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2020

\$5<sup>00</sup>



INSIDE THIS ISSUE!  
Meet Matt Ruhland, Banjo  
Dynamics #3, Musician Interviews  
and more...



*Oregon Bluegrass Association*  
www.oregonbluegrass.org

# Bluegrass *Express*

## MEET MATT RUHLAND Luthier/Musician/Nice Guy

By Tammy Spears

**P**ortland, Oregon has a jewel within its midst: Matt Ruhland. Matt can be seen playing banjo in local jams, bands, and bluegrass festivals. But nationally, he is making a name for himself as a gifted luthier. Part I of this article will introduce you to the multi-talented Matt Ruhland. Part II will give you an inside glimpse of his small-batch mandolins from a customer and associate perspective.

### Part I The Musician

Matt grew up in rural Memphis and has fond memories of riding his bike “all over the place.” But as an adult, the heat, humidity and geographic location of Memphis enticed him to find new frontiers. In 2006 he sold his home, packed his belongings and hit the road. Having canvassed the U.S., he gravitated toward the Pacific NW to check out the home base of his musical heroes Caleb Klauder (Foghorn Stringband) and David Pugh (Jackstraw). Matt said that as he crossed through Walla Walla, Washington and drove into the gorge, he knew that he would live in Portland. In fact, during that drive he was so excited that he stopped his car and jumped into the John Day River, symbolizing the immersion into his new home. Having already played banjo (but mostly

rock guitar) in Memphis, his first music jam in Portland was the Alberta Street Pub’s bluegrass jam where he met many of the friends he holds dear today. Not only a talented multi-instrumentalist (banjo, mandolin, guitar), Matt also sings; he recently performed in 3-part *a capella* harmony at the OBA’s Pickersfest. Locally



*Matt uses a non-toxic spirit varnish he concocts from 190 Proof White Lightning grain alcohol (yeah, you could drink it), tree resins, and organic shellac.*

you can catch him playing in the Portland-based Rowdy Mountain band.

### The Luthier

Before leaving Memphis, Matt worked in the construction industry restoring old homes. Upon moving to Portland, Matt reconnected with a childhood friend and the two decided to build custom furniture. Since this endeavor

was slow to develop, Matt found himself repairing and “tinkering with” violins and other small instruments. Working with small instruments was a natural fit. A good friend, past bandmate and fine woodworker, Jason Brooks (Minor Lee Woodworks), planted the seed of working in production, and in 2014 Matt took the plunge into building mandolins as a career. As Matt said, “At that time, I owned a nice Crafters of Tennessee A5 mandolin. I had been eyeing some F5s, but with the banjo as my primary instrument, I couldn’t justify that purchase. It made sense to me to start building with the F5. Baptism by fire, and why not?” Thus, the first F5 Ruhland mandolin was born, No. 0 or “Test,” which Matt still owns today.

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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:

**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](http://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. Please send submissions to:

**Linda Leavitt**  
[Expressnews@oregonbluegrass.org](mailto:Expressnews@oregonbluegrass.org)

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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@oregonbluegrass.org](mailto:obaexpressads@oregonbluegrass.org).

### PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

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Summer (Jul-Sept)	July 1	June 1	June 1
Fall (Oct-Dec)	October 1	September 1	September 1

### AD RATES AND DIMENSIONS

Size	Dimension	Cost	2 or more issues
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Half Page Horizontal	7.5 x 4.75	\$90.00	\$80.00
Half Page Vertical	3.75 x 9.5	\$90.00	\$80.00
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Eighth Page	3.75 x 2.25	\$40.00	\$30.00

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Leaderboard	728 x 90 px	\$50.00	\$30.00
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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](http://www.oregonbluegrass.org/bgexpress.php) or you may mail a check payable to The Oregon Bluegrass Association, PO Box 1115, Portland, OR 97207.

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](mailto: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 chapters in Salem and 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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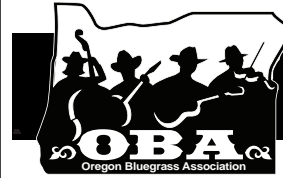
Amy Hakanson



Justin Hiltner



Jake Jolliff Band, with John Mailander  
at Volcanic Theatre Pub in Bend



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[www.oregonbluegrass.org](http://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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# President's Message

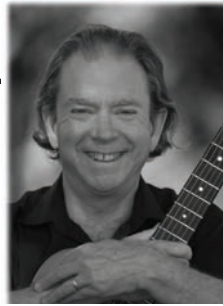


Photo By Doug Olmstead

"You're upping your game," a longtime friend and OBA member said to me recently. That's exactly what we hope people are saying as we roll into 2020.

Bluegrass music is expanding in our state, if the number of active bands is any indication—we're up to 18 OBA member bands and still growing—and we are finishing up 2019 with a new web radio station, a new concert series, and stronger ties and support for our existing programs and activities.

Best of all, we're seeing *you* getting out, getting involved, becoming members and volunteers, and spreading bluegrass around. Thank you all!

One quick way to get plugged in is to attend one of our quarterly public Directors' meetings (none of our Board's meetings are *closed* to members, but since July we have been scheduling a meeting each quarter in a public location to encourage members to get to know us and give us feedback). The next one will be at 7 p.m. on February 11, 2020 at Max's Fanno Creek Brew Pub in Tigard. Please join us.

