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INSIDE THIS ISSUE!
Travels With Toshio, Banjo Dynamics,
Winter Festival reviews, and more...



Oregon Bluegrass Association
www.oregonbluegrass.org

Bluegrass *Express*

TRAVELS WITH TOSHIO

By CarlyMae Buckner

When asked about how I spent last summer, people tend to be surprised when I tell them about the highlight of the summer, a month spent in Japan. Yes, I say, I really did stay for four weeks without my parents or a school group. What appears to be even more surprising to them is that I was able to visit thanks to my ties with the Japanese bluegrass community. I stayed in the home of my family friends, the Watanabes, arguably the most important bluegrass musicians in Japan. Many people have never heard of the bluegrass scene in Japan, but it has always been a part of my life.

In the mountains near Asheville, North Carolina, I grew up immersed in a vibrant music scene.

My parents, banjo player George Buckner and singer-songwriter Brooke Buckner, raised me in an environment full of bluegrass music and clog dancing. I am a fiddler and a fifth-generation mountain musician. My parents and I always performed as a family band, and I grew up playing music with their musician friends every time they came to our house for a pickin' party.

As a little girl, my first impression of Japan

was a faraway land where my dad traveled to play banjo. With his childhood friends Chris Sharp and Kevin Sluder, their band, The Tipton Hill Boys, toured Japan twice with the help and guidance of a legendary figure in the Japanese bluegrass community, Toshio Watanabe. Every year, Toshio



CarlyMae & Friends at Takarazuka Festival

brings a group of musicians to attend IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association's annual conference, festival, and awards) and tour the Blue Ridge mountains. As long as I can remember, their trip has included a stop at my family home for a traditional night of pickin'. Over the years, I've gone from looking up to my friends to playing and jamming alongside them. After being invited to come as a

family many times, finally, in the summer of 2018, my parents and I traveled to Japan for the first time as a family. We stayed in Toshio Watanabe's home in Takarazuka, and went on a small tour Toshio had set up for us as a family band. I was captivated by the passionate bluegrass music com-

munity and the intersection between mountain and Japanese culture. After discovering my interest in the language, I ended up taking a leap of faith to switch out of my Spanish class and into the Japanese class offered at my school in New Hampshire, Phillips Exeter Academy.

Eager to visit again, during the school year I reached out to Toshio Watanabe (or as I call him, Toshio-san) and asked if it would be possible for me to intern with him for the summer. Toshio was kind enough to set up an internship for me so that I could practice my first-year Japanese skills while assisting him and learning about his and his late brother Saburo's company, Bluegrass Old Time Music Service (or B.O.M. Service, Ltd.). Toshio and his employee, mandolin player Shin Akimoto, take care of the company's record mail-order business, making foreign music merchandise

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OBA Membership & Ad Information

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 \$30 for a General Member, \$50 for Supporting Performers, and \$125 for Contributing Business Sponsors, as well as other options. You can join online or complete the application on the back cover and mail your check to:

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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!

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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. Please send submissions to:

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When submitting an advertisement to the OBA, please be sure the ad is accurate and the file is black and white, 300 dpi and in either PDF, TIFF, or JPEG format. If you have questions about your file please email John Nice-Snowdy at nicetunz@gmail.com.

You can also find the OBA on Facebook! "Like" our page and keep up to date with bluegrass events.

Founded in 1982, the Oregon Bluegrass Association (OBA) is a volunteer-run, 501(c) (3), non-profit arts organization consisting of individual and band memberships. Based in Portland, Oregon, the OBA has a chapter in Roseburg, and is the umbrella organization for the Chick Rose School of Bluegrass.

The OBA is led by an elected Board of Directors who volunteer for two-year terms. Monthly meetings are open to all members and an Annual Meeting is held for the state-wide and regional members. Financial support for the OBA comes from membership dues, fundraising events, tax-deductible donations, merchandise sales and advertising revenue from the Bluegrass Express, the award-winning member newsletter.

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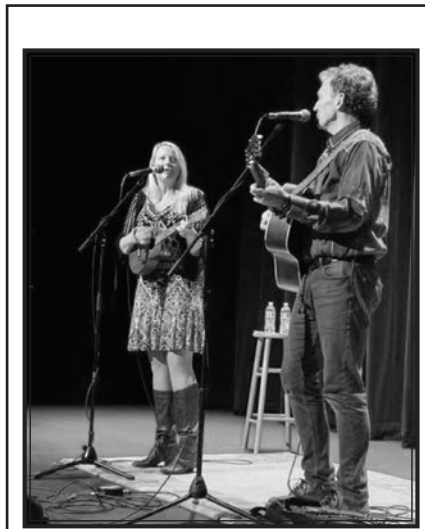
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Bluegrass Express

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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President's Message



Photo By Doug Olmstead

When I first wrote this issue's message, it was full of well-deserved praise for what our organization has accomplished recently, including the Sonny Hammond Memorial Gospel Show, where David Day and Tracy Hankins and their production team showed us how it's done; and OBA's presence at Wintergrass, especially Founder's Brewing and Bend Cider; Linda Leavitt, Patrick Connell, Tony McCormick and Randy Black, all the bands who played in our showcases, and everyone who stopped by to visit, jam, and donate.

But the coronavirus, and the disease it causes, called COVID-19, changed the balance of my message. Instead of excited anticipation of our planned events over the next couple of months, we are looking at what we can do to help our global and local bluegrass community stay vibrant and solvent until this health crisis is over.

We want you to be healthy and safe; follow the advice you're hearing from every direction: Wash your hands frequently, avoid touching your face, and stay home if you are sick in any way. But also consider the musicians and all the associated personnel they help support, who may be out of work for weeks or months to come. Think of all who depend on music entirely or partly for their livelihood: teachers, sound technicians, event planners, restaurants, hotels, airlines, trains, buses, printers, the employees at all those places and more. Consider how much you might spend on an evening to see your favorite local band, a touring major show, a beverage while jamming. If it's within your means, take some of that money and go to their web sites to buy a CD, a music book, a download, a T-shirt, a dinner to go, to help make up what these folks are losing from all the necessary cancellations. If you already bought tickets to a cancelled event, consider donating the ticket price to the sponsoring organization. Many of these groups operate on an extremely limited budget. One canceled event could mean the difference between continuing to operate or closing forever.

Claire Levine, a frequent article contributor to this newsletter, reminds us of The Jeremy Wilson (JWF) Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization which provides assistance to Oregon and Clark County, Washington musicians facing medical issues. The JWF has opened a Go Fund Me drive to help musicians, crews and their families as they struggle to pay basic costs of living due to the unprecedented performance cancellations due to COVID-19. Please help if you can. Go to this site for more information and to donate:

<https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/covid-19-oregon-musicians-relief-fund1>

We still plan to host our Annual OBA Membership Meeting from 1:00-4:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 28, at the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Hwy, Portland, Oregon 97219. There's plenty of free parking. There will be refreshments, some nifty drawing prizes, lots of opportunities for jamming, and some new bluegrass friends you haven't met yet. We will be electing a slate of Directors, and yes, your vote matters. Likewise, this is your opportunity to be heard, so bring your questions and great ideas.

Until then, please accept my humble thanks for your OBA membership and support of our entire music community.

Chris
OBA President

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CafeVaquera@hotmail.com

"Shady Grove" Saturdays 7-9pm
Regular folk program
Monday thru Friday 10am - noon
with bluegrass included

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

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Mixed format "Saturday Cafe"
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"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

Salem - KMUZ 88.5 & 100.7

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Travels With Toshio

more easily accessible for consumers in Japan. Saburo, who passed away in November of last year, was in charge of the bluegrass journal Moonshiner, writing and editing since the publication's creation in 1983. After corresponding with Toshio, it was established that I could apprentice with him at B.O.M. for a few weeks in the summer. I would also get to go to the 48th annual Takarazuka Bluegrass Festival, which the Watanabe brothers co-founded in 1972. Only outdone by Bill Monroe's Bean Blossom Festival and Dr. Ralph Stanley's McClure Festival, Takarazuka Bluegrass festival is the third longest continually running bluegrass festival in the world.

After months of anticipation, finally the time came for my departure to Osaka. Spending a month at home in North Carolina, I had filled my time by playing music with my parents and studying up on my Japanese. I could hardly wait for my internship to start. With fiddle in tow, during the second week of July I set off for my second trip to Japan. A day later, I touched down at Narita airport near Tokyo. My friend, mandolin player Kozo Kawakami, and his wife picked me up from the airport and spent the evening with me before I had to fly to Osaka the next day. The next day, I flew from Narita to Kansai airport in Osaka, where Toshio would pick me up and take me to Takarazuka.

My first few days in the Watanabe home were mostly uneventful as I slept off the jetlag. Toshio's wife, Kazumi, and his second son, Hisashi, welcomed me into their home as part of the family. Most mornings, I would accompany Kazumi to



Carly Mae with Shaggy Mountain Boys Toshio Watanabe (left) and Toru Yamaguchi (right)

the local market to fill up jugs of water for the day and buy enough food to prepare lunch and dinner. Kazumi and I had to alternate between English and Japanese to communicate, but I learned so much just from speaking with her. The family was incredibly kind and patient with me as I practiced my chopsticks and language skills.

