before he started in on instruments. So far, he's made four mandolins, and one guitar. Next up: a guitar for Nikki and a clawhammer banjo. Eventually, he'll make Hannah a full-sized fiddle.

And they still play music every chance they get -- including twice monthly at

senior centers in the Salem area. They also perform in Old Circle with Dennis Berck and Chuck Holloway.

One of the biggest changes in Nikki and Clyde's lives recently is grandchildren -- a whole passel of 'em: 7 and one half in all (number 8 is on the way). And at almost every festival you'll hear some combination of Clyde, Nikki, Clyde's offspring or some of the grandkids jamming or performing.

Bluegrass rules, and bluegrass regulations

Nikki and Clyde are two of the best bluegrass mentors around (see Nikki's tips for bass players). For many years,

Short course in bluegrass mandolin

Blue River was a popular traditional band based in Eugene during the late 1990s. John Morreau played guitar and sang most leads, backed by Chuck Holloway on banjo and Luanne Fugal on bass. Their mandolin player was planning to move, and they asked Clyde if he would consider stepping in.

Clyde had only played lead mandolin on Irish fiddle tunes up to that time, and he knew that wouldn't cut it with his Bluegrass Police band members.

"So I bought a good mandolin from Ken Cartwright and got two boxed sets of Bill Monroe CDs. Then I locked myself in my room for two months, and by the end of it, I was good enough for them to accept me."

These days, Clyde's great Monroe-style chops and his unorthodox teaching style have put him in great demand for mandolin workshops at regional festivals.



Ken Cartwright would host jams at his music stores or at other local venues, and the Clevengers would make a point of showing up to keep the beat and keep the faith.

Clyde believes that unless a jam is made up solely of people who have been playing a long time, it's helpful for someone to take a leadership role. In a bluegrass jam, he feels, it doesn't have to be straight ahead Flatt & Scruggs, "but Kumbaya is not bluegrass." It's good to have somebody who is willing and able to set some boundaries and give some direction. He has taken on that role in many jams.

Their tips for newcomers?

- Don't be thin-skinned when an experienced jammer gives you suggestions.
- Don't be afraid to get your instrument out, even if you don't feel up to playing. Watch what's going on -- and see what you can emulate. You'll always learn something.
- Speed isn't everything.
- And always try to find a jam with people about the same level -- or perhaps just a little better -- than you. That way, you'll keep playing, you'll gain confidence and you'll learn.



The Bluegrass Box:

How to play the mandolin in any key without using your brain.

By Clyde Clevenger

Back in 1997 I needed to learn to play mandolin. Oh, I knew a few fiddle tunes and some of the chords but had never taken a break in a bluegrass song, had hands like clubs, Vienna sausage fingers and no hand speed--none. Maybe the biggest road block was my long history of never practicing. But Blue River needed a mandolin player in 4 months, Steve Davis was moving to Seattle, and I was determined to get the job. So I went to the Reed Opera House in Salem to visit my dad, Ken Cartwright, bought a Gibson F5-L mandolin and two Bill Monroe box sets.

First thing I noticed was that I couldn't even play rhythm that fast. My hopes were dimming. I listened to all eight CDs several times with my mandolin in my hands, tried to "chop" along and within a few days I could play along with most of the songs, chords only. Listening to Bill's breaks, I noticed that he used a lot of double stops. Aha! That's the secret. I started making fingerboard charts, hundreds of them and found all the double stops in B, B-flat, E, E-flat, every key. Then it dawned on me: the only thing worse than my hand speed was my memory.

But I kept at it, studied the charts and slowly it dawned on me that there were patterns. Patterns! Maybe that's the secret. (Clyde isn't so confident now.) More circles, arrows and red lines on my charts and there was a pattern. Back to Bill and the CDs. I noticed that Bill just sort of followed the melody, implied a lot of the notes, and used lots of double stops. Using these patterns and some double stops, I found I could take a rudimentary break on some of the songs on the CDs. A few more times through the CDs and I advanced to what I still call today a "bulldog break." Follow the melody, acknowledge the chord changes, use as many double stops as I can, and sprinkle with "Monroe-isms."

I got the name for my pattern from an old fiddle VCR--the name escapes me. What he called the Bluegrass Box was similar to mine but not quite the same. Anyhow and anyway, I got the job with Blue River. I will never be as good a mandolin player as Steve Davis, but with my rapier wit, stellar good looks and voice like Elvis, I get by. I may not be good, but I'm confident.

I don't recommend my method to everyone. If you have the time, money and memory, hire a good teacher, listen to a lot of different mandolin players and practice, practice, practice. When I started, I had a full time job, and a family, plus I coached football, wrestling and baseball, leaving me little time to learn and no time to practice. I needed a method that was easy (no brain needed) and required little or no practice. This is it.

I need more time and space to explain The Bluegrass Box than we have here. I am available to do workshops at festivals and other events next year.

The Bluegrass Box and Mandolin Double Stops. If you are a hacker, like me, I bet I can teach you to hack better. I've done a video on the Bluegrass Box that is on my YouTube Channel, "Mandoholic," and will soon have the Mandolin Double Stops video done.

My goal for these workshops is not to impress you but to give you something that you can take home and use.

Contact me at: Mandoholic@comcast.net if you would like to schedule one of my workshops for your festival or other event.



Fall Bluegrass Flourishes in Southern Oregon!

Mandolinist Brian Oberlin with The Booher Brothers (Chris & Ben) will play western swing music on mandolin, fiddle, guitar and bass at the Sutherlin Grange Hall on **Oct 10**. Produced by Joe Ross, the event will celebrate 50 years of fiddling fun since formation of the Oregon Old-Time Fiddlers Association in 1964. Info: rossjoe@hotmail.com

Upcoming concerts, presented by Gaia Project, include The Greencards (**Oct 18**, Ashland; **Oct 19**, Bend), Steel Wheels & Caleb Klaunder (**Nov 21**, Ashland), Carlene Carter (**Nov 8**, Ashland), Shook Twins (**Feb 28**, Ashland). Info: gaiaconcerts.com

Also in Ashland, Ariella St. Clair has a lineup of 15 shows and workshops for her 19th annual season (Sept – April) of eclectic concerts. Of special note to bluegrassers is the **Oct 17** appearance of Dan Crary and Beppe Gambetta. Down the road, mark your calendars for John McEuen on **March 13**, Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick on **March 28**. For the full series schedule, see stclairerevents.com

Leftover Salmon will appear at Applegate Lodge on **Oct 7-8**, and Hot Buttered Rum will be there on **Dec 3**. Info: liveatthegate.com

Under new lease, Ashland Armory is expanding live shows at affordable pricing. Info: liveatthearmory.com

Band Feature

From Eugene, Back Porch Soiree kicked off the bluegrass at this year's Eagleview Music Family Reunion along the Umpqua River on Labor Day weekend. Their style encompasses

folk, bluegrass, Celtic, Cajun, country, and swing -- eclectic interests once described as "a mouthful, but boy is it fun!" Back Porch Soiree started as a group of friends who attended jams together. Asked to perform at a private party, they were "discovered." The group then got serious about the music without losing the fun and friendship maintained by this leaderless group. Founded in 2011, members are Sandy Wallrich (fiddle), Brian Lightheart (guitar), John Gent (mandolin) and Mila Butler (bass). Everyone sings too. At Eagleview, 16-year-old Mila really impressed everyone with her bass breaks and singing. Her mom also demonstrated some flatfoot dancing. You too can "discover" the band on Facebook and You Tube.