The next few months are going to be an exciting time for the OBA. We've got three *Bluegrass Special* concerts between January and March—the *Sonny Hammond Memorial Gospel Show* with the Kathy Kallick Band plus Cliff Perry & Laurel Bliss on January 25, Chris Jones and the Night Drivers on February 8, and Missy Raines on March 21.

Right in the middle is *Wintergrass*, from February 20-23. If you thought the OBA Suite was over the top last year, wait until you see what Patrick Connell is cookin' up for the 2020 OBA showcases. Plus jams, the silent auction, and seeing all your new best friends.

We are donors in support of *Wintergrass*. As always, we are grateful for your financial contribution. It's quick and easy with the donation button on our web site.

And don't forget the superb concerts featuring the best local artists with our partners Multnomah Grange 71 on January 11, February 8, and March 14.

It's a lot to put on your calendar, but don't worry, the OBA Calendar on our web site has you covered. Stop by next time you're clicking on the *Listen to OBA Radio* button.

One final thought: Just over the horizon is the OBA Annual Meeting on April 5 at the Multnomah Arts Center. It's more than a fine time with good pals; we will be electing a slate of Directors and announcing this year's Steve Waller Grant recipients.

If you're interested in upping *your* game as a volunteer by serving as a Director, contact me at [president@oregonbluegrass.org](mailto:president@oregonbluegrass.org). I'd love to have that conversation with you.

And now's the time to apply for the OBA's helping hand as a Waller Grant recipient. Our web site has everything you need to apply.

So, until we meet again, please accept my humble thanks for your membership and support.

*Chris*  
OBA President

## What's Playing On The Radio

Local Radio Bluegrass and Country Listings

### Everywhere And Free

Oregon Bluegrass Radio  
[www.oregonbluegrass.org](http://www.oregonbluegrass.org)  
Every day, all day

### 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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.kyacfm.org)

### Salem - KMUZ 88.5 & 100.7

"Ken 'til 10" 6-8am M-F  
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[kmuz.org](http://kmuz.org), all bluegrass



# ANNUAL MEETING

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*Commencement of Ruhland Mandolin No. 42 for Tammy Spears*

Matt fondly recalls his first trip to Orcas Island where he met the famed Bruce Harvie who has over 40 years of experience marketing tone woods. The knowledge, sound advice, and builder references Mr. Harvie generously provided were invaluable to the young luthier and has shaped the way Ruhland mandolins are made. Chuck Holloway (musician and owner of a Ruhland mandolin No. 20) recently commented, “Matt got it right, right from the start.” Well said, as early Ruhland mandolins are known for their tone and volume.

In contrast to its classical European roots, the mandolin has become best known in the U.S. for its appearance in bluegrass, country and old-time music. Ruhland offers two American-style models: the almond-shaped A5, and the F5 with scroll and points. Although inspired by the early Gibson/Loar mandolins, Matt also draws inspiration from past and present builders including Sullivan and Gilchrist. Matt’s building philosophy is to draw from the old, but always search for new and improved methods. For example, where some luthiers have a calculated “recipe” for voicing the instrument, Matt feels that each instrument should prescribe its own voicing. Finishing is also a unique process; Matt uses a non-toxic spirit varnish he concocts from 190 Proof White

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## Matt’s Take on Mandolin Maintenance

There are so many things that contribute to the tone, volume and playability of a mandolin. I encourage players to learn as much as they can about caring for their instruments, and to share with other pickers. Ultimately, though, don’t hesitate to check in with a pro for maintenance.

As seasons change, mandolins will take on or lose moisture rapidly, because these carved plates have a lot of exposed endgrain. Keep an eye on your action, and make bridge adjustments accordingly. After any adjustment or string change, **always make sure your bridge foot is flat on the top**, and not tanking toward the fretboard. Fret wear can also sneak up on you. If you do get a little buzzing, and a bridge adjustment isn’t quite the answer, it might be time to check in with someone for a fret dressing.

**Please learn what your mandolin finish is. There are different polishes and methods of care for finishes from nitrocellulose lacquer to spirit varnish. Polishes for nitrocellulose will dissolve spirit varnish. You should check into Jubilee Polish for shellac-based finishes. For the most part, a soft cloth is all you need to clean most finishes. Direct sun on a black case at a summer festival can roast a finish, or make it check horribly. Always be cautious there. If you are buying a new case, and you’re a festival goer, buy a white one, please!**

I’ve seen a trend in playing with heavy strings. Your standard **issue J74s should be fine for most builds. If you load up with those heavy strings**, I’ve noticed that the tops don’t vibrate as freely with all that added pressure. There’s a serious balance going on, and little things like that can rob you of tone.

If you think you just have to have a pickup, go watch Andrew Marlin play with Mandolin Orange. His 1924 Loar will be the loudest thing in that full band, and he’s playing into a Sure Beta 57. Also, check out Caleb Klauer’s Country Band for another properly miked tone generator. That Sullivan F5 punches right through! I think the pads in most pickup setups take the brilliance away from a mandolin top. The area between the tone bar and the edge of the F-hole is very important for brilliance. Please reconsider!

**D**oes your banjo have an overly bright or harsh sound? Do other musicians cringe at your attempts to blend in musically? In my many years of doing professional banjo setup, I have found this tone problem to be common with traditionally constructed banjos. Typical banjo sound contains a high overtone content. To explain further, the thin responsive head on the banjo allows the strings' sub-vibrations, or overtones, to become audible. The high harmonic content of the banjo's sound in fact defines the unique quality of the banjo's sound.