After a few days, Toshio brought me to a pickin' party at a small music club in Itami called "Tomorrow," where I was reunited with many of my musician friends. The club was packed full of musicians, playing along to the music with banjos, guitars and fiddles while in their seats. Groups would rotate on and off the stage at the front of the room, following a handwritten schedule in which each band had signed up for an eight-minute set. Although crowded,

the small club felt friendly and familiar, like a pickin' party that might take place in someone's living room. Someone notified me that my turn was next, so I quickly

gathered some friends together for our impromptu performance. A spontaneous onstage decision of what to play led to my friend and banjo player Hirokazu Kotera leading the room in a sing-along of The Beverly Hillbillies theme song, The Ballad of Jed Clampett (in English and Japanese).

My favorite part of the trip, by far, was the Takarazuka Bluegrass Festival. In Toshio's station wagon, we traveled 30 minutes by car from the city of Takarazuka to Sanda, a town which was about as far out in the country as possible for

Japan. Up in the mountains of Sanda, the festival takes place at a wooded campground. After driving way out into the country, we pulled off the main road onto a dirt road leading up into the camp. I can remember first stepping out of the car into the extremely hot and humid air where Saburo and some other men were working on setting up a canopy over the stage. Festival-goers trickled in all afternoon. I sold them wristbands in exchange for the 4000-Yen admission fee (about \$37). By evening, the campground was full of musicians and listeners.

That evening, dozens of kids that looked to be my age lugged instruments and sleeping bags up the dirt road. I learned that they were students from Kobe University's Bluegrass Club. The group set up under a pavilion and grew larger as the evening went on and more students arrived. While a few set up concessions, most of the students were playing music in different jam circles. It was unlike anything I had ever seen--dozens of teenagers who wouldn't put their instruments down. I decided to introduce myself to these kids. I walked up to one boy sitting with a mandolin and introduced myself with mediocre Japanese. He responded with wide eyes in English, "How do you know Japanese?" I got to talking with him and learned that he had spent time abroad in Australia during high school, and was now in his second year at



2019 concert poster: The Faded Grass with Carly Mae Buckner

Continued 

Travels With Toshio

Kobe University. He told me about his discovery of the Bluegrass Club, and how he instantly loved the sound of the unfamiliar music. He chose mandolin because it was his favorite-sounding instrument, and after practicing for just a few months, he would be performing the next morning.

I spoke with more students and explained that I was from North Carolina. "North Carolina?" one girl asked, "like Cabin in Carolina?" The students were amazed that I was actually from the place that they sang about. I was amazed that these students were so interested in the bluegrass music that I had grown up with.

Once the festival started that evening, the rest of the weekend was full of nonstop music. An extensive lineup meant that the woods would echo with banjo and guitar from early morning to late into the night. Students formed jam circles and played for hours, hardly considering sleep. I grabbed my fiddle and bounced between a few groups, some with freshmen who had just started on their instruments, and some with advanced pickers, seniors who had been playing longer. These students were totally dedicated to the music; groups would circle up and play the same tune over and over, in what I finally realized was a rehearsal for their onstage performance.

At the festival I met plenty of interesting characters, including a boy called Tater, just a few years older than I was. Tater introduced himself and told me about a year he spent in Tennessee when he was 12 years old, living with legendary fiddler Tater Tate. Tater and I spent a long time talking about fiddle. He could play one tune in all of the great fiddlers' styles, pointing out differences and variations in breaks. Tater's extensive knowledge left me inspired to study more music and take advantage of my surroundings at home in North Carolina.

The last night of the festival, "CarlyMae and Friends" had a time allotted in the schedule. While trying to piece together a short set, Tater and I were jamming with another guitar player when I noticed a young man standing around playing his banjo by himself. I invited him to jam with us and he wore out Groundspeed. He told us he wasn't part of the university club, and he didn't have a band to play in. I recruited him into our band and soon we were ready to go. Our band ended up building in size until when it was time for the performance, the stage was packed full. Although the music might not have been the most clear or precise, we had a great time playing together that night.



CarlyMae with Hirokazu Kotera (left) and Toshio Watanabe (right)



CarlyMae and Friends at Takarazuka Bluegrass Festival



CarlyMae with Toshio & Kazumi Watanabe and George Buckner

For my last adventure before returning home to the U.S., I was invited to play at a country music club in Nishinomiya called Fort Worth with a band called The Faded Grass. I was the only band member onstage who wasn't wearing a matching plaid shirt and cowboy hat, but I really enjoyed playing with The Faded Grass. After the show I said a final goodbye to my friends.

During my trip, I realized the true value of music and the way it brings people together. Although I was across the world, I witnessed the impact of continuation and preservation of traditional bluegrass music that started in the mountains, my home. Being able to share my heritage with Japanese bluegrass enthusiasts reminds me of how important it is to appreciate and protect my heritage as a mountain musician. Working closely with Toshio, Saburo, and Shin gave me an appreciation for all of the hard work it takes to keep the music scene alive in Japan. The Japanese bluegrass community continues to inspire me to be more active in the effort to preserve the music, and I can't wait to go back.



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Kyle Ledson | One Way Traffic (2019 Band Competition Winner)



STRINGSUMMIT.COM

A flexible head is the soundboard of the banjo. Just as quarter-sawn spruce is the material of choice for guitar soundboards, polyester film (otherwise known as Mylar) is the material of choice for modern banjo soundboards. This is the banjo component that is actively engaged in pumping sound waves into the air. The acoustic properties of the head are what give the banjo its characteristic sound.

There are basically three types of banjo heads: Mylar (polyester plastic), imitation skin (Fiberskyn), and natural skin. The most widely used family of heads is the Mylar group. These can be further separated into coated and non-coated groups.

Most heads are coated on the top surface with a rather heavy coating of white textured pigment. The purpose of the coating is three-fold. First, it looks appropriate for the banjo. Next, it provides a non-slip surface for the right hand and bridge. Most importantly, it diffuses the sound somewhat and helps temper the excess of overtones in a clear plastic head. Of the white-coated heads, the two most common brands are Remo and 5-Star (or Ludwig heads). Lately I have been using lots of Remo Taiwan-made heads which look and sound similar to 5-Star, Ludwig, and Mirisola heads.

American-Made Remo Heads

The Remo head is used by most banjo builders and is the most common brand. The regular Remo head is inexpensive and commonly used by major manufacturers. They generally produce a bright, crisp sound that grabs the attention of the listener.

The Remo head has become a standard by which we judge other heads. To avoid confusion, the exact head that we are talking about is the 1100 M1 medium crown, frosted top side. (One benefit associated with Remo heads is the wide variety of options available in sizes and coatings.) The frosting on some Remo heads is somewhat susceptible to scratching off. To help alleviate this problem, you may lightly

sand the surface of the Remo head with 400-grit sandpaper. This will remove the high, rough nodules that tend to break off and scratch across the head, especially during bridge replacement.

Most of us banjo players are used to scratched, worn-out-looking heads, but there is a solution: Why not put the frosting on the underside of the head? It's still white in appearance and should sound similar, but will not scratch off. I like this idea, although I do not like the shiny appearance of the smooth Mylar top. 400-Grit or finer sandpaper comes in handy again! I simply remove the shine by sanding the top surface, and the head loses its overly shiny appearance. There is also some advantage to the slightly grippy surface of a top-frosted head for keeping your bridge from sliding around.

Another popular head commonly used in old-time and open-back banjos is the Remo Renaissance head. Its surface has been treated to resemble a naturally translucent skin head.

When you tighten them to high bluegrass tension, they are very bright and loud, but tend to stretch a little more than frosted heads. One of my favorite modifications that you can try yourself is to use small bursts of colored lacquer or spray paint on the underside of the Renaissance head to make it look even more natural and organic. If the preprinted logo disturbs the look, you can usually wipe off the Remo logo with some acetone. The banjoist from the Irish band We Banjo 3, Enda Scahill, displays such an artistic custom head on his Nechville Longneck tenor banjo.

Remo will make various head sizes to fit almost any banjo, and also offers three

different crown heights. The crown height is the tallness of the head. Use a high crown if you have short bracket hooks, and use a low crown if you have an arch-top tone ring. Medium crowns work best on most bluegrass banjos. Several options are available through Nechville or your local music store.

5-Star and Taiwan-Made Remo Heads

5-Star heads are constructed differently. First, they are made with a slightly stretchy Mylar, but the coating is much thicker and more durable than that of the Remo head. The perimeter of the head material is not glued in, but is crimped into a steel band, and it is virtually impossible to pull it apart. There is not as much variety offered with 5-Star heads, but generally they are a good choice for a bright, dry tone, with a little less sustain.

5-Star and Remo offer clear and non-frosted white heads. The tonal characteristics of the clear and non-frosted heads tend to be similar, producing maximum

brilliance and transparency of tone. (By transparency, I mean that no overtones are masked and more of the high harmonics are amplified.) While clear heads can look striking, they might be too ringy for a traditional bluegrass sound. Most experienced players shy away from them because they mask no overtones and often sound too bright or shrill to the ears. Again, here is an opportunity to point out that the different construction of helically mounted banjos may be a big benefit to lovers of clear heads due to less metallic interference inherent in that design.



Continued



Heading For Great Sound

Heading My Way

If you have read this far, you are probably ready for some hot setup tips related to heads. One reason I like the banjo is that the sound board is never stuck at just one stiffness like a guitar or other wood-bodied instrument. Since the head is the sound-board of the banjo, any adjustment of its stiffness or tension will greatly affect the way the instrument sounds.