Band News

On **Oct 5**, Art along the Rogue features over 50 artists creating huge pastel chalk drawings on H Street in downtown Grants Pass. Eight Dollar Mountain and others (rock,

blues, Celtic) will perform. Info: eightdollarmountain.net

Umpqua Valley Bluegrass Band is working on a special mountain-style Christmas show for the Douglas County Fairgrounds in Roseburg on **Dec 5-6**. They'll also appear at the Festival of Trees at Seven Feathers Hotel & Casino in Canyonville on **Dec 5**. The festival has raised more than \$1 million to date for the HealthCare Fund for Children. Info: rossjoe@hotmail.com

Long Mountain Revival's long-time fiddler Jerry Truppa has moved away, leaving a big gap in that group. Dan Dosier (Off The Wall Music) has been filling in while the group searches for a replacement fiddler. LMR is booking next year's schedule, including Eagleview in Sutherlin (which the group had a great time playing this year), a Gospel music festival in Salem, and the Wounded Warriors Project in Brookings, a small bluegrass festival benefit for veterans.



Back Porch Soiree at the Eagleview Music Family Reunion (John Gent, Sandy Wallrich, Mila Butler, Brian Lightheart)

Jon Clement (Long Mountain Revival's mandolinist) has begun work on a new album, due out in mid-2015, titled "Look Up, My Brother" with bluegrass gospel, a touch of swing, some Celtic sounds, and several instrumentals. The majority of the music will be by Long Mountain Revival, and the project will also feature country vocalist Mike Boren and Christian recording artist Kate White.

Classes and Workshops

Creekside Strings kids' fiddle program is set to bring students to the Wintergrass 2015 Youth Academy. This past summer, Creekside Strings hosted three fiddle camps in Ashland. Info: creeksidestrings.org

Festivals

Eagleview Music Family Reunion (near Sutherlin) was a resounding success, and dates have been set for 2015 at this beautiful group campground along the Umpqua River that offers great fishing, swimming, hiking and nature study. The emphasis will continue as

a showcase for Oregon bluegrass, old-time fiddling, and Americana groups. Mark your calendars for **August 28-30, 2015** (the weekend before Labor Day weekend). The moon will be bright, glowing and full. Bands should contact Joe Ross before **March 1** to get scheduled. Info: rossjoe@hotmail.com 541-673-9759

Jams (always call ahead to confirm)

First Friday – 6 PM - Gospel jam, Redwood Grange, Grants Pass. Info: 541-292-6907

Sunday after the first Friday – 1-4 PM - Mia and Pia's Pizzeria, Klamath Falls, Info: 541-281-5994 or 541-783-3478 banjoist48@yahoo.com or benfcoker@gmail.com

Second Saturday - Tom's Guitars in Medford. Info: 541-772-1994

Second Tuesday - Caldera Tap House in Ashland. A lively, challenging and fast-paced jam hosted by Siskiyou Summit. Info: 541-482-8984 justapicker@charter.net

Second Sunday - 8:30 AM breakfast, 11 AM-1 PM jam in Williams at the grange hall. Info: steveradcliffe@peak.org 541-479-3487

Third Friday – 6 PM - Gospel jam, St. John's Lutheran Church, Eagle Point. Info: jonmando@embarqmail.com 541-538-8482 or 541-826-4334

Third Sunday (year-round) – 1-5 PM - OBA Roseburg Chapter, Evergreen Grange Hall, Roseburg. Info: 541-679-0553

Fourth Thursday -6-9 PM - Wild River Pub, Grants Pass. A mix of bluegrass, folk, and Americana, with some good pizza too. Info: 541-471-7487

Radio

Mondays from 7 – 9:30 p.m., "Bluegrass Tendencies" w/ Georgia Lee features diverse tunes from the countryside with a tendency towards bluegrass. Info: freewillradio.org kimmericle@oigp.net



Long Mountain Revival at Eagleview (Mark "Pappy" Adams, Dan Dosier, Jon Clement, Bob Batte)

Correction:

In the Summer 2014 issue of the Bluegrass Express, we incorrectly captioned a photo on page 10 as being Corral Creek. The band whose photo was published was actually the Umpqua Valley Bluegrass Band from Douglas County, OR. Corral Creek Bluegrass Band is from Newburg, OR. Members of Corral Creek include Carl Dornfeld, Ron Taylor, Pam Young, Ed Fegles, Grady McKenzie and Tracy Hankins.

Our sincere apologies to both bands.

The OBA Bluegrass Express



Corral Creek

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The flatpick guitar style is difficult to master, making it easy to get discouraged. I'm not nearly where I'd like to be as a guitarist, and there are probably ten guitarists on my neighborhood block in SE Portland who are better than me. (I *try* to remember that music isn't a competition.) Sometimes I feel like giving up, but I never will. I keep at it because I understand that it takes a lot of hard work to be able to sound how you want to sound. Talent alone doesn't cut it. I know what I need to work on and I always make an effort to touch on as many of those elements as I can in my practice. What I love most and what really keeps me going on this musical journey is hearing my own progress! Here are 10 ways you can improve your flatpick guitar playing.

1. Practice in performing position.

If you perform sitting down, sit down when you practice. If you perform standing up, stand up when you practice. I usually perform standing up, and for me, it's more challenging to play standing than sitting. I find it harder to get a sturdy foundation for my right hand. I've been getting better at it with practice, though. If you perform standing up and you're more comfortable sitting down, sit down in the posture you're comfortable with. Make sure you have your strap on before you stand. Take a mental and physical note of how your right arm feels. Stand up slowly and try to keep your arm in that same comfortable position where you feel most anchored and in control. If you can't keep your position, then you'll have to adjust your strap length.

2. Loosen up. Relax your ass.

Guitar players, really all developing musicians, hold tension in various places when they play, including: the right leg, the shoulders, the neck, the jaw, left hand, etc. Unfortunately, it's basically impossible to play fast, technical stuff when you're all tense. The

best advice that I ever got for achieving relaxation was from classical guitarist Jim Piorkowski at SUNY Fredonia. Strange as it may sound, his advice was to relax your ass. Relax your butt as if you're about to... relieve yourself. Yes, you read that correctly. Obviously, you don't want to literally do that but relax your butt cheeks while sitting down (or standing up straight) with your shoulders back. Take a couple deep breaths and feel the tension flush away. The key to playing clean and fast is to have relaxed hands, arms, and shoulders—I swear to you, it all starts from your behind!

3. Practice with a metronome on the off-beat.

It is necessary to practice with a metronome if you are working toward being an advanced musician. The audience notices rhythmic "mistakes" first, way before flubbed notes. Look at jazz players: Some players play WAY far out note choices, but if they are in time and create a rhythmic motif, it sounds hip. The key to getting that "in the pocket" swinging feel is to practice your lines with the metronome on the off-beat. It almost automatically gives you a more danceable and desirable sound to your playing.

4. Left-hand technique: stay on your fingertips.

There are many things to work on with your left hand. You have to have a good, natural position, you have to work on your dexterity by practicing hammer-ons and pull-offs, plus you have to learn scales,

arpeggios, and licks, etc. WOW, that's a lot! One of the biggest things you can concentrate on with your left hand, though, is staying on your fingertips. Staying on your fingertips will improve your tone, and will be the foundation for making all those other techniques *sound good*. Staying on your fingertips will give you get the cleanest tone because your fingertips are less fleshy and will secure the string against the fret. You're also less likely to get residual string noise from adjacent strings

5. Right-hand technique: use your right arm at the elbow.

I've noticed many guitarists wiggle their hand at the wrist. These folks will likely end up with carpal-tunnel syndrome, or they're just not playing with the force required to get good tone out of an acoustic instrument. There's a lot of debate out there about your right hand and how to get the best use out of it. I look to the cleanest pickers in the world like David Grier, Chris Thile, Clay Hess, Chris Eldridge, etc. They all have something in common: they keep their hands very relaxed and make subtle



C chord on the fingertips



movements that start from the elbow and follow through to the thumb.