Even if your banjo is loud, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is sounding its best. Often the loudness of a banjo contains a large measure of "noise." The heavy metal-laden banjo machine tends to serve up more than its share of high-frequency resonance, and compounded with discordant harmonics, we have a recipe for a harsh cold sound.

Naturally, we all have slightly different ideas of good sound, but among serious musicians, most favor a certain warmth of tone. The secret to finding this warm quality in your banjo is to try to free up some of its lower frequencies while controlling its high overtones from becoming overpowering. The most pleasant tones to the human ear tend to be in the medium- to lower-frequency range. Most banjos are capable of producing these frequencies, but they are often choked off by a setup that is too tight and which restricts the banjo's bass potential. When bass is present, it rounds out the sound and helps buffer the high frequency noise. I hope the following information will assist in achieving even and balanced tone on whatever style of banjo you have.

If you have a Heli-mount style banjo, perfectly even tension is automatically applied to the banjo head. Helical Head mounting replaces upwards of 70 pieces of metal hardware, and mounts the tone components independent of direct metal contact, producing fuller, deeper, and more even tone with less work. Detailed setup advice follows for adding a musical warmth, especially for those with traditional hook-and-nut style banjos.

## Heads

So how do we encourage the bass and control the noise? The common first remedy is to loosen the head. I won't go into detail about how to do this, since if you are reading this, I must assume you have the tool and know-how for that. I'd suggest using the right size nut driver, usually 1/4". Make sure all nuts have equal tension and the tension hoop remains straight. If the instrument loses too much volume or brilliance with a looser head, you may want to experiment with different types of heads.

Some players of overly bright banjos have installed a Fiberskyn head. This is a simulated natural skin-looking head that is a little thicker. It can be an effective way to muffle the highest frequencies and it is a particularly common replacement head on Stelling banjos. We are always walking a tightrope with adjustments on a banjo. The danger is that the Fiberskyn may cause the instrument to sound lifeless and dull. If you tighten the head too much, you might choke off the musicality altogether, especially with 11-inch heads. In most bluegrass banjos, I prefer a Renaissance head or a regular frosted head. 5-Star heads seem a little heavier but tend to sound a little colder and brighter than standard Remo frosted heads. Clear heads, which can be sharp and edgy in a traditional banjo, sound their best evenly tight or helically mounted. More to come on banjo heads next time.

## Bridges

The banjo bridge is a source of much myth and misunderstanding. There are many features to the bridge that can distract from or add to optimal banjo sound. It's important to pay attention to the following bridge features to help limit unwanted noise, yet allow ample volume:

### Bridge Weight

This is perhaps the most crucial factor in bridges. Most bridges I see on bluegrass banjos are a little too light to deliver a warm tone. While light, thin bridges translate the string vibration into a bright sound, they also allow audible responsiveness to every overtone imaginable. On 5-string banjos, the bridge should weigh no less than two grams, and under three grams. Let me also add a note on bridge density: Harder maple with many growth lines produces a brighter sound than softer maple with grain lines about 1/8" apart.



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Continued on page 8

## String Slots

If the string slots are not cut to fit the string snugly, or if the front edge of the slot is too deep, noise can occur. A bridge with a wide ebony top for extra weight, and longer contact area between the string and the bridge, is the most effective. Be sure the playing side of the string slot makes sharp, intimate contact with the string for clean tone.

## Bridge Height

With a hook-and-nut style banjo, it is important to use only the bridge height which is optimal for the instrument. This can vary slightly with each banjo. Different heights will produce different tone results, but changing the bridge height obviously affects the string action and resulting playability. It's recommended to avoid over-tightening of the banjo's coordinator rods to force a banjo to accept a different height bridge. This can cause unwanted stresses, bad sound, and potential damage to the banjo pot. This can also contribute to harshness and unwanted bass constriction. To find the proper height, remove the strings, loosen the coordinator nuts by the tailpiece side of the rim, check the evenness of head tension, tighten the neck to the rim first, and then hand-tighten the nuts on the tailpiece side of the rim. Then re-string the banjo and find a bridge high enough so no strings rattle or buzz anywhere on the neck.

## Tailpieces

Another important part that should be considered when attempting to warm up a banjo's sound is its tailpiece. This part exerts the downward pressure of the strings on the bridge and head. Just as it is important to determine a banjo's "natural" bridge height, it is also necessary to seek a tailpiece position that is rigid, yet which allows the natural vibration of the bridge and head.

There is always an interplay of offsetting factors, but the following guidelines are generally true: With 5/8" bridges I like to fasten the Presto tailpiece rigidly down until its underside just touches the tension hoop. Then with strings on, and a little

more tightening of the tailpiece nut, the body of the tailpiece will start to point up toward the top of the bridge. Of course, the higher the bridge, the higher the tailpiece should be. If there is a screw in the end of the tailpiece, I would remove it so that there is solid contact between the tailpiece and the side of the tension hoop. Kershner and Price tailpieces are a bit more solid so they allow for a little more leeway in how they are set up. For example, they can be off the top of the tension hoop a little and be parallel to the head, or even pointing up a little.

Beware of too much choking down at the tailpiece. If you need to crank down on the tailpiece to get any life out of the instrument, you probably have other weak links in the banjo system that should be addressed first.

Nechville and Stelling tailpieces are pre-set by their anchoring points on the tension hoop, but still allow some down pressure adjustment. These tailpieces also give a bit of side-to-side adjustment for string centering.