Head Tightening

A conventional banjo has 24 nuts and hooks to tighten (with a two-part Helimount frame, even head tightening is automatic). All banjo enthusiasts recognize the importance of getting even tension on each nut and hook around the perimeter of the banjo. Some have even gone to the trouble to use a torque wrench to equal-

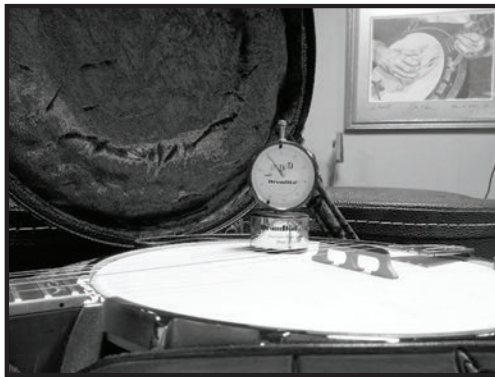
ize the force required to turn each nut. It is possible that you'll be working with an older banjo so beware of sticky or rusty hooks and nuts. If you are using a torque wrench, you may be getting totally different actual tension on each nut. If you are starting from scratch and have your banjo completely apart, you can check each nut for free turning before reassembling your banjo. You'll have to

install a few hooks and nuts across from each other first to keep the tension hoop level, and work up to having all of the hooks and nuts snugged up evenly first by squeezing the tension hoop down and just thumb-tightening the nuts

all the way around. I then use a ¼-inch nut driver, or whatever size is required, to travel around the perimeter. The first go-round will take about a full turn and the next go-round, probably a half turn. For successive trips around the perimeter

you will only tighten in ¼ turn, or smaller increments, until the head is up to proper pitch.

I tune the head to G# for most 11-inch flat-head banjos. While this is widely considered the ideal tension, it is difficult to hear that pitch coming from the head. You must first tune the banjo with a tuner, then mute the strings with one hand while you tap or scratch lightly on the head and try to



isolate a note and sing along with it. Then try listening to that note on the banjo.

I usually play my 5th string and compare it to the

note I think I hear on the head. I try the 6th and 7th frets on the first string and see if I hear any of those tones coming from the tapping or scratching on the head. Sometimes it is easier to hear what I believe is the head's harmonic frequency, or a high wisp of a sound that is an octave higher than you would expect. When I am reasonably sure of the head's pitch, I make

adjustments to go in the direction of G# and re-test. If it's reasonably tight to the feel, it's likely that you will be close to the G# already. If you are way off, try listening for a different note, because you are probably picking up the resonant frequency of the



pot or some other acoustic property of the banjo. When you are reasonably sure that you have picked out the head's initial pitch, go in ¼ turns of the wrench until you arrive at G#. I have also had some success setting a clip-on tuner on the head's sur-

face, and while lightly touching the strings and tapping gently on the bridge, the tuner will tell you a pitch. After several attempts yielding a common reading, you can assume the tuner is giving you the actual pitch of the head. A more reliable method is to use a calibrated drum dial indicator and place it on the head about 1½ inches from the tone ring. If the needle comes up to about 91 or 92 on the dial, it is probably very close to that magic G#.

Plan to spend a fair amount of time on a conventional hook-and-nut banjo getting each part the same and up to pitch. If you have a Helimount banjo, you might hear the pitch change if someone taps the head while you are turning the tensioning wrenches.

Inspect all new heads for defects and be sure the glue ridge (if it's a Remo) is not preventing an intimate metal-to-metal contact where the head's metal bead touches the tension hoop. I have even tried filing down the high spots, but this is a good way to waste a head, because it's so easy to abrade and weaken the head right at the critical strength zone. With 5-Star heads I have considered further crimping the bead down upon the Mylar if it looked like it was loosely crimped. If you notice such a thing, you should choose a different head before going to the extreme of putting the head in a vise or hammering the bead flat all the way around.

Heading for Tradition

For some early classic recordings of Earl Scruggs, he had a natural skin head on his banjo. The drawback to natural skin is its stretching with humidity, but if you are able to keep it tight through frequent adjustment, you'd probably like the sound. The high flexibility of a skin head tends to allow clarity of a wide harmonic range, which results in a very sweet tone. If tight, it will be bright but with less sustain than a plastic head, lending a "drier" quality to the sound.

A good compromise between a skin head and a plastic head is the Fiberskyn head

Continued on page 12

Heading For Great Sound

made by Remo. With this head, you won't have the problem with weather changes, and you will retain some of the sonic properties of a skin head. Regular Fiberskyn heads are actually Mylar heads laminated with Tyvek. These heads are thicker and if they still come in two weights, I would choose the thinner option. I like the Fiberskyn, especially on 6-string banjos and 12-inch open back banjos.

Heading for Expression

I am surprised how few people use their banjo head for displaying some kind of art. The banjo head seems a perfect place to post a message or decorative statement. Just to be different, why not color the head black or some other color? I suggest either solid coloring or drawing a design directly on the surface of the banjo head with permanent marker. A light coat of a clear spray lacquer will blend the appearance and make it look more uniform.

Electric Heads?

For the renegade types, Nechville makes several amplifying options available, especially for owners of Helimount banjos. The modular nature of the Helimount-style banjo enables an easy switch to a new class of heads designed for electrifying your banjo sound. The Turbo module is one such idea that converts an acoustic banjo into an electric banjo. It replaces the tone ring and regular 11-inch head with an 11-inch thin wooden head. The Turbo has a small 6-inch head and volume and tone controls all mounted on this wooden head. It maintains its banjo tone and can be amplified to rock concert volume. Creative banjoists may opt to eliminate the head membrane altogether. A solid top with magnetic pickups can easily be installed in the same manner. This defines Nechville's solid body Quasar module, which produces a powerful electric guitar-type of tone.

Tom Nechville is an internationally known banjo luthier who lives in Portland, Oregon. More information on banjo set-up options can be found at www.nechville.com or contact Tom Nechville directly for a Portland consultation, phone 612-275-6602.

CLASSIC

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nechville.com

RoxyGrass! A New Jam Community in Medford

By Gretchen Hunter

Down here in the Rogue Valley we are organizing a weekly bluegrass class and jam, inspired by Portland's Taborgrass and similar jam communities. We've decided to name the jam community RoxyGrass, after a local landmark, Roxy Ann, an extinct volcano in Medford.

My idea started innocently enough last spring when I went to "Bluegrass in the Gorge," a band camp at Menucha organized by Laurie Lewis. It seemed like half the people there were members of this "Taborgrass" group, and they seemed to have great friendships and wonderful experience jamming together. I just knew we needed something like that down here in the Medford area. I kept talking to Linda Leavitt about my idea. Linda is a teacher and bluegrass musician (Mountain Honey band), editor of the Oregon Bluegrass Association's Bluegrass Express newsletter, and an instructor/organizer at Taborgrass. With Linda's encouragement, advice, and support, I started spreading the word down here, hoping to find people in this area who felt the same way I did about creating a bluegrass jam community.

Word spread fast and I started running into people who asked when we were going to do it, whatever "it" was. My friend Maria MacArthur suggested the name, my husband Bob Hunter (a retired lawyer, lucky for me) helped put together the paper work, Glenn Freese and Jef Fretwell gave me a lot of advice and the final push, and next thing you know, we had a nonprofit registered with the state of Oregon. Then I ran into a mighty fine banjo player named Ceridwyn (Keri) Ames Ducette one day at Hilltop Music, and suddenly RoxyGrass got a page designer, a Board secretary, a logo, and a Facebook page. She's working on a web page, so keep an eye out for RoxyGrass.org.



By the way, if you're in the neighborhood, or driving by on I-5, Hilltop Music is a great store just off the freeway at exit 24 in Phoenix, Oregon, full of new and carefully selected gorgeous consignment instruments, with two very nice dogs, and a wealth of free advice from Wayne Cameron and Lily McCabe. Wayne and Lily have been very supportive, and Lily is on the RoxyGrass Board.

Following the lead of Taborgrass, the purpose of RoxyGrass is to build a supportive community of bluegrass musicians who get together to develop their skills and confidence in a structured jam setting. Each Saturday experienced instructors will lead two levels of structured jams: One jam specifically for beginners, and another for more experienced players. Each week we will send out an email to let people know which tunes will be the focus for each group, along with links to where they can

find practice materials such as tab sheets, MP3 files, YouTube videos, and backing tracks. All acoustic bluegrass instruments are welcome. Participants are required to have working knowledge of at least basic chords, and the ability to execute chord changes.

We were all set for a kickoff event April 18, when Linda Leavitt was going to come to Medford to give a "Bluegrass Jamming 101" workshop, and Tom Nechville was going to join our own Jef Fretwell to lead a jam, but unfortunately, COVID-19 struck and we have to reschedule our kick-off – we hope it will be at the end of May. In the meantime, we're hoping to open the doors every Saturday for folks who don't mind jamming in small groups 9 feet apart, but week-to-week it'll depend on the epidemic status. Watch the Facebook page for notifications.

Time: Every Saturday from 2-4 pm

Place: Medford Congregational United Church of Christ.

1801 E. Jackson Street, Medford, Oregon

Admission: Free for jams, but \$10 when we start having instructors (after the epidemic passes).

For more information, contact Gretchen Hunter at gretchen435@gmail.com or (541) 613-5940.