6. Isolation.

If you're having trouble with memorization, or mastering a particularly difficult lick, isolate your hands. For example, if you're working on a difficult cross-picking pattern in your right hand, take the *left* hand out of the equation. Practice the right-hand pattern only, effectively playing the open strings. You'll be amazed on how quickly you'll conquer that really tough run.

7. Practice in front of people.

Get out there and perform. Perform for your wife and kids! Perform for your friends! Get used to playing ENTIRE songs without stopping. If you practice without an audience and flub up and stop in the middle of a song, you are more likely to do that during a performance. It's important to keep going and learn how to recover from those inevitable flubs. A great way to help you out is to record yourself and listen back for things you can improve upon. This is really tough for every musician; however, it's the only way to reach the pinnacle of your individual style.

8. Improvise and write your own licks.

Improvising is fundamental to most musical styles. Even the coolest classical composers for guitar, like Leo Brower, leave room for improvisation and wild interpretation. Improvising and trying new stuff is the best way to find your individual style. Not everyone starts out like Coltrane, however. Where do you start? Get some back-up tracks. I use Band-In-A-Box software with bluegrass "real tracks." Let the music play and just try wild stuff—release your inhibitions and don't be hesitant to experiment. Record whatever comes out and listen back to see what you think. You may be more pleasantly surprised than you ever imagined you could be! When you

hear something from what you played that you like, transcribe it or memorize it, and put it into your box of licks. Transpose it and play it in different keys, play it in different tunes. In time, you'll have a collection of licks and lines that become your unique signature.

9. Listen to your mentors and heroes.

It's great to want your personal style to shine through in your playing but it's also important to study the masters. The best thing you can do when you're learning a particular style of music is to *immerse yourself* in it! Listen to the music ALL THE TIME. When you hear something you like, make a note of it. Go back over your notes regularly and pick specific things to study deeper. Break down what David Grier, Bryan Sutton, or Cody Kilby is doing. Take the time to match their fingering, tone, and timing if you can. I also like taking ideas from non-guitarists, too. Some of my favorite artists to borrow from are Stuart Duncan and Jerry Douglas. I use the Amazing Slow-downer to slow down and analyze licks and melodies that I like and that I want to learn. There are several other great tools out there that allow you to listen to your favorite musicians at a pace you can follow along with. Figuring out how the masters do it helps to open doors for you in your own improvisation, which is also helpful when you are writing your own licks.

10. Record yourself and listen back.

An underlying theme in most of the tips I've shared with you is to record yourself, listen back, and act as your own critic. It's important to the process and will help you get better. That means you need to get a recording interface and mic. It doesn't

have to be expensive either! I have a Focusrite Scarlett USB Audio Interface that I use all the time to record rehearsals and practices. You can find the interface for \$150 and you'll need a mic, cable, stand, headphones, and a computer, too. When you have these valuable tools you'll be able to analyze what you don't like about your playing and be able to identify ways to change it. It's difficult but important. Admittedly, it can feel demoralizing to listen to yourself and think, "*THAT'S what I sound like!?*" There's no way around it, though, because the first step to improving is to know where you're at, relative to where you want to go. Once you get in a groove with recording yourself, listening back, and fixing aspects of your play you don't like, you'll really enjoy hearing your progress.

Take it one step at a time. Learning is an iterative process. The key elements to practice are Isolation, Repetition, and Iteration. You've got to keep going and whatever you do, keep on pickin'!

If you have a question, or if you're interested in more detail on a particular point, please tweet me at @ken_chapple or comment on Facebook at facebook.com/kenchapplemusic.

For more topics and information, point your web browser to kenchapple.com



The Bluegrass Express is a volunteer newsletter. As with any volunteer publication, it's cobbled together by people who write, take photographs, design and edit in their spare time, around busy work schedules -- and the desire to be done with their volunteer tasks so they can be picking.

And, given that even the most polished writers make typos and forget where to put the quotation marks and make spelling mistakes, most volunteer newsletters leave a lot to be desired in how well the articles read.

What sets the Express apart from other such newsletters is one person: Nancy Christie.

Nancy has been proof-reading and copy editing the Express for four years. She is a fastidious, detail-oriented reader who cleans up the big (potentially embarrassing) and tiny mistakes. She makes us all look good.

In the real world

Many of us know Nancy from seeing her at jams or on stage with her beautiful red bass. But she disappears from music for eight hours a day -- serving as office manager at Oregon Health & Science University's Institute for Environmental Health, where she proofread and edited scientific journal articles and funding proposals for many years. She also

worked for about a year as a proof-reader and typesetter on a community newspaper in California.

She's used to working with material that uses a lot more syllables than anything you'll find in the Express, so for Nancy, editing simple text is a piece of cake.

So when the Express needed help, Nancy volunteered. And she's been an integral part of the production process ever since.



About the music

As did so many kids, Nancy started out on the piano -- and really didn't like it. And her mom told her she couldn't carry a tune -- which any-

body who's ever heard Nancy belt out a song will tell you was a big mistake on Mom's part.

A true child of the 60s, Nancy had grown up listening to rock. She also was familiar with classical music from over 12 years of teaching ballet in Washington, Idaho, and Arizona. But during a stint in Los Angeles, she started to listen to country and western music, which eventually led to bluegrass -- and to Winlock, her first festival.

"After a few festivals, I saw that it would be a lot more fun to attend if I played an instrument. And somebody said the bass was fairly easy to learn -- at least to get to a point where I could have fun with it."

After renting a bass for about 10 months, she bought her Engelhardt bass, which some people call "Big Red."

Her first jam was the Rambling Bluegrass Jam in Beaverton, led by Paul Drews and Kathleen Tyau. She quickly started attending others, until she became comfortable as "the bass player."

"Then I heard about the Rock Creek Tavern Jam and started going to that one. It was a little bit over my head -- but they needed a bass, so they let me stay!"

Her first band was called "In the Grove," which included several of the Rock Creek Tavern jammers. She also had fun playing occasion-



ally with the slightly wacky 2Licks-2Many.

Then guitar player/singer Dennis Zelmer invited Nancy to play with A Sudden Tradition, and she's been playing with them since February 2012. A Sudden Tradition is an eclectic sort-of-bluegrass band that performs at a wide variety of functions throughout Oregon, from fund-raising races to weddings.

"I think I always had a fantasy when I was young that I would somehow be on stage in front of an audience. I never knew how I would get there,

and certainly never thought that it wouldn't happen until my 60s and that I'd be playing upright bass."

Always playing

Today, Nancy is the reliable bass player at the Cowlitz Valley Old Time Music Association. For more than 30 years, the group has held an open mic on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Friday evenings for musicians in the Longview/Kelso area. Nancy and a group of others make up the back-up band, in which she's expected to play show tunes, bluegrass, rock -- and even back up

musicians on their originals.

"It really expands my listening abilities."

Nancy lives near Kelso, in a house that once belonged to her grandparents. It's a beautiful setting on 40 acres, "But there's not much bluegrass between the Portland/Vancouver area and the active jamming at Winlock."