## Strings

Light gauge strings, .009, .011, .012, .020 wound, .009 are typical on bright bluegrass banjos and usually sound great. If you are shooting for a darker or warmer sound, try this set: .010, .012, .014, .022 wound, .010.

## Summary

Whenever working on your banjo, remember that small changes add up to a combined result that is often quite noticeable. When facing a choice for which adjustments to make to warm your sound, opt for making several small adjustments rather than one large one. Banjos usually respond better to many minute adjustments rather than to one drastic one.

## Nechville News Flash

**Tom Nechville, internationally recognized banjo luthier now offers professional banjo set up and repair through his affiliation with shops in and around Portland.**

**You can request specialized Nechville service through your local music store, repair shop, or call Tom Nechville for an appointment.**

**Find out about Nechville's compensated bridges, Comfort Bevel armrests, Warp Drive pickups, and other accessories at <https://www.nechville.com/accessories.php>**

**If you wish to view his personal collection of instruments for sale or want to learn more about banjos in general, call Tom for an appointment. 612-275-6602.**

**Happy picking!  
Tom Nechville.  
<https://www.nechville.com>**



# Meet Matt Ruhland

cont. from page 6



Batch Eight of A5 mandolins

Lightning grain alcohol (yeah, you could drink it), tree resins and organic shellac. Matt also states that he is not a big fan of electronic pickups or heavy strings, believing that they take away the natural tone of the instrument.

Tight quality control is achieved because Ruhland is, and will remain, a one-man operation. No time for loneliness though, as Matt enjoys visits from customers and fellow musicians checking out his shop. He always seems to find time to chat and answer questions.

Matt is creating Batch Nine of F5-style Ruhland mandolins. You can find more information about Ruhland mandolins at Matt's website, [ruhlandmandolins.com](http://ruhlandmandolins.com)

## Part II Customers and Associates Tammy Spears, Portland, Oregon

I started chatting with Matt in the fall of 2018 about building a semi-custom Ruhland A5 mandolin. By April 2019, Batch Eight commenced of eight Ruhland A5

mandolins (No. 36 to No. 43). Mine was No. 42. I've photo-documented and oged over every step of the build from picking out the blocks of wood to applying the finish. The entire process was interesting, exciting, and fun. Matt's kind and jovial persona is great. And since Matt is a musician, he has a natural sense of sound, playability, and what a musician wants from an instrument.

In this age of mass produced "throw-away" goods, for me it is refreshing and inspirational to own a custom, handmade mandolin from a local builder. Or, as a friend says, "You have an instrument with a soul." Now comes the fun part of getting some playwear on my new Ruhland mandolin. It truly is a work of art with "bell" quality tone that I will eternally enjoy.

## Reed Stutz, Berklee School of Music, Boston, Massachusetts

I'm really happy with my Ruhland mandolin, No. 23. I have lots of fun playing it, dancing with its woody tone and strong presence. It's got a unique character that I was fond of right off the bat, and I keep seeing it has more to show me. I'm real grateful Matt is doing what he's doing and glad to have him and my Ruhland mandolin No. 23 as partners. Heck yeah for local builders doing cool things.

## Josh Levine, Portland, Oregon

I own Ruhland No. 30, an A5 model and one of the first instruments he made with the old Alaskan Sitka from a decommissioned bridge. It is an amazing instrument, louder than any instrument I've owned, and I own some loud instruments. It plays incredibly easy and amazingly, has no dead spots. I get

great tone and volume way up the neck. I've been watching Matt as a builder from pretty early on, somewhere around No.10, I think. It was clear to me that he knew how to get great tone out of an instrument. When you walk into his house, you immediately see slats of wood curing. He really is completely obsessed with building mandolins, which is great, since I like playing mandolins. Such a treat to have him living down the street. When I saw his first batch of A5 models and got to play No. 29 and No. 30, I finally bit the bullet and picked one up. He really has refined his craft and it seems every instrument he builds has it. I just played his most recent batch of A5s and they are amazing too. I was slightly envious, but I love my Ruhland A.

Matt is also a really great guy. One of my favorite things about Matt, other than his mandolins, is if you are ever at a late-night festival jam with him, at some point he

Continued on page 11



Matt Ruhland and Tammy Spears mid-way through the build



# OREGON BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

## BLUEGRASS SPECIAL CONCERT SERIES 2019-2020

### Next Concert

SATURDAY  
JAN. 25  
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Kathy Kallick Band

Cliff Perry and Laurel Bliss



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He and the band have recorded two critically acclaimed albums and generated five #1 songs on the bluegrass music charts.

SATURDAY  
MAR. 21  
2020

Missy Raines



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[oregonbluegrass.org](http://oregonbluegrass.org)

#### AT THE DOOR:

\$25 General Admission | \$22 OBA members  
\$12 ages 12-18 (under 12 free)

# Meet Matt Ruhland

cont. from page 9

busts out a massive cast-iron skillet and cooks pork chops or steaks mid-jam and shares them with everyone. Mandolins and pork chops – now that is a key to my heart.

## George Gruhn, owner, Gruhn Guitars, Nashville, Tennessee

“I recently had the occasion to borrow a Matt Ruhland F5-style mandolin from Dennis Benjamin for a weekend, which gave me the opportunity to play it at my shop, at home, and take it backstage to the Opry and show it to a number of prominent artists, where it was well received. I was favorably impressed with its workmanship, playability, materials, and sound. There are more makers today producing high-quality mandolins suitable for bluegrass music than probably at any time in the instrument’s history. In my opinion, Ruhland mandolins warrant attention from serious musicians.”