Lily McCabe, Jef Fretwell, Gretchen Hunter and Keri Ames at Hilltop Music, Phoenix, Oregon

Gretchen Hunter is a retired vineyard manager, former decision analysis consultant, mechanical engineer, and construction worker, who as a child was pretty sure she was a prodigy. By the time she found out her parents' opinion of her abilities may not have been completely objective, it was too late to stop learning to play various instruments. Gretchen plays guitar and lives on a farm near Eagle Point with her husband Bob.

Interview: Philip Graham of Ear Trumpet Labs

By Patrick Connell

Wizard of Bluegrass Sound

Preamble: Kaden Hurst and I are sitting in the kitchen next to Grendel, the giant Ear Trumpet dog. Philip Graham and his daughter, Malachi, are preparing dinner for the Missy Raines Trio, who are about ten minutes away, touring through town and staying with them that night.

Malachi Graham: The coffee is ready. Before getting into building microphones, my whole childhood was pretty much watching my dad tinker with stuff and figure out how it works. Here's some coffee that he roasted in the back yard.

OBA: Does this predate your interest in your microphones? I can see how all the coffee would afford you the energy and clarity to pursue other creative endeavors.

Philip Graham: I spent all my time, especially when they were kids, distracting myself from my software job by getting obsessive over one thing after another, usually crafty, tinkering things. I was into photography for a while, and building pinhole cameras. And then other audio gear, like guitar amplifiers, and other electronic stuff. And that was what I was doing before, right before the microphones, and I still have a whole basement full of unfinished projects.

OBA: Much like the myriad luthiers, string, and pick manufacturers that are specifically catering to the bluegrass circuit, you've become central to the bluegrass world, which is why we are here. Were you anticipating that, or was it a surprise that you quickly became the genre's preeminent microphone builder?

PG: I started with them for my daughter Malachi. She's a songwriter, and it was right around when she was in college and had taken up music a little more seriously, and was starting to write some of her own songs. We were starting to talk about recording some of her stuff. And that was the

weren't using them live. I didn't have any of the baggage, assumptions, or feedback problems, and I didn't feel there was any good reason not to start building them. I had some of the basic skills and, thankfully, there is a bunch of freely available information out there. Most of the standard

circuit designs for microphones are in the public domain. I looked at those and thought that the circuit didn't look that complicated.

OBA: I used Google to figure out how to get here today. The Google Street View included a blue bus that says "In dog we trust" parked right in front of your house. How does that bus fit into the larger story of you and your microphones?



first time that I paid any attention to microphones. I wasn't involved in the bluegrass community or paying much attention to bluegrass before, but the mics brought me there. I was doing it for recording initially and, because they look pretty weird, some musicians that I knew wanted to use them live. Foghorn Stringband was one of the early adopters, but some other some singer-songwriters that I knew were using them even before that. At that point, I did some redesign and re-engineering to make them as stable as possible, for live application. And I was coming into it without any audio engineering background. I had never done live sound and was just totally blind. But to me, it seemed self-evident that they (large diaphragm condenser microphones) make acoustic music sound good, which is why people record with them, and I couldn't understand why more people

PG: *REDACTED FOR NATIONAL SECURITY PURPOSES*

OBA: Tell us about the name. The "ear" part seems straightforward, since hearing is such an important part of playing and enjoying music. How about the rest?

PG: I think Meara, my wife, actually came up with that name. When she came up with that, it made sense. It sounds like an old-time tool that might help you hear better. We knew the physical design was there, and we knew there was a vintage look that we were going for. "Ear Trumpet" — it makes you hear better. So that was that.

Continued 

Philip Graham of Ear Trumpet Labs

OBA: Ear Trumpet microphones are ubiquitous in the bluegrass and acoustic world. It would appear that there was a need that has now been filled. Is that the case?

PG: I was working more with singer-songwriter Americana people, before Foghorn Stringband jumped in. They had been using (or trying to use) a condenser mic for a while. As I found out more about the bluegrass world, it seemed to me that they've always been wanting to do this, and that nobody needed any convincing that using central mics would be optimal. What I hadn't realized is how much of a struggle people had been having with the existing mics.

OBA: What are you doing differently from your predecessors?

PG: The main difference is that I'm designing with live performance in mind, which very few people doing large diaphragm condensers are doing. They have a design assumption that the mics are for studio use. They tend to optimize the sound, just to get that magical sound in the sweet spot, in a controlled environment. They're not designing for a consistent frequency response across the whole path, which is really the only thing I paid particular attention to.

OBA: At the risk of being presumptuous, I'd guess that you haven't always found yourself cooking dinner for traveling bluegrass musicians. Tell us about the relationship building and what you've learned about and from the international bluegrass community.

PG: The feedback process has been really great. I have a whole lot of gratitude for all the musicians playing out there and basically advertising our mics, often in front of a lot of other musicians. I get calls from people who are interested in buying and/or inquiring about our mics. Often, these are people who saw some band or singer using one of our mics. The bluegrass community seems more apt to pick up the phone and talk to you. I remember communicating a lot with Caleb Klaunder

and his band, and they gave me the idea of making a mic for the bass. We had already communicated quite a bit about what their needs were regarding the central mic, and they were really easy to work with as we developed "Nadine," the bass mic. I try to be available by phone, and it's really great to get input from people about how they are using their mics and their unique preferences. It helps inform my designing.



OBA: Any builder of anything good will perform quite a bit of research and development, trial and error, before finalizing their product. What was that process like for you? How did your first prototypes turn out?

PG: There is a museum of early models in the workshop. I was playing with different kinds of hardware parts, conduit boxes, and different things like that, trying to come up with what's easy to make, because I'm not a machinist, but am assembling them from repurposed parts. I spent a lot of time digging around in the Hippo Hardware store, going through the bins looking for things with the thoughts of "What would that fit with? Would that fit with this? What part could this possibly be?"

OBA: Your microphones have a pretty striking aesthetic. How did the characteristic appearance of Ear Trumpet microphones come about? What goes into the naming of a new model?

PG: I was building them largely out of parts and pieces that I had in my base-

ment. I definitely knew I wanted to build my own bodies. A lot of do-it-yourself mic builders purchase cheap mics, strip out all the insides and put much nicer capsules and electronics and stuff in there.

You can make some really nice-sounding mics that way. But if I was going to go to the trouble of building a mic, I didn't want to throw it into some cheap body. There's a very common mic project that is made from copper plumbing pipe. It's just a straight pipe, without anything else to it, but they use that for the body. And so that immediately got me thinking that you can make it out of anything metal. As long as you have metal for shielding, the sky's the limit. A lot of the inspiration for these comes from older designs. They look retro and some of the models are specifically callbacks to older designs. That early mid-century industrial design was a big influence.

OBA: One of the best things about your company, and large diaphragm condenser mics in general, is it allows acoustic musicians to be much more in charge of their sound, and remain acoustic. Part of bluegrass training involves learning how to "work the mic," as they say. The standard protocol is "up the middle, out the side." How do you feel about that and the extent to which it complements the pattern of your mics? Is there a better way for musicians to arrange themselves around your mic?

Malachi: It just takes ongoing practice sharing notes with other bands who do that style and figuring out what works. We were really excited to work with the band "Man About a Horse." We just released a video that you can find on our website, demonstrating some live application strategies. One thing they recommended is putting on headphones that go straight to the mic rather than having it amplified through the PA. You're going to hear so clearly what the pickup pattern is. You can talk all the way around it; you can play through it; you can play songs through

Continued on page 16

Philip Graham of Ear Trumpet Labs

it and discover things like, “Oh, that’s the loudest spot. We shouldn’t have the fiddler over there.”

OBA: Your mics have been used and lauded by an impressive roster of bluegrass heavyweights, including Del McCoury, Bryan Sutton, Missy Raines, and Danny Barnes. Do you have a dialogue with performers about what their live performance needs are? Have you ever built a microphone with a specific performer or group in mind?

PG: We often communicate with people about their needs and that will end up informing our design process. The “Myrtle” model came about by way of a swing musician and singer in London. “Nadine” was a collaborative effort as well. Lots of people who use my mics will provide feedback that helps me think about how to build the next mic. The “Delfina” is a good example, because it was developed for people who wanted a “Myrtle” but without the big ring around it.

OBA: Without spilling any beans, what can your fans get excited about that might be coming down the pike? An ear trumpet electric car?

PG: Meara, my wife, has been motivating me to get back to the workbench and start tinkering more. I always assumed I would do more custom work, but we’ve settled into pretty heavy production. These days, cellists are making an argument for their own device. So that probably is the thing that I will work on, a cello mountable mic, for all those bluegrass cellists.

Editor’s Note: There’s more to this interview than we could print in this newsletter. For the full interview, you’ll be able to hear it on Oregon Bluegrass Radio starting in May 2020.

Patrick Connell is a bluegrass musician and teacher in Portland, Oregon. He is a member of Julie & The WayVes and he teaches at Taborgrass and at Artichoke Music. He is also the founder of the new Oregon Bluegrass Radio project on Live 365.

"MICROPHONES OF DISTINCTION"

EAR TRUMPET LABS
HAND MADE

MYRTLE

EDWINA

"The new gold standard among Americana and bluegrass guitarists."
— Acoustic Guitar Magazine

WOOD & WIRE
with MYRTLE

EAR TRUMPET LABS.COM

The advertisement features a black and white photograph of a four-piece bluegrass band performing. From left to right: a fiddler, an acoustic guitarist, a bassist, and a banjo player. They are all wearing suits and are positioned in front of several large, vintage-style microphones. The microphone on the far left is labeled 'MYRTLE' and the one on the far right is labeled 'EDWINA'. The central logo for 'EAR TRUMPET LABS' is prominently displayed, with the tagline 'MICROPHONES OF DISTINCTION' above it. A quote from 'Acoustic Guitar Magazine' is placed to the right of the band, and the website 'EAR TRUMPET LABS.COM' is at the bottom.