She'd like to start a jam, but she realizes that it's always risky to advertise a bluegrass jam: The definition of bluegrass seems to broaden to encompass anything people feel like playing, from Bob Dylan songs on the harmonica to Waylon Jennings on the Telecaster.

"So if I want a bluegrass community here, I expect that I will need to cultivate it myself." She's currently figuring out the best way to make that work.

Meanwhile, she's got plenty of music in her life: The Cowlitz group; a small ensemble that plays at assisted living centers; the Rock Creek Tavern jam; attending Taborgrass to observe the teaching methods, and performances with A Sudden Tradition.

"I'm playing with other people about 12 times a month. That's plenty."



By Nikki Clevenger

If you don't have an old Gibson guitar, you probably did not attend the 1st annual Columbia Gorge Fiddle Contest. Herded through the doors of the Stock Barn, Gibson-wielding guitarists flooded the stage, providing rhythm guitar for fiddlers from all over the Columbia Gorge area and beyond. Many of today's local favorites made an appearance for a chance to win \$400 at what might be the largest fiddle contest in the area. Portland fiddling locals Andy Emert, James Mason, Aaron Carter, Eileen Walters, Bob Heinith, Donna Reuter, Denice Carter, Luke Price, Gary Schuh, Cynthia Bartlett-Hamm, and Ricky Selman, among others, all gave it a go for top prize. The contest also drew fiddlers from surrounding areas such as Seattle and Corvallis. There were also a handful of contestants from as far away as Texas and Idaho to boot.

Success is certainly a word that can be used to describe this first installation of a re-birthed fiddle contest for the area. Questions linger, as typically do in competition circles, but the general attitude was positive. Those who participated expressed excitement and happiness during and after the contest. It is, naturally, difficult to not be in good humor while playing fiddle tunes and among others who do. I did hear complaints of high camping costs from several campers. Despite the fact that

some of the fiddlers left, having seemingly no interest in the bluegrass world around them, there were fiddlers galore still in attendance. There were many good fiddlers out jamming in tents and the camping area who never set foot in the Stock Barn for the contest. Perhaps you are one of them.

Little did these fiddlers know: There was a second fiddle contest held the same weekend, at the Columbia Gorge Bluegrass Festival. This contest had merely a handful of contestants, 6 or 7 at the most. Representatives of the contest were seen actively searching the campground for anyone to participate, even while the contest was going on. Had everyone left? This contest was open to more than just fiddlers. Flatpick, mandolin and banjo divisions were offered. Due to low participation, the flatpick and mandolin divisions were combined into one division, paying out the Top 3. As it turned out, there were 4 contestants in this division. Someone got the shaft. It feels as though interest in this contest is low--so low, in fact, that I fear this contest will not continue for very long. Perhaps some feel as though contests should disappear altogether. Some would argue that they are entertaining and offer an opportunity for some to get on stage and show their stuff. It was certainly entertaining watching

a mandolin contestant from northern Washington rendering his version of Old Rodney Dangerfield. Between breaks he would tell short stories that gave the audience and judges a stitch in their side from laughing by the time he was finished. Quality entertainment that did not exceed the given set length or offend any of the other performers. Just food for thought.

Will I see you at these contests next year?

Columbia Gorge Fiddle Championship (Open Division) Results:

1. Luke Price (Portland, OR)
2. Mia Orosco (Waco, TX)
3. Andy Emert (Portland, OR)
4. Aaron Carter (Portland, OR)
5. Stephen Burwell (Maple Valley, WA)

Columbia Gorge Bluegrass Festival Instrument Contest Results (Adult):

Banjo Champion: Evan Heidtmann
(Portland, OR)

Fiddle Champion: Aaron Carter
(Portland, OR)

Flatpick/Mandolin Champion: Morgan
McNamara (Portland, OR)



The judges of the bluegrass instrument contest entertain the contestants and crowd before the competition.

2014 OBA Pickers' Fest

Perfect weather, combined with the beautiful setting and hospitality of Zigzag Mountain Farm, made the 2014 Picker's Fest one of the best yet! Many thanks to all those who joined us for the weekend of picking, singing and friendship. We hope to see you all next year!



The Theory of Bluegrass: Swiss Army Banjo

by Matt Snook

Unless you have unlimited practice time available, you're probably interested in making the most of it. While we probably don't want mundane practicality to dictate the music we make, some techniques are certainly more generally useful than others

For instance, you might have learned a very pretty version of something like *Whiskey Before Breakfast*, a tune that is almost certain to come up during jams in the northwest these days. However, you've probably noticed that melodic break you spent hours learning has several drawbacks, because these licks generally suffer from the same weaknesses: first, they are unique. Each melodic lick is a species unto itself, and really only fits in one particular tune, in one particular place. Secondly, for most people the melodic licks have to run smoothly from start to finish – once you fall off in the middle, it's hard to jump back in. This can cause a 'fear of falling' in the beginning picker, so that she is actually hesitant to call her favorite tune, because a mistake in the intricate and fragile solo seems disastrous. (It is not.)

Second time around on the same tune highlights another shortcoming of the melodic lick: they are also incredibly hard to modify on the run. As anybody who uses them can verify, it is actually harder to learn melodic licks that are similar to each other than those that are radically different. The unique right and left hand moves required for even slightly different licks also make improvising on melodic banjo beyond most folks' abilities.

Finally, melodic licks are stranded. The time you spend learning that run in the key of D can't be taken anywhere else – even capoed! Most melodic phrases are so arcane in both the left hand positions and right hand non-patterns that they refuse to be helpful in any other situation.

But don't despair! Not all your banjo practice needs to be shackled to one solo on one tune at a time. There are several patterns you can find on the fingerboard which are precisely the opposite; a sort of Swiss Army Knife of banjo licks that can be used in almost any tune in any key. I call them *working positions*, and they polar opposites of the brittle melodic licks. Don't get me wrong, I love melodic banjo. Just realize that your time spent learning those particular licks is limited in payback. The Swiss Army licks

fit any tune, anywhere, anytime, can be modified without limits; they work in any key, and actually can provide a soft landing place for those times that you do fall off of your special melodic licks because they can be started, stopped, and interrupted any time you like! There are several of these, but we'll look at just one of them for now.

Figure 1 represents a banjo fingerboard with either the nut or the left hand index finger making a bar across the strings. This can be all four strings, but often is only two or three, depending upon the lick being played. For this Swiss Army picking position, the strings will be fretted either at the barred fret, or one or two frets above that bar, as shown. You'll notice that there is a relationship between the barred notes and the fretted notes. If the barred notes are at the nut, they make a G chord while the other pattern comprises an A minor chord. If you are using this shape with the barred chord at the seventh fret, that will be a D chord while the other fret positions make up an E minor chord, etc. That's not really important, just an interesting coincidence of the musical scale.

How useful is this working position? To really bring home the difference, here is some homework. Go to your pile of banjo books, out into the internet, or build your own melodic versions of *Big Mon*, *Whiskey Before Breakfast*, *Texas Gales*, and *Ragtime Annie*. All great tunes, and played in A, D, C, and...whatever, respectively. Without even looking at the melodic versions you've found or created, we know several things about them. They are unique, with left hand fingerings and right hand patterns (or non-patterns!) that are nothing the same. You certainly won't be using your *Whiskey* solo in *Big Mon*, for example. They will also have the dubious qualities of needing memorization and being hard to jump back into when you fall off. They will be completely impertinent in any other key, will probably prove difficult to use in improvisation, etc.