## Bruce Harvie, owner, Orcas Island Tonewoods

“I see all the new builders when they come here for tonewood, so I have a pretty interesting front-row seat in the emerging mandolin-building community. A lot of them show me their latest, and all I can really offer is ‘nice wood!’ I built about 25 instruments back in the 70s and 80s, and that would certainly be the critique of my own work!”

“When Matt showed up here, he had an early F5 copy with him, and it really had a great sound. I had a few comments on the arching and a couple other details, but you could really tell he was onto something. When he showed up again a year or so later, he had really dialed it in. I’d say he is right up there with just about

any of the newer breed I’ve run into in the last 15 years or so. And not only did he “get there,” but he got there quickly.”

## Greg Boyd, owner, Greg Boyd’s House of Fine Instruments, Missoula, Montana

“We’re excited to be a dealer for Matt Ruhland’s mandolins. In fact, we’ve been “all in” after meeting Matt and hearing the first one a few years ago. Rarely are new makers

opinion.”

Greg had this to say about the latest Ruhland A5 that is for sale at his shop: “This is a spirit-varnished, sunburst beauty. The back and sides are constructed from Western Big Leaf Maple with excellent bookmatched back. The neck is 2-piece figured Sugar Maple. The Maple figure is very beautiful with strong figure everywhere. The top is a special hard Sitka Spruce (or possibly a Lutz hybrid) from Ketchikan,

Alaska, aged over 25 years. Matt says this special Sitka Spruce is harder and much more resonant than much of the Red Spruce that is available today. Snakehead peghead has blackened back and Ebony veneer face with Ruhland logo in pearl inlay at top, pearl and abalone flowerpot in center. Ebony radiused fingerboard with gold EVO frets and pearl dot position markers. Traditional two-piece adjustable intonated bridge; silver James tailpiece with Ruhland engraved in the cover; ebony end pin; and nickel Rubner tuners with ivoroid buttons. The entire mandolin is bound with multiple ivoroid bindings, with multiple lines seen at sides of peghead, sides of fingerboard, and top and back edges of body. The sound is easy to describe – just picture in your mind your idea of a great-sounding mandolin. This one sounds better than that and sounds like it should be priced much higher.”



*One Happy Customer!*

able to produce such mature-sounding instruments, but Matt has done it consistently time after time. We see such a variety of instruments come through the shop that we can quickly sniff out if someone is making quality instruments consistently, and Ruhland is a quality instrument. We have already sold several to experienced players that know what a good mandolin should sound like. Matt’s refinement of traditional building methods and use of high-grade materials puts him near the front of the line of mandolin makers in my

*Tammy Spears is a mandolin player living in Portland, Oregon, and fronts a bluegrass band, Tammy and the Tomcats.*

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# Musician Interview: Amy Hakanson

By Roz Hamar

If you have never seen Amy Hakanson play fiddle or nyckelharpa, you have a real treat in store! I first heard her play with her band Varelse at ScanFair in December 2018, and I became an instant devoted fan. This past May, Varelse released their first CD at Gastro Mania in Portland's Multnomah Village to a standing-room-only enthusiastic crowd. I play the CD often in my car and never tire of the lovely haunting tunes. More recently she joined the band Big Dickens with a last-minute invitation to play fiddle. Though she had not rehearsed with them, she was a wonderful addition, taking breaks on every tune and doing a vocal lead.

I was truly honored to be asked to interview Amy and write this article for the OBA Bluegrass Express. We met for coffee and I began by asking her to tell me the story about how she became a musician. As many of you know, Amy comes from a super-talented musical family. Her grandmother, father, mother, brother and sister are all accomplished musicians and Amy got an early start. When her sister Ellie started taking violin lessons at age 6, Amy — then age two — demanded her own fiddle. Her mother, Kathy Hakanson, was her first teacher, initially with a violin made from a cereal box, and then with a 1/16<sup>th</sup>-size real violin. By age three Amy asked for a “real” teacher and began Suzuki lessons with Elisa Boynton.

At age five, her father, Rob Hakanson, began to teach her simple fiddle tunes like Ashokan Farewell, Flop-Eared Mule, and Boil Them Cabbage Down. Then Dad organized the family into a band for the Columbia Gorge Bluegrass Festival (today called GorgeGrass) in Stevenson, Washington. Dad played guitar and the two girls played fiddle. They performed “Keep on the Sunny Side” in the vocal competition and Amy sang harmony. This launched a period of years when the family band (which also included Mom on standup bass) became regulars at bluegrass festivals in the region – Hood River, Tillamook, Wenatchee, Prospect, Port

Angeles, and Seattle's Wintergrass. They continued to play together until Ellie went off to college.



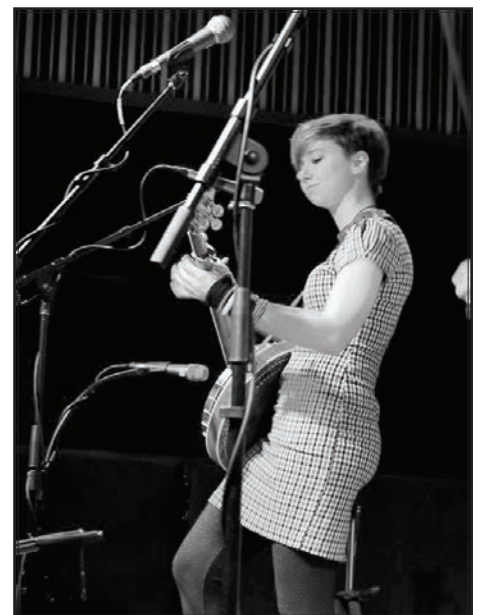
By then, Amy was in high school and continued to pursue her love of music, but now with an intent to explore and play instruments other than the fiddle. She learned to play electric guitar, acoustic guitar, mandolin and banjo and enjoyed these challenges.