COLUMBIA GORGE BLUEGRASS



CAROLINA BLUE
KATHY KALLICK
SLOCAN RAMBLERS
THE PRICE SISTERS
CENTRAL VALLEY BOYS
RUNAWAY TRAIN
HARDSHELL HARMONY
SUNNY SOUTH



JULY 23—26, 2020

2020 Winter Music Festival...

by Kirk Mlinek

Brings Down The House In Florence, Oregon

The 18th annual Winter Music Festival, formerly known as the Winter Folk Festival, wrapped up on Sunday afternoon, January 26, 2020, to the sweet sounds of Portland singer-songwriter Tyler Stenson, and the shimmering vocals of Kristen Grainger and Dan Wetzel, performing as the True North Duo. Nearly 1,500 patrons enjoyed food, art, on-site jams, pie by the slice, workshops, and nine bands over the three-day festival!

A production of the Friends of the Florence Events Center (FEC), an all-volunteer nonprofit created to support the city-owned FEC, the festival kicked off on Thursday with the invitation-only Kids' Concerts. The Greg Blake Band, featuring Annie Savage, played to 900 K-6 school-children from the Mapleton, Reedsport, and Siuslaw school districts. Train songs were the theme this year, and the FEC Theater was replete with related coloring projects completed by the students. New this year were on-site workshops conducted by Janet Wellington (basic jam etiquette), Annie Savage and the Greg Blake Band (jamming bluegrass style),



Kathy Kallick & John Reischman

guitarist Jim Hurst (rhythm and lead guitar ideas), and Kristen Grainger and Dan Wetzel (songwriting). The classes were at capacity, attendees were happy, and festival organizers have been asked to expand these offerings in 2021.

Friday night has been established as bluegrass night at the festival and the combination of John Reischman and the Jaybirds and the Kathy Kallick Band resulted in a sellout! Dale Adkins did an excellent job of handling the guitar work for John's band in Patrick Sauber's absence. Kathy's band has never sounded better and the audience responded in kind. Given John and Kathy's history in the Good Ol' Persons, it was no surprise when Kathy invited John's entire band on stage to close the evening with several encores.



John Reischman & The Jaybirds

Saturday's afternoon offerings leaned toward the Americana genre. Chelsea and Bino Peck, performing as Mr & Mrs Something (no, that's not a typo, that's their logo!), entertained with heartfelt originals rendered from life's experiences. Nashville's Jim Hurst provided a rollicking solo set that had the audience begging for more. The Greg Blake Band closed the afternoon set with a stunning set that showcased the band's prowess across the bluegrass and classic country genres.

The Saturday headliner shows were a purposeful mix of progressive acoustic

Continued



2020 Winter Music Festival



The Kathy Kallick Band

music juxtaposed to the music of a man who has been at the folk music game for more than 50 years. Circus No. 9 provided a low-key opening set on Saturday night. Banjoist George Guthrie of The Wooks was called in to substitute for Matthew Davis, the band's banjo player who also carries a good bit of the singing load. The band also performed for the free community concert on Friday afternoon in the Oregon Pacific Bank lobby!

That left the stage for Livingston Taylor, James' little brother. With the audience in the palm of his hand after only a few moments on stage, Liv took the audience on a musical journey interspersed with spellbinding humor and stories from a career many only dream about. To say that he was present from the moment he walked on property until the time that the last autograph was signed, and the last earnest conversation concluded, is an understatement. What a consummate professional!

The festival committee thanks the many financial and in-kind sponsors, including Sea Lion Caves, the presenting sponsor; the volunteers, and the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. The committee gives special thanks to the many patrons who validated this year's lineup by purchasing tickets and traveling to Florence, the heart of Oregon's coastal playground.

What's that? What about 2021? Stay tuned for big news regarding the 2021 lineup! It's gonna be big, really big!

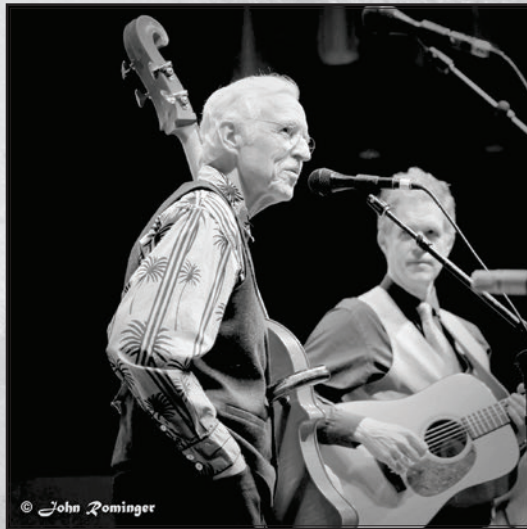


True North

Kirk Mlinek chairs the Friends of the Florence Events Center, a non-profit organization which produces the Winter Music Festival in Florence, Oregon. For more information, visit their web page at <https://wintermusicfestival.org/friends-of-the-fec>

OBA Bluegrass Special Concert Series

Chris Jones & The Night Drivers
Saturday Feb. 8th 2020



Laurel Bliss and Cliff Perry

OBA Sonny Hammond Memorial Gospel Show
Saturday Jan. 25th 2020



The Kathy Kallick Band joined by Laurel Bliss and Cliff Perry

KBOO Marathon



Sunny South



Josh Cole & Friends



Women in Bluegrass
Ellie Hakanson, Anna Berry,
Rachel Gold & Linda Leavitt



Mountain Honey



Sunfish Duo

A Small Summary of a Big Event: Wintergrass 2020

by Tom Nechville

Every February Wintergrass comes along at the perfect time to start preparing for the coming festival season. You can count on that event to bring music lovers together from the Pacific Northwest, Canada, Japan, Hawaii, and around the world. Every picker and fan at Wintergrass can find performances and impromptu jams covering their favorite genres. While as usual, Patrice O'Neill and Stephen Ruffo created a great lineup on the big stage, OBA suite coordinator Linda

Leavitt, along with Tony McCormick, Patrick Connell and others put on a great weekend of activities in Oregon's own hospitality jam suite.

High-quality showcases, singing and guitar workshops, Oregon Luthier Roundtable discussion, and lots of cool jamming filled out the weekend and provided a welcoming and friendly environment to hang out and socialize. Excess jammers could overflow right next door to

Nechville's Banjo Revolution suite where a jam was always in full swing. Oregon's participation, along with all the 3rd-floor showcase and jam rooms at Wintergrass enhanced the weekend for all those who participated.

Tom Nechville is an internationally known banjo luthier who lives in Portland, Oregon. www.nechville.com



Ellie Hakanson & Friends



Rock Ridge



The Savage Hearts



Jam Time!

Continued



A Small Summary of a Big Event: Wintergrass 2020



Nora Candey crocheting the rug she donated to our Wintergrass drawing



Amy Hakanson of the band Varelse, playing the nyckelharpa.



Linda Leavitt, Tammy Roark (Bend Cider owner) and Tony McCormick



Oregon Luthier Roundtable

Photos By Sol Gutierrez



Never Come Down



The Lonesome Town Painters



Bekkah & The Dusty Rubies



Jam Night

LOCAL & LIVE BLUEGRASS MUSIC



Never Come Down at The Old Church



Photo by Hermon Byner / themandolinplayer.net

Mountain Honey at The Landmark Saloon



Skillethead at The Belfry (Bend)



Whiskey Deaf at The Muddy Rudder (Portland)



*Greg Blake Country Band with Ellie Hakanson at Trexler Farm
(Stayton)*

WANTED

The Bluegrass Express is looking for local band photos to insert on the "Local & Live" page. If you want in, just send us your best photo with a brief caption of Who (preferably just the band name), Where (venue) and When (please, no longer than 6 months ago). Submit to expressnews@oregonbluegrass.org before the 1st of the month of the issue to be printed.

Ask Aunt Pearl: Minding Your Bluegrass Manners

by Linda Leavitt

Dear Aunt Pearl,

Will we ever get to jam again, or am I destined to sit here alone in my house with a pile of donuts for 18 months, missing everyone who used to annoy me?

Why can't I hold my weekly jam? This is ridiculous. I need to get out of this house and pick with folks.

Can't we still get together in small groups standing six feet apart?

Plus, all I want to eat is baked goods, and already even my comfortable pants are getting tight.

I need answers and I needed them yesterday.

All best,

Mr. Stell Toucher le Visage

Dear Mr. Toucher le Visage,

Well, bless your heart! Put down that donut, right now!

I am so sorry that the coronavirus is keeping you home-bound and jam-free. I understand. Thank you for doing your part to slow the virus and to save lives.

We're all feeling sad about not being able to get together to share songs and germs like we used to do.

Have you thought of any bright spots in this situation? This time sequestered in your home may turn out to be a golden opportunity to prepare for when jams resume. Take advantage of this time to learn and woodshed, and at future jams you will find yourself swinging at the lights.

Are there songs and tunes you'd like to learn? There are lots of local and national musicians who now offer online lessons.