Now pull out your Swiss Army knife of licks! The first four lines of Figure 2 show the introductory parts of those tunes. They all rely upon our Swiss Army position, despite being different tunes in different keys. The first two lines present *Big Mon* in A way up at the 14th fret and *Whiskey Before Breakfast* at the 7th fret, both in a melodic or 'single-string' style. Want to play *Scruggs* style? Line

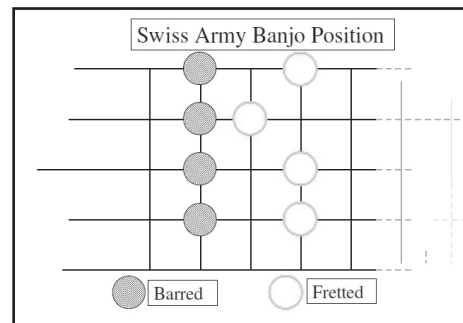


Figure 1: Swiss Army working position. The barred notes are either at the nut or fretted by the index finger. Fingering for the other notes will vary depending on just what you're playing.

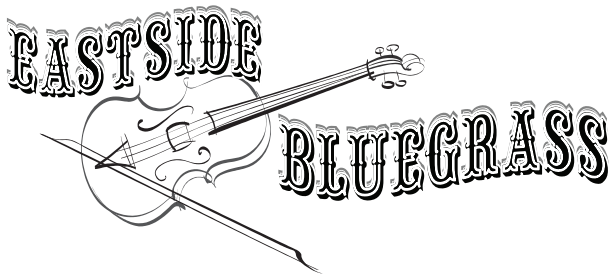
three is a *Scruggs* opener for *Texas Gales* in C, using the nut for the barred notes and the familiar C chord fingering for the rest. Also in C is the beginning of *Ragtime Annie* in C at the 5th fret – and since this tune is played in various keys, give it a try! You can play it exactly the same in C, D, E, A, G... Just tune your fifth string to something sympathetic, change the position of the barred notes, and off you go.

To demonstrate the flexibility of these working positions, look at the next four lines. Here you have alternative takes on the same tunes, using more roll patterns instead of melodic for the first two tunes, and simple variations for the next two. This working position can be used to create great banjo melodies, and is so comfortable after a while that you can go ahead and launch into your most convoluted melodic break knowing that, should you space out in the middle, this working position will provide not only a soft landing but may even become your initial go to break in the future!

Give it a try. There are several of these useful *working positions* scattered around on the fingerboard. Any practice time spent here will benefit not just one song, but everything you play in a long night of jamming.

PS: All "Theory of Bluegrass" articles will be available on the OBA website. Your mileage may vary, and the author is not responsible for injury or damages incurred during a segue from melodic to *Scruggs* style. No banjos were harmed in the making of this article. Matt teaches banjo & dobro in Coos Bay, Corvallis and Portland, Oregon. Send messages to matt@greenbeard.us.





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Sound advice: Hints and tips on sounding your best with Mark Gensman, Ground Zero Sound

Hey there, fellow bluegrass fans. Another summer of music and fun comes to an end. Sadly, we have lost some more festivals and that is a shame--to lose those opportunities for live bluegrass performances.

A question comes up frequently from bands that play in venues other than festivals, such as bars, coffee houses, restaurants and smaller indoor venues. Using a PA in small spaces can create feedback problems, especially if there is a lot of background noise and the monitors need to be turned up. The typical fix is to put a pickup on your instrument and run it through a "DI." Which DI is the normal question.

What's a DI, you ask? It means "direct injection" and it basically is an impedance matching device. Plus they provide ground-lift capabilities that will avoid ground-loop hum problems caused by multiple ground paths. You plug your high impedance guitar cord into this device, and it has a balanced XLR output connection to the mixer and an unbalanced connection to your amplifier. The XLR connection is a "balanced" output and is a microphone level, and can send the signal several hundred feet without loss.

A simple DI is just an impedance matching transformer with the balanced output. This type of DI is called a "passive" DI, meaning it doesn't add anything to the signal. However, having a quality transformer is still critical to the sonic performance of a passive DI box, which explains why some of the better brands like Radial are very expensive.

Passive DIs are useful for keyboards and electric bass guitars. Normally, in bluegrass, use an active unit for acoustic instruments because of the additional control over volume and equalization it provides.

An active DI normally does not have a transformer but rather uses active circuits that require power, either via phantom power from the mixer or from an on-board battery. Normally the active DI box is turned on when an input is connected, and switched off when phantom power is detected or the input is unplugged. Several DI boxes have speaker level inputs so you can connect an amplifier-driven signal to the DI and send that signal over balanced output to a mixer. However, NEVER connect amplifier-driven speaker signals to a DI unless it specifically states there is a connection. You do not want to let the smoke out.

Acoustic instruments fitted with passive piezo pickups require some sort of preamp because of their low-level signal. An active DI is the very best choice. With an active DI, you have volume control, input control and equalization capability,

so you can tailor the sound to your personal taste. I have had players of acoustic guitars and acoustic bass instruments with piezo pickups tell me they don't require an active DI, and that has always been a mistake. The low-level output of a piezo pickup makes the sound thin and only active electronics can solve the problem.

Rarely does a typical rock-and-roll sound contractor carry an active DI, so if you are smart you should always provide your own. Especially since you can spend the required time to adjust the unit to achieve the sound you want. I normally carry three or four passive DI boxes and two active DI boxes since most of my live sound activity involves acoustic music. My passive DIs were inexpensive but of good quality and have served me well over the years. My three active DIs get the most use.

For the typical bluegrass musicians with a pickup on their instruments, I highly recommend the LR Baggs Para DI. I believe it is the direct box of choice with most professional acoustic musicians. I also like the Fishman Pro EQ active DI. Mine typically sits on stage where any musician can use it if they choose to. Both run on phantom power or nine-volt batteries and my suggestion is to always put a new battery in your active DI before each gig. Very cheap insurance.

I hope to see many of you at various festivals next season, and keep picking and listening.

If you have any questions about anything involving recording, mastering, audio software, duplicating, mics, speakers or sound reinforcement, please feel free to contact me at:

GZsound@hotmail.com.

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“I don’t always do what you’re technically ‘supposed’ to do. So anybody that happens to come at me at any point throwing this knowledge around that you’re supposed to anchor your hand and keep it off the body of the guitar, and you’re supposed to hold your pick a certain way, and you have to hold your guitar a certain way - it’s crap.”

- Josh Williams, *Ready for Anything*

When asked to dispense advice about musical technique or gear, I always remember Josh Williams’s quote above. What works for me may not work for you. With that in mind, I’d like to share some thoughts and information regarding guitar strings. What follows is mostly information that I’ve gleaned from the internet and gathered into one convenient place. I hope it works for you.

Guitar string “problems” can be grouped into two general categories: Trouble (I don’t like the way they sound) and Pain (my strings hurt my fingers). The following information may help you solve your guitar string Trouble and Pain problems so that true happiness can be yours again.

Trouble (I Don’t Like the Way My Strings Sound)

Many, but not all people, consider medium gauge phosphor bronze strings to be the standard for bluegrass. Another string material widely used in bluegrass is 80/20 bronze. In general, phosphor bronze strings are darker and mellower in tone compared to 80/20 bronze. If you’d like a brighter tone so you can hear yourself better in a jam, a set of 80/20 bronze strings in your favorite gauge may do the trick.

Pain (My Strings Hurt My Fingers)

As stated above, the “standard” bluegrass guitar string set is medium gauge. Medium gauge strings sound great, but the increased tension can cause pain in your fingers, hand, and wrist. Medium gauge strings have caused cases of carpal tunnel syndrome in some players. Former national flatpicking champion Stephen Bennett told me at Winlock in July that he “loves the sound of mediums,” but he can’t use them any more due to issues with his hands.