In the winter of 2008, Amy was at Wintergrass and had an opportunity to see the band Väsen. This was her introduction to Swedish music and she loved it! She has never looked back. She bought one of their albums and then another, listening to them often. By the time she was 18, she was listening to more and more Scandinavian folk bands. A friend from a radio station gave her 30 CDs and Amy fell in love with this music. She especially loved the nyckelharpa. At the same time, she decided she wanted to study abroad and took a trip to Iceland that further hooked her on the idea of travel and learning.

Amy's search for a nyckelharpa led her to instrument maker Earl Holzman in Wisconsin. He just happened to have a

nyckelharpa he had made a few years earlier and he offered to sell it to her at a discount. She had already saved money for such a purchase and was able to raise another \$1000 on Go Fund Me. Her nyckelharpa arrived before Wintergrass 2014. Väsen was playing again that year and Amy took a workshop from them. Olov Johansson encouraged her to go to the Erik Sahlström Institute in Tobo, Uppsala, Sweden. Amy worked three jobs to save enough money, combined with parent help, to go from August 2014 to May 2015. On her way there she was able to travel to Iceland, England and around Sweden, and attend a Swedish Festival in Korro where she made friends and was introduced to folk dance which is an integral part of the Swedish folk music scene. At the Sahlström Institute, Amy was able to study and play with some of the best in the world. Her time was devoted to playing all day and every day in classes that were interspersed with coffee breaks (“fika”) and meals. There were twenty students in attendance – half playing instruments and half learning dances. On occasion, the musicians and dancers would get together so the players could learn to dance and to play for the dancers. Half of the students

*Continued on page 14*



# Musician Interview: Amy Hakanson

cont. from page 13

were Swedish and the rest came from all over the world – United States, Denmark, Norway, Japan, England, Switzerland, Germany and Finland.

Amy was drawn to Scandinavian music because of the fiddle, an instrument that is central to many folk traditions around the world. The nyckelharpa is idiosyncratic to Uppsala, while other parts of Sweden have their own special instruments. Amy's family comes from an area in Sweden (Skåne) where wooden shoe fiddles were popular. In fact, Amy learned that folk music was not well regarded in Sweden for some time in the 1800s. It was seen as devilish. Dancing and fiddling were especially seen as sinful.

Ironically, the music of Sweden was wonderful for Amy and diving into it revitalized her interest in the fiddle. Most of the work Amy gets these days is for playing the fiddle, but her first love is the nyckelharpa. She describes it as a cross between a hurdy-gurdy and a fiddle. Scandinavian music and bluegrass have some similari-

ties. Amy can hear them in the songs her grandmother plays. Some Scandinavian music morphed into American bluegrass and old-time music. In Swedish music there are no breaks and less singing, and also no guitars. Bluegrass places more emphasis on virtuosity and players take solos and improvise. Amy loves to play bluegrass, old time, country and jazz. She

old Swedish texts, and return to Sweden in Summer 2020. After graduation, she hopes to spend more time with her band and pursue grants in her areas of special interest. Her vision for 10 years out is to be doing more of what she loves and making a living doing it!

We wish her all success in accomplishing her dreams.

*Roz Hamar retired in 2015 from years of Montessori school leadership, moved from the Bay Area to Portland (where she grew up), took up her guitar and found her way to Taborgrass and the Oregon Bluegrass Association.*



is not fond of competitions or recitals and prefers to play in low-pressure situations where she can enjoy the music and the other musicians.

Until a year ago, Amy was studying Music Therapy at Marylhurst University. She was disheartened when their program folded. Now she is studying Ethnomusicology at Portland State University where she expects to graduate in spring 2020. She is also learning to build instruments and would love to build a nyckelharpa, using



## Kathy Kallick Band – Horrible World

Live Oak Records, [www.kathykallick.com](http://www.kathykallick.com)

**G**uitarist and singer Kathy Kallick has hailed from the San Francisco Bay area since 1973. For about twenty years (1975-95), she was with The Good Ol' Persons until they disbanded.

In 1999, she formed The Kathy Kallick Band. In 2009, fiddler Annie Staninec and bassist Greg Booth joined her band that also includes Cary Black (bass) and Tom Bekeny (mandolin). Kathy and the band have been quite busy and prolific with several album releases over the years. "Horrible World" continues to show the eclectic nature of this group.

There are a half dozen Kathy Kallick originals (e.g., "Ride Away," "Pockets Full of Rain," "The Sunday Road") and a self-penned instrumental from Tom Bekeny ("Edale"). A tip of the hat to traditional music includes covers of Bill Monroe's bluesy "Dark as the Night" and A.P. Carter's "My Honey Lou." Featuring Greg Booth's Dobro, "Boot Heel Drag" has a nice Western Swing feel. Besides solid song selection and arrangement, the band offers straightforward picking and good harmony.