There are lots of free online resources, such as taborgrass.com and <http://www.fbbts.com/Tunes.html>, that provide notation and backing tracks.

You can also make a list of songs and tunes you've always wanted to learn to play and sing. Listen to the original recording until you have memorized the melody. Upload that number to the Amazing Slow Downer app, and concentrate on each number one at a time. Go deep! Listen. Play. You don't need notation. All you need is your ear.

After 18 months away from your jam group, you will emerge with new songs and tunes you have memorized, plus a plush logger beard. You'll be so deep within the music, you'll be able to express yourself better than ever before.

Remember...this too, shall pass. We'll be jamming again before you know it. Meanwhile, lay off the donuts, darlin', stay home, wash your hands, don't touch your face, and stay well.

Love,
Aunt Pearl

Love,
Aunt Pearl



Linda Leavitt plays guitar, mandolin and sings with Mountain Honey. She is the vocal instructor at Taborgrass and loves to teach folks to sing.



Jed & Jack Mitchell at Taborgrass Open Mic



OBA Suite Jam at Wintergrass



Stephen Kendrick won the rug drawing



Patrick Connell & Joe Suskind Guitar Workshop

EIGHTEEN YEARS OF GREAT BLUEGRASS



WENATCHEE RIVER BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

JUNE 19-21, 2020

CASHMERE WASHINGTON
CHELAN COUNTY EXPO CENTER
(FAIRGROUNDS)

NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS
APPALACHIAN ROADSHOW

PO' RAMBLIN' BOYS
WITH LAURA ORSHAW

DAVE ADKINS

THE KODY NORRIS SHOW

NORTHWEST FAVORITES

RUSTY HINGES BLUEGRASS

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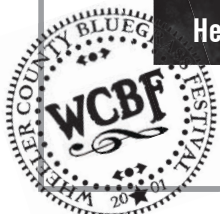


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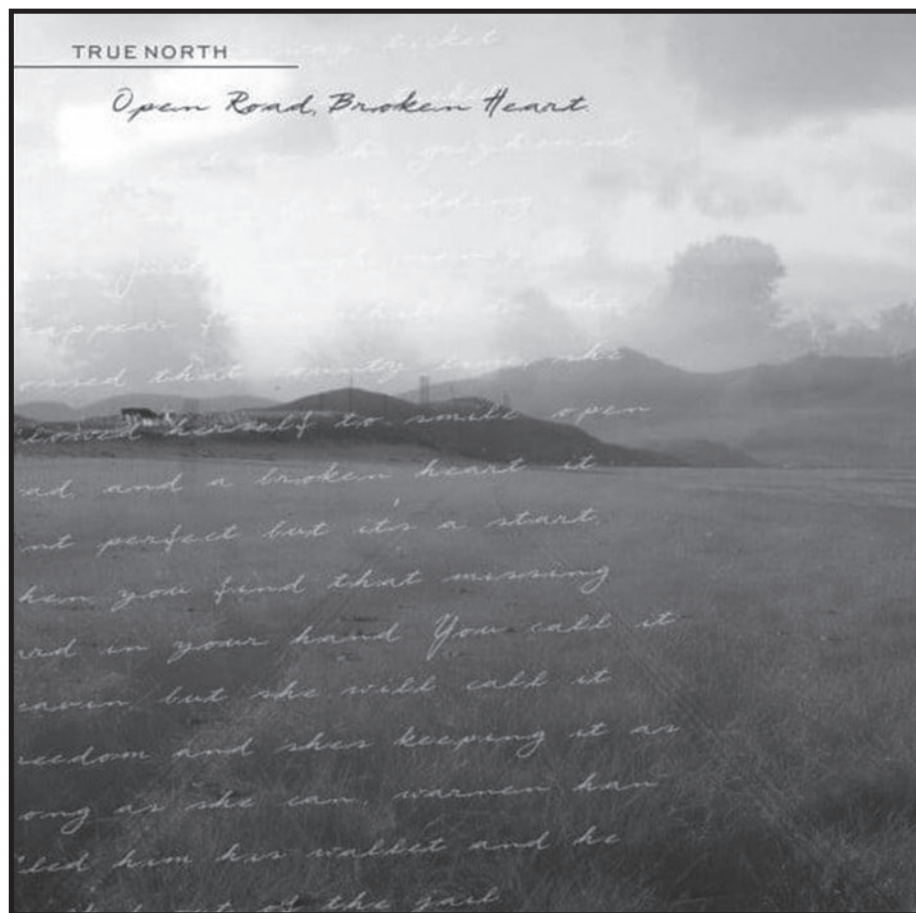
CD Review-True North – *Open Road, Broken Heart*

by Joe Ross

Based in Oregon, True North's fourth album in over a dozen years together continues to emphasize rootsy original material with poignancy and soul. The band is a passionate contributor to an ever-growing acoustic folk and Americana repertoire. Their focus squarely emphasizes prolific contemporary messages, thoughtful arrangements, graceful instrumentation, and relaxed vocals. The group's primary songwriter, Kristen Grainger, was a finalist at Merlefest, Telluride and Kerrville Festival songwriting contests. She's joined by Dan Wetzel, Dale Adkins, Suzanne Pearce, and two guest artists, Eric Alterman and Todd Sicafoose.

Opening with "One Way Ticket," we hear about three different people searching for freedom and happiness. It's a stark reminder that life isn't perfect, but one must stay optimistic and keep on believing. "Dark Horse Bar & Grill" paints a vivid picture of a seedy place "with a special vault for storing things that aren't your fault." I also enjoyed the Zen-like quality of "Seed, Leaf, Flower, Seed" with its concise expressions that evoke the seasons of life. "You Come Around" is an interesting, but rather sad, take on the heartache of prolonged waiting for love to blossom. Song crafting is an art, and True North has again succeeded. Their masterful approach has a reflective, poetic quality and potential for widespread appeal.

Joe Ross, from Roseburg, Oregon, picks mandolin with the Umpqua Valley Bluegrass Band. He can be reached at rossjoe@hotmail.com.



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See back cover for more information

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Scheduled Jams: Oregon and SW Washington

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

*Some jams may be temporarily cancelled due to the COVID-19 situation.
Please check with the organizer about the status of any jam you're planning to attend*

Sunday

CLACKAMAS/HAPPY VALLEY: String Along Jam - 2nd and 4th Sundays 2:15 pm to 5 pm
Bluegrass and more. Happy Valley Library Community Room, 13793 SE Sieben Park Way, Happy Valley, OR 97015. Located off Sunny-side Rd. at SE 147th. Look for the signboard on the sidewalk near the Library.
For information: Charlie mels677@aol.com or LeaAnne ldenb@juno.com

CORVALLIS: EZ Jam – Every 1st and 3rd Sunday 2 – 4 pm
A friendly jam for beginning and intermediate players. Meet at a private residence.
For information and directions: Call Christine Robins (541) 738-2610

KLAMATH FALLS: Bluegrass Jam – First Sunday of every month 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 12:00 pm- 4:30 pm
Portland Audubon Center, 5151 NW Cornell Road, Portland. All levels of bluegrass players are welcome. Bring an instrument, your voice, a song, and a friend. Come make music among the birds. Small donation of \$5.00 requested to help cover room rental.
For information: Rich Powell powellR1041@q.com

PORTLAND: Sunday Bluegrass Jam - 2 to 5 pm
Ladd Taphouse, 2239 SE 11th Ave., Portland OR 97214.
Open bluegrass jam for all acoustic instruments and skill levels.
Contact Murray Nunn at munn7515@gmail.com

PORTLAND: The Handsome Ladies- 2nd Sunday 3pm -5pm
Strum Guitars, 1415 SE Stark #C
Ladies only, traditional bluegrass repertoire and instruments.
For information: www.thehandsomeladies.org

ROSEBURG: OBA Roseburg Jam - 3rd Sunday 1-5 pm year round
The Sutherlin Senior Center, 202 E. Central Ave., Sutherlin, OR 97479
Bluegrass Jam - all levels encouraged.
For information: (541) 679-0553 lizcraim42@gmail.com

SISTERS: Strings in Sisters – 3rd Sunday of the month 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm
Sisters Library, 110 N. Cedar St. 97759 All welcome. No charge.
For Information: Phil Minor 541/719-0497 or Bruce Barnes 541/728-3190

Monday

BEAVERTON: Rambling Bluegrass Jam - Every Monday night all year (except Christmas Day if that falls on a Monday) 6:00 to 9:00 pm
Open jam in semi-private banquet room with lively tempos and jammers eager to try new material. Papa's Pizza Parlor, 15700 Blueridge Dr., Beaverton, OR 97006
For information email: rambling@ramblingbluegrass.org or website http://ramblingbluegrass.org Phone: Pizza Parlor (503) 531-7220

Tuesday

Jon Cooper DUNDEE Bluegrass Jam: 1st and 3rd Tuesday Each Month, 7-9 pm
Held at La Sierra Mexican Grill, 1179 Hwy 99W, Dundee, OR. 97115
Features bluegrass/old country music. All skill levels welcome.
For information: Steve Edward - stephene47@frontier.com, (503) 985-1945, Tracy Hankins - hankinstracy@gmail.com, (503) 720-6629, Ron Taylor - ron@taylorpaintingofportland.com, (503) 625-7254

EUGENE: Bluegrass Jam Every Tuesday 9:00 pm - 1:00 am
Sam Bond's Garage, 407 Blair Blvd, Eugene - Call (541) 431-6603 for information
This year 'round jam offers good food and micro brews.
Jam Hosts: Sunday Sam and Sean Shanahan.