So, what to do? First, unless you’ve been signed to a recording contract

with national touring support, ditch the “standard” strings and play what doesn’t hurt. If that means switching to a lighter gauge string, so be it. The goal is longevity – the more you take care of

your hands, the more years you can play.

If you insist on mediums, consider switching from phosphor bronze to 80/20 bronze. Information on the D’Addario website indicates 80/20 bronze has slightly less tension than the same set of strings in phosphor bronze. Another option is a hybrid set – D’Addario and GHS offer a bluegrass set, which is a mix of medium gauge strings on the lower E, A, and D strings, and light gauge on the G, B, and E. Elixir offers a similar set they refer to as Light-Medium.

In terms of tension and protecting your fingers, Elixir strings present a paradox: They are easier on your fingertips because of the coating, but the overall tension of their sets is slightly higher than other manufacturer’s sets. For example, D’Addario’s website shows their standard medium phosphor bronze EJ17 set has an approximate overall tension of 185 pounds. Elixir’s website shows their Nanoweb medium gauge phosphor bronze set has an overall tension of 188 pounds. By comparison, D’Addario’s medium gauge EXP coated 80/20 bronze set EXP12 has an overall tension of approximately 176 pounds. If Elixir strings feel a bit tight to you, consider switching to another manufacturer’s strings. Most string manufacturers such as GHS and D’Addario now offer coated sets.

Fall and winter are a great time to experiment with different strings. Try a few sets that differ from what you normally buy; you may be pleasantly surprised (and your fingers will thank you).





By Nikki Clevenger

Oregon Bluegrass Association



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Kathy Boyd & Phoenix Rising

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Scheduled Jams:

Though we try to stay up to date, times and locations change - always call first!

Sunday

KLAMATH FALLS: Bluegrass Jam - Sunday after the first Friday of the month from 1 - 5 pm
Mia's and Pia's Pizzeria and Brewhouse, 3545 Summers Lane, Klamath Falls, OR 97603
For Information: Ben Coker (541) 783-3478 benfcoker@gmail.com

PORTLAND: OBA Jam - First Sunday of every month October- April: 12:30-4:30PM
Portland Audubon Center, 5151 NW Cornell Road, Portland
All levels of bluegrass players are welcome and we frequently break a small group off for faster picking. Small donation of \$6.00 requested to help cover room rental.
For Information: Rich Powell powellR5923@q.com

PORTLAND: Off Key Easy Bluegrass - Every Sunday 2pm to 5pm
Biddy McGraw's Irish Pub, 6000 N.E. Glisan St.
Beginner and intermediate jam. "Nobody's too crummy too play with us!"
For Information: Randy Black or Tony McCormick offkeybluegrass@oregonbluegrass.org

CLACKAMAS: String Along Music Jam - 2nd and 4th Sundays
Sunnyside Library Community Room, 13793 SE Sieben Park Way, Clackamas, OR 97015. Located on circle behind Albertsons at 148th.
For information: Sharon - queen.sas@juno.com

ROSEBURG: OBA Roseburg Jam - 3rd Sunday 1-5 pm year round
Evergreen Grange, 5361 Grange, Rd. Take Exit 119 off I-5. Just past the 2nd stop light, turn left on Grange Rd. The Grange is down 1/2 mile on the left.
Bluegrass Jam - all levels encouraged.
For Information: (541) 679-0553 lizcrain42@gmail.com

WILLIAMS: Pancakes & Jam - 2nd Sunday of every month except July and August. Pancake Breakfast: 8:30-11am, Bluegrass Jam: 11 am - 1 pm.
Williams Grange, 20100 Williams Hwy.
For Information: Steve Radcliffe (541) 479-3487 steveradcliffe@peak.org

Monday

PORTLAND: Rambling Bluegrass Jam - Every Monday night all year. Friendly!
See Our Website for information on location, time, contact, etc. www.ramblingbluegrass.org

Tuesday

ASHLAND: Bluegrass Jam - 2nd Tuesday - 7-11pm
Caldera Taproom, 31 Water Street, Ashland. For Information: Call Glenn Freese (541) 482-8984 justpicker@charter.net

DUNDEE: Bluegrass Jam: 1st and 3rd Tuesday Each Month, 7-9 pm
Held upstairs at La Sierra Mexican Grill, 1111 N Hwy 99W, Dundee, OR, 97115
Features bluegrass/old country music. Beginner to intermediate jam, all levels welcome.
Information: Jon Cooper (503) 702-8978 cooperweld@gmail.com

EUGENE: Bluegrass Jam Every Tuesday 9:00 pm - 1:00 am.
Sam Bond's Garage, 407 Blair Blvd, Eugene
Established in 1995, the venue of this year 'round jam offers good food and micro brews.
For Information: Chuck Holloway & Sean Shanahan. Call (541) 431-6603.

HILLSBORO: Rock Creek Bluegrass Jam Every Tuesday 7-9pm
McMenamin's Rock Creek Tavern
10000 N.W. Old Cornelius Pass Rd. Hillsboro, OR 97124.
Established, open intermediate and advanced Bluegrass only jam.
Information: timhowell74@gmail.com

Wednesday

BEAVERTON: Bluegrass Jam - Every Wednesday except the 2nd one, 6:30-9:30 p.m.
Round Table Pizza, 10150 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy Beaverton, OR (just east of 217)
For Information: janeromfo5@gmail.com

SILVERTON: Bluegrass Jam - Every Wednesday 7 - 9 pm
Seven Brides Brewing Co. 900 N. 1st St., Silverton, OR
For Information: Mark Rauch 2047@gmail.com
DwaynePowell@dwyanepowell@hotmail.com

EUGENE: Jam - Each Wednesday from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Music Masters Studios in South Eugene located at the shopping center at 40th & Donald
All skill levels are encouraged. Good players stop in frequently and sit right in with newbies. No charge. Some old time and old country tunes filter in with the bluegrass.
For Information: Sean McGowan (541) 510-1241 <http://www.musicmastersstudio.com/>

Thursday

BEND: Bluegrass Jam - 2nd and 4th Thursdays year round from 7 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Held in the board room of the Bend - LaPine School District, downtown Bend, between Wall and Bond Streets, across from the Public Library.
For Information: Becky Brown and Verda Hinkle (541) 318-7341 hinklebrown@bendbroadband.com

GRANTS PASS: bluegrass-folkgrass-gospelgrass-mountain-musicgrass - 3rd Thursday 6pm-9pm

Wild River Pub meeting room
Acoustic-bluegrass, folk, western, Americana roots & more!
For Information: (541) 471-2206 - Brinkerhoff and Antonucci

VANCOUVER: Bluegrass Slow Jam
Every Thursday from 6:30-9:30
Barberton Grange, 9400 NE 72nd Ave, Vancouver WA 98665
Please note this is a slow jam, with the belief that bluegrass is a non-competitive participation sport. All talent levels are invited to participate. No amplified instruments. Listeners welcome. No charge, but there is a donation jar for those who would like to support the Grange for allowing use of their facility.
For information: Chuck Rudkin pbr@comcast.net

Friday

DALLAS: All Gospel, All Acoustic Jam
Every third Saturday of the month 7-10 pm
Guthrie Park in Dallas.
For Information: Sally Clark (503) 623-0874