"Horrible World" is another engaging and tastefully rendered project from the Kathy Kallick Band.

*Editor's Note: The Kathy Kallick Band will perform January 25, 2020 at the OBA Sonny Hammond Memorial Gospel Show. "Horrible World" CDs will be available at the show.*

*Joe Ross, from Roseburg, Oregon, picks mandolin with the Umpqua Valley Bluegrass Band. He can be reached at [rossjoe@hotmail.com](mailto:rossjoe@hotmail.com).*

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I Draw Slow *(sat/sun)*

Väsen *(fri/sat)*

Red Wine *(th/sat)*

Darol Anger's Intergalactic Republic of Strings *(fri/sat)*

John Reischman & The Jaybirds *(th/fri/sat)*

Balla Kouyate & Mike Block *(sat/sun)*

Trio Brasileiro *(th/fri)*

Kate Lee & Forrest O'Connor *(fri/sat)*

Joe Craven & the Sometimers *(sat)*

The Barefoot Movement *(th/fri)*

The Larry Keel Experience *(sat)*

Hogslop Stringband *(fri/sat)*

Nefesh Mountain *(sat/sun)*

Old Salt Union *(fri)*

Lonesome Ace Stringband *(th/fri)*

The Warren G Hardings *(th/sat)*

Five Letter Word *(fri)*

Heels to the Hardwood *(fri)*

Highway Home *(sun)*

The Swingbringers *(sat)*

[www.wintergrass.com](http://www.wintergrass.com)

Wintergrass is a production of Acoustic Sound, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization



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Nyckelharpa Q&A .....	Amy Hakanson
Oregon Luthier Roundtable .....	Matt Ruhland, Tom Nechville, Gareth Jenkins, and luthiers TBA
Intermediate Facilitated Jam Session .....	Patrick Connell, Kaden Hurst, Brian Alley
Song Jam .....	Linda Leavitt
Tabgrass Beginner How to Jam .....	Linda Leavitt
How to Mic a Band .....	Phil Graham, Ear Trumpet Microphones
Flatpick Guitar Workshop .....	Ken Chapple, Lonnie Ohta, Patrick Connell, Joe Suskind

### Evening Showcases

- Isaac Callender
- Amy Hakanson
- Jeremy Freeman
- Ken Chapple
- Lonesome Town Painters
  - Five Letter Word
  - Greg Blake Band
  - Never Come Down
- Portland Radio Ponies
- (And Surprise Guests!)

*All dates and times to be posted at Wintergrass*

*[www.wintergrass.com](http://www.wintergrass.com)*

# OBA Steve Waller Memorial Fund

## History

In honor of his significant contributions to music and the Oregon Bluegrass Association (OBA), the Steve Waller Memorial Fund (the Fund) was established after Steve's passing in June 2015. The purpose of the Fund is to honor Steve through awarding financial grants to deserving individuals, to further their education, professional growth, or the advancement, preservation or support of bluegrass music.

Resources supporting the Waller Fund include: OBA general account funds, donations from the Oregon bluegrass community, and, potentially, grants received from various other organizations. OBA's goal is to receive enough support to endow the Waller fund, so that the principal balance remains intact in perpetuity, and regular earnings support annual grant awards. Until that point is achieved, OBA will strive to maintain financial resources to award funds deemed sufficient for recipients.

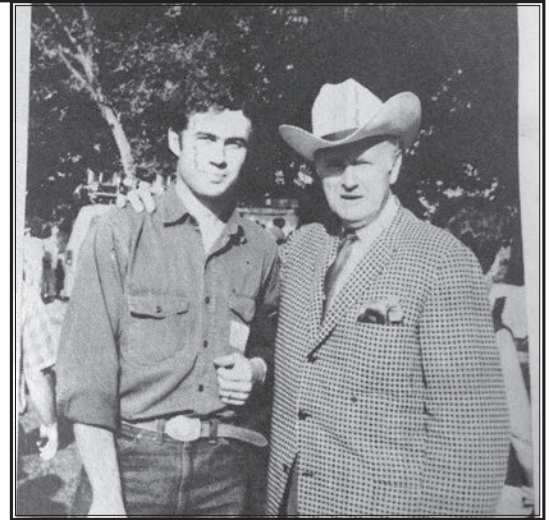
OBA administers the Waller Fund. Grant awards may vary in amount, and may be awarded to one or more recipients. OBA's Waller Fund Committee will review applications and recommend award recipient(s) and amount(s) to the OBA Board of Directors for final approval. The OBA aims to present the award annually at the Annual Meeting in April.

## Scope

Steve Waller Memorial Fund grants will be awarded annually to individuals or groups with involvement in the Oregon Bluegrass community. The OBA Waller Fund Committee will consider all requests received through completion of the Waller Grant Application Form by the due date.

## Criteria

1. Applicant(s) must be an Oregon Bluegrass Association member (individual or band) and the primary award recipient must be an Oregon resident.
2. Applicants must have a stated financial need.
3. Applicants may request funds for musical tuition or lessons, professional development, or the advancement of the bluegrass genre.
4. Applicants must complete and submit the Waller Grant Application Form by the due date.
5. Applications may not be submitted by a current OBA Board Member or relative.
6. Grant award payments will be made by OBA to the entity designated on the Waller Grant Application Form.
7. OBA may revise the criteria and Waller Fund application process from time to time, as needed.