HILLSBORO: Rock Creek Bluegrass Jam Every Tuesday 7 pm - 9pm
McMenamin's Rock Creek Tavern, 10000 N.W. Old Cornelius Pass Rd., Hillsboro, OR 97124.
Established, open intermediate and advanced bluegrass music jam. It is requested that only bluegrass instruments are used and no song-books/tab.
For information: Nancy Christie, 503-348-5374 nancy.d.christie@gmail.com

LINCOLN CITY: Bluegrass & Old Time Music Jam Every Tuesday 6 pm - 9:00 pm
North Lincoln Eagles Lodge, SW 32nd at Hwy 101
All levels and ages welcome.
For information: Carla 541/418-1779

Wednesday

BEAVERTON: Bluegrass Jam - Every Wednesday 6:30-9:30 p.m
Round Table Pizza, 10150 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy, Beaverton, Oregon (east of Hwy. 217)
For information: Jane, janeromfo5@gmail.com

MEDFORD: Bluegrass Jam - 2nd and 4th Wednesday 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Wild River Pizza & Brewery, 2684 North Pacific Hwy, Medford, OR
For information: John Nice (805)748-6648 nicetunz@gmail.com

Thursday

BEND: Bluegrass Jam - 2nd and 4th Thursdays year round from 7 pm - 9:00 pm
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 or hinklebrown@bendbroadband.com Call or email to confirm before you head out.

GRANTS PASS: Acoustic Bluegrass Jam - 3rd Thursday 6pm-8:30 pm
Wild River Pub meeting room, 533 N.E. F Street
For information: Gary or Debbie Antonucci hugoants@msn.com

Scheduled Jams: Oregon and SW Washington

VANCOUVER, WA: Bluegrass Slow Jam - Every Thursday 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Barberton Grange, 9400 NE 72nd Ave, Vancouver, Washington 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

CENTRALIA, WA: Acoustic Bluegrass Jam – 3rd Friday 6 pm - 9 pm October through April

Sponsored by WAMA (Washington Acoustic Music Association). Informal event with a few small jams taking place at the same time. Location: Oakview Grange, 2715 North Pearl Street, Centralia, Washington. Donations for facility costs are encouraged.

For information: Cheryl (360) 870-8447 or
cheryl.terry68@gmail.com

DALLAS: Open Acoustic Jam - Every Friday 7:00 -10:00 pm

Guthrie Park in Dallas, Oregon.

For information: Sally Clark (503) 623-0874 or email
Jim.dusterjim@hotmail.com

SCIO: Old Country, Folk, Bluegrass and Gospel Jam – Fourth Friday 7:00 pm to Midnight

ZCJB Hall, 38704 N Main St. Scio, Oregon
www.zhall.org Free event, but donations accepted to support the historic hall. Beginners welcome. Please bring goodies to share.

For information: Starla (541) 223-2343 or email
Starla91262@yahoo.com

Saturday

PORTLAND: Taborgrass Bluegrass Class & Jam - Every Saturday October through April. The Sessions offers two small jams guided by professional musicians every Saturday during Taborgrass.

Waverly Heights Congregational United Church of Christ, 3300 SE Woodward Street. Portland, OR 97202. For all instruments.

No registration required. Drop-ins welcome. Knowledge of basic chords and the ability to execute chord changes is required.

Contact: Greg Stone,
971-207-3195

DALLAS: Acoustic Gospel Jam - Every 3rd Saturday 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm

All levels welcome. Guthrie Park in Dallas, Oregon.

For information: Sally Clark (503) 623-0874 or email
Jim.dusterjim@hotmail.com

WINLOCK, WA: Slow Jam - 2nd Saturday of the month beginning at 1 pm, October through May.

Hosted by WAMA (Washington Acoustic Music Association) Held at the Hope Grange in Winlock, Washington. Great for all levels and especially good for total beginners.

For Information: see website –
wamamusic.com or email info@wamamusic.com

VANCOUVER, WA - Old Time Country Jam - Every 2nd and 4th Saturday 6:30-10:00 pm

2500 N.E. 78th Ave., Vancouver, Washington. 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 listing via the public calendar at oregonbluegrass.org or email: calendar@oregonbluegrass.org.

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Contact Mimi Dobler at calicograce@gmail.com



2020 Festival Calendar

Due to the coronavirus, many festival organizers await more information to determine whether to cancel, reschedule or go forward with festivals this summer. Please check festival websites for more information.

Date to be decided:
Bridgetown Bluegrass Festival
1126 SW Park Avenue
Portland, Oregon
Bridgetownbluegrass.com

Date to be decided:
Bluegrass from the Forest
Shelton High School
Shelton, Washington
bluegrassfromtheforest.com
(360) 898-4581

Date to be decided:
Goldendale Pickers Festival
Ekone Park
Goldendale, Washington
\$10 for the weekend
clairell2002@yahoo.com

June 12-14, 2020
Sacajawea Bluegrass Festival &
Dutch Oven Rendezvous
Sacajawea State Park
Pasco, Washington
mctama.org
(509) 492-1555

Canceled for 2020:
National Old-time Fiddlers'
Contest & Festival
Weiser, Idaho
fiddlecontest.org

Check the website:
June 18-21, 2020
California Bluegrass Association
45th Annual Father's Day
Bluegrass Festival
Grass Valley, California
fathersdayfestival.com

June 19-21, 2020
Wenatchee River Bluegrass
Festival
Chelan County Expo Center
(Fairgrounds)
Cashmere, Washington
wenatcheeriverbluegrass.com

July 3-5, 2020
Wheeler County Bluegrass
Festival
Wheeler County Courthouse
Fossil, Oregon
(541) 763-2400
wheelercountybluegrass.org

July 10-12, 2020
Lost River Bluegrass Festival
Merrill, Oregon
lostriverfestival.com
Greg Mathews
(541) 891-3178

July 16-19, 2020
19th Annual Northwest String
Summit
Horning's Hideout
North Plains, Oregon
stringsummit.com

July 17-19, 2020
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Diana Morgan
(360) 436-1179
darringtonbluegrass.com

Continued on page 40

photos by Mitch Cline



Scroggins & Rose at Wintergrass



Don Julin & Tim Connell at Wintergrass

2020 Festival Calendar

Due to the coronavirus, many festival organizers await more information to determine whether to cancel, reschedule or go forward with festivals this summer. Please check festival websites for more information.

July 23-26, 2020
Columbia Gorge Bluegrass
Festival
Skamania County Fairgrounds
Stevenson, Washington
new.columbiagorgebluegrass.net

July 31-August 2, 2020
20th Annual Winlock Pickersfest
Winolequa Park
Winlock, Washington
info@wamamusic.com
winlockpickersfest.com

August 7-9, 2020
Blue Waters Bluegrass Festival
Medical Lake, Washington
bluwatersbluegrass.org

August 7-9, 2020
Mount St. Helens Bluegrass
Festival
Check website for new location
Toledo, Washington
General Cothren (360) 520-4524
washingtonbluegrassassociation.org

August 20-23, 2020
28th Annual Rainier Lions
Bluegrass Festival
(Rainier Pickin' Party)
Wilkowski Park
Rainier, Washington
davidwuller@gmx.com
(360) 832-8320

August 21-23, 2020
Oregon Bluegrass Association's
13th Annual Pickers' Fest
Location to be announced
www.oregonbluegrass.org

September 4-6, 2020
Tumbleweed Music Festival
Howard Amon Park
Richland, Washington
Three Rivers Folklife Society
(509) 528-2215
mail@3rfs.org
3rfs.org

September 4-6, 2020
North Cascades Bluegrass
Festival
(Labor Day Weekend)
Deming Log Show Grounds
Bellingham, Washington
ncfb.fun

September 6-8, 2020
Sisters Folk Festival
Sisters, Oregon
American roots music from blues
to bluegrass.
sistersfolkfestival.org

September 25-27, 2020
Tygh Valley Bluegrass Jamboree
Wasco County Fairgrounds
Tygh Valley, Oregon
Debra Holbrook
(541) 489-3434

October 3, 2020
Birdfest & Bluegrass
Ridgefield, Washington
ridgefieldfriends.org



Wintergrass hallway jam



Ellie Hakanson and the 2020 Wintergrass MOD class

OBA Supporting Performer Directory

OBA supporting memberships are \$50 per year. This includes a listing and link on the OBA website and a brief (approx 35 word) band listing in the supporting performer directory.

Ash Creek

Ash Creek explores the frontiers between bluegrass, folk, and traditional country music. Gene Alger plays banjo; Larry Ullman plays bass; Tim Howell plays guitar; Clayton Knight plays mandolin and fiddle. We all share lead and harmony vocals.

Booking@eclecticacoustica.com
https://eclecticacoustica.squarespace.com/
Facebook: @ashcreekbluegrass ash-creek-bluegrass
Clayton 503-358-0658

Corral Creek

Corral Creek's commitment to showing the audience a good time has worked out O.K. for 13 years. We share tunes of Oregon, gospel, and bluegrass standards to city festivals, cultural centers, bluegrass festivals, house concerts, wineries and more.