Saturday

PORTLAND: Taborgrass Bluegrass Class & Jam - Every Saturday Through May. Starts up again September 6, 10-1 for the beginning class and jam; 1-4 for the intermediate
St. David of Wales Episcopal Church 2800 SE Harrison Street Portland, OR 97214
For all instruments. No registration required. Drop-ins welcome.
Cost is \$10 per session. Knowledge of basic chords and the ability to execute the chord changes is required.
For Information: www.taborgrass.com

DALLAS: All gospel, all acoustic jam - Every third Saturday of the month 7-10 pm
Guthrie Park in Dallas
For Information: Call (503) 623-0874 dusterjim@hotmail.com

WINLOCK, WA: Slow Jam - Second Saturday of the month beginning at 1 pm, October through May. Held at the Hope Grange in Winlock, Washington. Great for all levels and especially good for total beginners.
For Information: see website - winlockpickers.com or email winlockpickers@gmail.com

VANCOUVER, WA - Old Time Country Jam - Every 2nd and 4th Saturday 6:30-10:00 pm
2500 N.E. 78th Ave., Vancouver, WA. 98665 at the Vancouver Masonic Center
All are welcome to join the fun as a musician, singer, or to just listen and or dance.
Contact info: Dean Roettger (360) 892-0769 or (360) 627-1228 email vip1x1@yahoo.com

If you have jam updates or additions, you may update your jam's listing via the public calendar at oregonbluegrass.org or email calendar@oregonbluegrass.org



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A Sudden Tradition

A Sudden Tradition is a five-member Portland-area Americana band, performing bluegrass, folk, old time, country, standards, contemporary, and original songs. Our mission is to bring musical joy to your gathering. Upbeat and family friendly-- light-hearted and just plain fun-- that's what you get with A Sudden Tradition!

www.ASuddenTradition.com
Dennis Zelmer 503-893-4569
Suzanne Chimenti 503-957-6161
info@ASuddenTradition.com

Back Porch Revival

Gene Greer – guitar/harmonica, Tony McCormick – banjo, Dan Anolik – mandolin/harmonica, Aron Racho – guitar and more, Bruce Peterson – bass and guitar.

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www.backporchrevival.com
Gene Greer
info@backporchrevival.com
503-641-4946

Back Up and Push

Dan Kopecky --mandolin/vocals, Robert Brownscombe –bass, Susie Anderson – fiddle/vocals, Tom Gall -- guitar/vocals, Patrick McLaughlin – banjo.

5 piece bluegrass band from Welches, OR. We play a mix of traditional bluegrass, southern blues and a few cowboy tunes. Available for festivals, shows, parties, dances, barbecues or whatever!

backupandpush.tripod.com
Patrick McLaughlin
patrickmw@aol.com

Bethel Mountain Band

Gene Stutzman, Jerry Stutzman, Larry Knox, Tyce Pedersen (Front) - Jerry Schrock, Will Barnhart, Craig Ulrich

Hello bluegrass lovers of the Willamette Valley! Please visit our website to learn more about us, our music, our schedule, and the annual "Bluegrass in the Orchard Grass" event.

bethelmountainband.com
Jerry Stutzman
info@bethelmountainband.com

Steve Blanchard

Steve Blanchard is well known as an acoustic flatpicker guitarist, singer and songwriter with a career spanning over four decades. His musical style includes bluegrass, cowboy/western, folk, and Americana.

No matter what the style or venue, you're sure to feel Steve's love and passion for his music.

www.SteveBlanchardMusic.com
503-730-0005
Steve@SteveBlanchardMusic.com

Eight Dollar Mountain

Darrin Campbell, Stuart Green, Phil Johnson, Peter Koelsch, Mark Lackey.

Eight Dollar Mountain rises from the Cascade-Siskiyou Mountain region of Southern Oregon and brings you fine string music from the long standing traditions of excellent bluegrass.

www.eightdollarmountain.net
Mark Lackey

Fadin' By 9

What happens when you bring together a bass-playing attorney, guitar-strumming bilingual reading specialist, fire-on-the-fiddle volcanologist, and a banjo-picking elementary school principal? Correct if you circled "(c) Fadin' by 9". With hot pickin', tight harmonies, and a mix of "bluegrassified" rock, folk, and bluegrass covers & originals, Fadin' by 9 creates a unique, uplifting, high-energy sound.

www.fadinby9.com
Dave Irwin
dave-irwin@comcast.net
360-903-0131

Home Grown

Steve Smith, guitar; Bill Nix, banjo; and Dave Morris, fiddle. Everyone sings.

HomeGrown has presented their music in a variety of settings ranging from Bluegrass festivals to concert halls. Their music ranges from intense Jug Band dance tunes to foot tapping porch tunes to sweet melodic waltzes.

www.homegrownoldtime.com/in
Bill Nix
billnix1@msn.com

Hudson Ridge

Mary Luther- lead vocal and bass, Jerene Shaffar-vocal, mandolin and bass, Shelley Freeman- bass and vocal, Kevin Freeman, lead guitar and vocal, Bob Shaffar-fiddle and dobro, Fred Grove-rhythm guitar.

Hudson Ridge has a sound all its own. Love of harmony and the desire and ability to "Ridgetize" their own blend of Americana, Bluegrass, and traditional Country music gives this band a truly unique sound.

www.hudsonridgeband.com
Mary Luther
mluther56@gmail.com
541-404-9281

Kathy Boyd & Phoenix Rising

Phoenix Rising appears fresh and new as the result of its members performing together in various combinations over the past 30 years. This particular combination has now gathered together in full force, bringing together the best of bluegrass, cowboy, folk, country, Americana and some incredibly talented songwriting to bring you a sound that is clean, hard driving and uniquely their own.

www.phoenixrisingband.org/
kathyboyd@phoenixrisingband.org
503-691-1177

The Loafers

Mike Stahlman, Dave Elliot, Aaron Stocek, Holly Johnson

The Loafers are an acoustic quartet, based in the Portland-Metro area, specializing in bluegrass, jazz, and old time instrumentals, with a few good classic vocals thrown in for good measure. We are a new group with some old names, and a couple new faces.

Dave Elliot
503-663-3548

Long Mountain Revival

Long Mountain Revival's main emphasis in the group is sharing the Gospel through song. Long Mountain Revival is available for church functions, outreaches, community events, and any other venue where Gospel Bluegrass music is desired.

www.myspace.com/lmrevival
Jon Clement



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jonmando@embarqmail.com
541-292-6907

Lost Creek

From Portland, Oregon, Lost Creek delivers a driving blend of bluegrass and old time standards with terrific vocal harmonies and tasteful instrumentation. For years they've delighted audiences at festivals, pubs, parks, dances, markets, and weddings throughout Oregon and Washington. Have a listen and see what's new ... thanks for stopping by.

For Information:
www.lostcreekmusic.com
Band@lostcreekmusic.com

Lucky Gap String Band

Chas Malarkey, Bob Llewellyn, Jerry Robbins, Mike Harrington, Linda Sickler

Good Old-Time Traditional Americana and Bluegrass on the Oregon Coast. High Energy, Tight Harmonies, and Fun-Loving Personalities compliment any Party, Dance, Wedding or Special Occasion.

Chaz Malarkey
Malarkey@charter.net
541-265-2677

Mischief

Based in the Pacific Northwest, Mischief is father/daughter duo Matt and Anna Snook with Jim Brockill. We've 70+ years of experience playing bluegrass and acoustic music. Be amazed: trio harmonies and instrumentals with banjo, Dobro, guitar, mandolin and octave Mando, and fiddle.