Pam Young
pywaterfalls@yahoo.com
corralcreekbluegrass.com
For bookings please call 503-319-5672

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

Dogwood String Band

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Woody Wood
dogwoodstringband@gmail.com
dogwoodstringband.com

Fire & Stone

Fire & Stone is a nontraditional bluegrass band playing a diverse blend of traditional and contemporary folk, blues, pop, and bluegrass. F&S delivers a powerful sound of lyrical storytelling, rich harmonies, and expressive instrumental solos

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/fire-andstoneband/
Email: victor.reuther@gmail.com
Telephone: (707) 832-9262

The Jamblers

The Jamblers play a blend of bluegrass, folk, classic rock, alt-indie and more, and jumble 'em all into our stringband style. We feature tight, bold harmonies and tons o' fun! Some call it "Americana." We call it "Music," the kind everyone enjoys.

www.jamblers.com
www.facebook.com/jamblers
Gene Greer, info@jamblers.com
503-702-1867

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www.phoenixrisingband.org
KBPR@gmail.com
503-936-8480

Julie & The WayVes

Julie and The WayVes is a 5-piece progressive bluegrass band, based in Portland, Oregon. Centered around the songwriting of Julie Schmidt, a confluence of hard-driving bluegrass and masterful composition and arrangement sensibilities delivers a powerful and elegant sound. Timeless tones within a modern, artful structure that incorporates genre-bending subtleties without sacrificing what their instrumentation suggests they are: A bluegrass band. Members: Julie Schmidt, Patrick Connell, Jon Meek, Kaden Hurst, and Rob Wright.

Patrick Connell
patnellconnell@gmail.com

Midshelf String Band

Midshelf String Band is a 4-piece Portland-based band with roots in bluegrass, folk, Celtic, honky-tonk and other Americana. We're fairly new as a band, but we've all been playing for decades in other bands like Back Porch Revival and Pagan Jug Band. We really enjoy playing together and aim to bring fun and good times with us wherever we go. Check here for our schedule:

www.midshelfstringband.com/

Misty Mamas

The 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. Katherine Nitsch (vocals, guitar), April Parker (vocals, mandolin, accordion), Eileen Rocci (vocals, upright bass), Tony Rocci (guitar, mandolin, vocals) **mistymamas.com**

April Parker 503-780-9770

Mountain Honey

Sweet and golden acoustic music inspired by traditional bluegrass, with driving banjo and high lonesome harmonies. Mountain Honey features Linda Leavitt (vocals, guitar, mandolin), Dee Johnson (vocals, bass), Greg Stone (vocals, guitar) and Mike Stahlman (vocals, banjo).

www.mountainhoneypartland.com
www.facebook.com/mountainhoneymusic
Contact Linda at lleavittmusic@icloud.com

Never Come Down

Earnest songwriting, dedication to craft, and genuine care for the music. Joe Suskind: Lead Guitar/Vocals, Crystal Lariza: Rhythm Guitar/Vocals, Kaden Hurst: Mandolin, Lillian Sawyer: Fiddle, Brian Alley: Banjo, Ben Ticknor: Bass

Booking: nevercomedown.band@gmail.com
Brian Alley 303-330-8414

Pickled Okra

Bluegrass, quirky originals, harmony-laden traditionals, and bluegrass-influenced covers. Todd Gray (mandolin & drums) and Paisley Gray (guitar & upright bass)

Paisley Gray
pickledokraband@gmail.com

Rose City Bluegrass Band

Bluegrass, Country and Americana. Peter Schwimmer, Spud Siegel, Gretchen Amann & Charlie Williamson

Charlie Williamson
charlie3@nwlink.com

Continued on page 42

OBA Supporting Performer Directory

The Rogue Bluegrass Band

The Rogue Bluegrass Band is: Paul Hirschmann, guitar, dobro and vocals; Ed Hershberger, banjo and vocals; Deb Smith-Hirschmann, bass and vocals; and Don Tolan, mandolin and vocals. An entertaining four-piece acoustic bluegrass group, featuring harmony vocals and foot-stomping fiddle tunes.

Rogue Bluegrass Band

Contact Don at
RogueBluegrassBand@yahoo.com

Rowdy Mountain

A throwback to the heyday of bluegrass music, Rowdy Mountain brings the heat with the raw, down from the mountain sound that originally gave bluegrass its wheels back in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Featuring energetic and fresh classics alongside stirring and relevant originals that honor the time-tested tradition, Rowdy Mountain is the real deal. Listen for yourself at rowdymountain.bandcamp.com.

971-347-6050

rowdymountain@gmail.com

Scratchdog Stringband

The Scratchdog Stringband is creating a name for themselves as the vanguard of a high-energy, innovative brand of bluegrass that satisfies old-school traditionalists of the genre while enchanting modern audiences with a style of music they didn't yet know they loved. Some of the hardest-working young musicians in the Pacific Northwest.

Steve Eggers

eggers-stephen@gmail.com

Slipshod

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. Check out this dynamic duo on their website, Facebook and YouTube..

www.SlipshodMusic.net

Steve Blanchard, 503-730-0005

Steve@SteveBlanchardMusic.com

Matt Snook, 541-805-5133

BohemianBanjo@gmail.com

Sunfish Duo

With Sarah Ells on guitar and Daniel Fish on mandolin, you'll go back in time to hear traditional harmonies and simple melodies from the roots of Bluegrass, Country, and Old-time music.

Daniel Fish

djoeifish@gmail.com

Timothy Jenkins Band

Timothy Jenkins

tjenkins@uoregon.edu

The Hardly Heard

The Hardly Heard perform music inspired by Second Generation Bluegrass. We offer rich vocal harmonies, memorable instrumentals and we are equipped with a full gospel set for Festival Sundays.

Contact email: thehardlyheard@gmail.com

Visit us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/thehardlyheard/

[thehardlyheard/](http://www.facebook.com/thehardlyheard/)

Band Website: www.reverbnation.com/thehardlyheard

True North

True North is a powerhouse of award-winning original songs, with the crazy-good picking and harmonies of a band deeply rooted in folk and bluegrass genres. Members: Kristen Grainger, Dan Wetzel, Josh Adkins and Martin Stevens.

truenorthband@comcast.net

www.truenorthband.com

Wailing Willows

Traditional bluegrass. Andrew Spence, banjo, guitar, primary lead vocal. Hal Spence, guitar and tenor, Andrew's dad, bringing family-blend harmonies. Kim Jones, bass fiddle, lead and harmony vocals. Dave Elliott, mandolin and lead harmony vocals.

Contact: 909-913-3668

andspence@gmail.com

Whistlin' Rufus

Pat Connell, Ritchie Wernick, Nat O'Neal, Patrick Connell, Zach Banks. Three- and four-part vocal harmonies, exciting instrumentation and contagious fun are part of the Rufusarian 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



Packed house in the OBA Suite



OBA Suite Jam

June Apple For Guitar In A (Capo 2)

Arr. By Greg Stone

4/4

G F

G F

1. G 2. G G

0-2 0-2-0 3-1 0-2 0-2-0 3-1 0-2 0-0-2 0-0-2 0-0-1-3-0 3-0

F C G

3-2-3-0-2-0-2-0 1-0-1-3-0 3-1 0-0-2-0-0-2 0-0-1-3-0 3-0

F 1. G 2. G

3-2-3-0-2-0-3-2 0-2-0-2-0-3-1 0-2 0-2-0

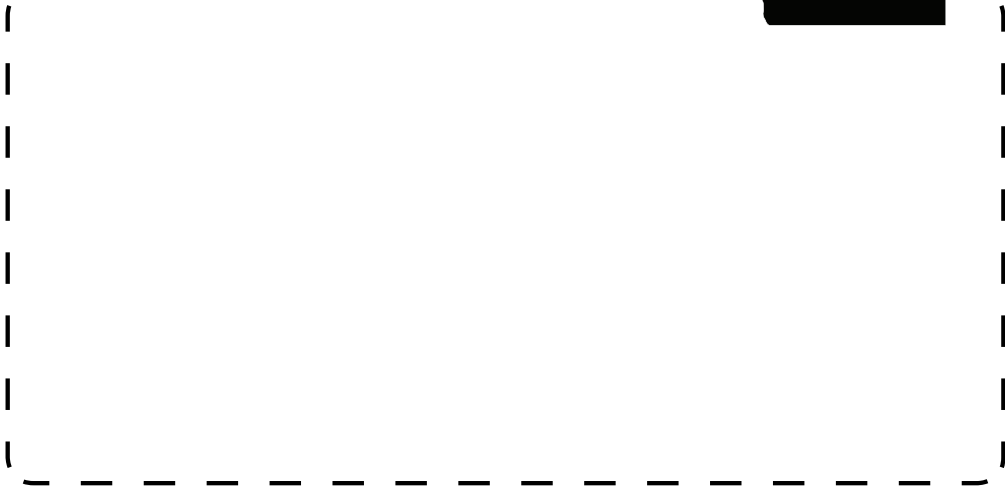
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City, State, Zip _____

Daytime phone _____ Email Address _____

Visit www.oregonbluegrass.org
for information on OBA activities,
local jams, festivals, concerts,
Chick's Kids and more

THANK YOU
FOR JOINING
THE OBA!

THE OBA NEEDS YOU!

We are always seeking members for various tasks, ranging from open director positions to taking a shift at the merch booth at a festival. It's fun and you'll meet some truly nice people. Tell us a little about yourself in an email to volunteers@oregonbluegrass.org or contact any board member.

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 Event: _____