Matt@greenbeard.us
541.805.5133

Misty Mamas

Carol Harley, April Parker, Katherine Nitsch, Eileen Rocci

This band – together since 2005 – has made a real name for itself in the Vancouver/Portland acoustic music scene. Collectively these women have decades of experience playing and singing in harmony. MISTY MAMAS serve up Home-Style bluegrass filled with powerful harmonies, traditional and original songs as well

as tasty instrumentals combining the American genres of bluegrass, old time, gospel, folk and country music. Family friendly, the band can include interactive songs that engage the younger set.

Carol Harley
Carol@mistymamas.com
www.mistymamas.com

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LuAnn Price, Michael Johnson, Steve Leming, Dave Toler and Steve Bickle

Money Creek plays stirring mountain ballads and burning banjo tunes. Known for their precise harmonies, rarely do you find a group of singers with their unique blend. Join Money Creek on a musical American journey of triumph, sorrow and just plain fun.

www.moneycreekbluegrass.com
LuAnn Price
moneycreekbluegrass@hotmail.com
425-346-6136

Mud Springs Gospel Band

George Klos
541-475-6377

Puddletown Ramblers

Puddletown Ramblers is a regional bluegrass band that performs original songs, good old time traditional bluegrass, acoustic, old country and Americana music. We are based in Portland, Oregon and perform all over the Northwest. Our blend of harmonious voices will shake that tender chord in your heart and leave you wanting to hear more.

Dave Peterson, Tom Martin, Joe Martin, Walter Jacobson, Fred Schultz.

Dave Peterson
puddletownramblers.com
david@puddletownramblers.com

Rose City Bluegrass Band

Gretchen Amann, Charlie Williamson, Peter Schwimmer, Spud Siegel

The Rose City Bluegrass Band performs an eclectic blend of Bluegrass and Americana. Who doesn't love great banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin and bass backing up 3 part harmonies? We excel at playing and delighting folks at

corporate and civic events, weddings, family gatherings, private parties, restaurants and taverns.

www.rosecitybluegrass.com/ind
Charlie Williamson
charliew3@nwlinc.com
503-206-4911

Roundhouse

Donn Whitten, Kim Jones, Ron Leavitt and Joe Denhof

Roundhouse was formed with the goal of providing a variety of musical genres to diverse audiences: something for everyone. Toward this end Roundhouse performs bluegrass, southern rock, doo-wop, gospel, country, blazing instrumentals and original compositions. Roundhouse instrumentation includes guitar, mandolin, banjo and bass.

www.roundhouse-band.com
Kim Jones
roundhouseband@qwestoffice.net
503-838-2838

Shasta Ray Band

The band's founder and leader is Shasta Ray, born in New England. His travels and experiences are reflected in his song writing. About 30% of what the band plays are Shasta Ray originals. The band is referred to as a truly "Community Band"...a "Bring a town together Band." The music played is a real slice of Americana including bluegrass, folk, country, sing-a-long gospel, and old time favorites.

Liz Crain
downhomeband@yahoo.com
541-537-1031

Slipshod

Slipshod formed in 2012. These musicians enjoy entertaining audiences with both their humor and musical skills. Matt Snook (dobro and banjo) and Steve Blanchard (guitar and mandolin) offer listeners a broad and diverse range of music, including originals, familiar melodies and dynamic instrumentals. Their harmonies and unique vocal interpretations add to their precise instrumental talents.

If you're looking for a fun, energetic



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band for your next event, party or festival, consider Slipshod. Check out this dynamic duo on their web site, Facebook and YouTube.

Steve Blanchard, 503-730-0005
Steve@SteveBlanchardMusic.com
Matt Snook, 541-805-5133
BohemianBanjo@gmail.com

Sleepy Eyed Johns

Ian Joel - banjo; Mark Klassen- guitar;
John Melnichuk - fiddle; Chuck Davidshofer - bass; Billy Wyatt - mandolin.

Sleepy Eyed Johns – Stump-pulling bluegrass, from the roots.

Ian Joel
se6bq5@teleport.com
503-281-7666

Steer Crazy

Rick King -- Guitar, Glenn Denison -- Mandolin, Tim Dawdy -- Steel-Guitar & Dobro

A New Brand of Western & American Music. Musical fun and close harmonies that require no complicated explanation. Nice guys singing and playing great music.

<http://www.facebook.com/Steercrazyband>
Tim Dawdy
beardvc@pacifier.com
360-904-0347

Stumbleweed

Stumbleweed is a Portland based bluegrass band. Playing mostly original material, with a few classics thrown in, we blend traditional bluegrass and honky tonk with a bit of old country, and we smile a lot. From weddings to company picnics, Stumbleweed plays with an infectious energy that brings fun to any gathering.

Contact
westcoates@juno.com,
garrettmaass@gmail.com or
oregondivedoc@gmail.com

The Wild Wood

Coalescing from Portland's thriving music scene, The Wild Wood is a

constellation of accomplished young stars who have been attracted toward one another as much by each other's shine as by the affinity they share with traditional Folk music. The Wild Wood resonates with that part of us which is rooted in a simpler way of life while delighting us with dynamic arrangements, emotional vocal harmonies and virtuosic solos by two national champions. Josiah Payne – Mandolin, Belinda Underwood – Bass, Michael Money – Guitar, Kian Dye – Fiddle

<http://www.thewildwoodmusic.com/>

Wayward Vessel

Ken Chapple (guitar), Julie Schmidt (fiddle), Josiah Payne (mandolin) and Belinda Underwood (bass).

Wayward Vessel is an adventurous alternative acoustic ensemble exploring the boundaries of bluegrass and folk music. With superb musicianship and lush, natural vocal harmonies, the band creates a unique palette to portray their rich library of original and traditional music.

www.waywardvessel.com
info@waywardvessel.com

Whiskey Puppy

Rachel Gold (guitar), Justin Auld (banjo and fiddle) and Gabe Adoff (Bass)

Whiskey Puppy plays boot-stomping, mule-slapping traditional bluegrass and old time music. The Portland, OR trio brings energy, humor, and skillful musicianship to little-known songs and tunes searched out from the repertoires of the early Southern string bands.

<http://www.whiskeypuppy.com/>
Rachel Gold
rachelgold145@gmail.com
503-227-0647

Whistlin' Rufus

Pat Connell, Ritchie Wernick, Nat O'Neal, Patrick Connell, Zach Banks, John Meek.

Whistlin' Rufus has delighted family audiences throughout the Pacific

Northwest for several years. Three and four part vocal harmonies, exciting instrumentation and contagious fun are part of the Rufusian bluegrass experience. A Whistlin' Rufus show guarantees a varied and wonderful mix of blazing bluegrass, original homemade tunes and an Irish fiddle tune or two.

www.whistlinrufus.com
Pat Connell
whistlinrufus@comcast.net
971-207-5933

Betsy and Theron Yochelson

Stand-up bass / mandolin -- Lead / harmony vocals. We head up two bluegrass / acoustic-country "all-event" bands in the mid-Willamette Valley.

541-409-8248
Betsybyo@gmail.com
Red Diesel:
www.facebook.com/reddieseloregon
Prairie Dog Backfire:
www.reverbNation.com/prairiedogbackfire

How do I get my band's information listed here?

1. **Sign up** for a band membership! Go to Oregonbluegrass.org, fill out the form on the back page of this issue, or find us at a festival or event! A band membership includes one print subscription per membership.

2. **Email** your band's listing to webmaster@oregonbluegrass.org. Don't forget to include contact information and a photo (and a link or two if you have it.) Once we have verified that your membership is current, your listing will be posted to the website. The Express is updated quarterly *from the website*. We may have to shorten your listing from the website to fit allowable print space.



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