## Use Of Funds

1. Awards are intended to be used within the OBA's mission statement to "promote, encourage, foster, and cultivate the preservation, appreciation, understanding, enjoyment, support, and performance of bluegrass and other closely related music."
2. Awards are to be used within the one-year grant cycle and the Grant Use Summary Form to be completed by June of the year following the award.
3. Submit the form by March 1 to [wallerapplication@oregonbluegrass.org](mailto:wallerapplication@oregonbluegrass.org) or mail by mail to the OBA.
4. Recipients of the award may be asked to present their use of the award at the OBA general membership meeting held annually in April. If awardees are unable to present in person, a statement may be prepared.

# OBA Steve Waller Memorial Fund

## Grant Award Information and Application

Applications Due March 1, 2020

Submit to: OBA

P.O. Box 1115

Portland, OR 97207

Or:

wallerapplication@oregonbluegrass.org

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Time to Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Are you an OBA Board Member or Relative? \_\_\_\_\_

*(Use a separate page to complete the following section, if necessary.)*

Describe your involvement in the Oregon Bluegrass Community.

Describe the Use of Waller Grant Funds \_\_\_\_\_

For What Time Period Will Funds Be Used \_\_\_\_\_

How Will the Grant Funds Further Your Musical or Career Aspirations?

Provide information on who would receive Waller Funds from OBA, should you be awarded a Grant (name, address, phone number, email address)

For questions about this application, contact:  
wallerapplication@oregonbluegrass.org

## Thank You and Good Luck!

# Waller Grant Experience

by Jane Rombouts

I have been a bluegrass fan for decades and a faithful listener to KBOO radio's "Music from the True Vine" on Saturday mornings for years. One Saturday morning, KBOO announced the OBA Pickers Retreat in ZigZag. On a lark, I went there for the day. I had a fantastic time and was introduced to the Northwest bluegrass community. After that day, I started attending TaborGrass with my fiddle. I augmented my home practice with random YouTube videos. I have always loved singing but felt my voice was not all it could be.

I applied for the Waller Grant to help with some focused work on my singing and fiddling. Part of my decision on how to invest the grant money was based on fitting instruction into my already busy life. I decided to try online instruction for fiddling because the format offers so much flexibility. I chose Artist Works fiddle with Darol Anger. For vocal instruction, I decided to work with Darcy Dillon. Darcy has performed with Portland Opera and teaches conveniently close to my home. I worked diligently with the online fiddle

instruction that allowed me to dig in later in the evenings when I had time. Darol Anger's program covered a huge variety of topics such as double stops, variations on licks, bowing, and chopping, just to mention a few. I focused on a particular area of fiddling for a couple weeks at a time. Darol Anger's program also includes sections on Blues and Jazz. Dipping into both of those areas has really helped increase my break repertoire.

I learned SO much about singing working one-on-one with Darcy. She taught me about my breathing, my jaw, projection, enunciation, how to protect my voice, and how to pair my singing with others. I completely relearned how to sing and how to think about singing. Darcy pushed me to focus on technique, providing me with voice exercises, instruction, and feedback. Working with her one-on-one helped me improve my singing in ways I never would have been able to achieve on my own.

I was fortunate to have been awarded the Waller Grant; thank you, OBA! I learned styles and techniques in singing and fid-



dling that will help me improve and continue to carry me forward, a direct result of the Waller Grant. It was a wonderful opportunity to improve my bluegrass musicianship and it helped me really engage at a new level with music as a grounding and joyful part of my life. I am a markedly improved musician with much more to contribute to our local bluegrass family. Gracious thanks again to the OBA!

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# A Voice For Change: Justin Hiltner Talks Bluegrass

by Nora Candey

**J**ustin Hiltner is a Nashville-based banjo player and songwriter. His playing, though firmly based in Scruggs, is innovative and he thinks outside the box while still maintaining a traditional aesthetic. In his eight years in Music City, he's toured, performed, and collaborated with such bluegrass greats as Laurie Lewis, Roland White, Jim Lauderdale, Ronnie McCoury, and Molly Tuttle. Justin is an active part of the national bluegrass community, as a professional banjo player and also as Associate Editor for *The Bluegrass Situation*. He has taught throughout his career, including private lessons and camps such as Laurie Lewis's *Bluegrass in the Gorge* at Menucha. In August 2018 he released a collaborative album called "Watch It Burn" with Jon D. Weisberger, which features 11 original songs co-written by Justin and Jon, and an all-star cast including Molly Tuttle, Tim O'Brien, Kimber Ludiker, Tristan Scroggins, Casey Campbell, Brandon Godman, Corrina Logston, Amanda Fields, Vickie Vaughn, and Ellie Hakanson. Justin's performance on "A Tribute to the Kentucky Colonels" by Roland White and Friends led to an award nomination.

In 2016, Justin was nominated for the IBMA's Instrumentalist Momentum Award. As a songwriter, he has been featured in the IBMA Official Songwriter Showcase. Justin has his own band, the Justin Hiltner Band, and is working on his first solo album. Justin is a progressive champion of the under-represented and marginalized in bluegrass, and produced the first-ever diversity showcase in bluegrass, now an annual event at IBMA's business conference. He is a powerful voice for change and inclusion in the community, and sharp as a tack when it comes to knowledge of all things bluegrass. Over the past couple years, Justin and I have gotten to be pen pals, and I'd always wanted to interview him. When the opportunity came up, I jumped at it. What follows is a sort of "everything I always wanted

to know about Justin but was afraid to ask," and I hope the readers will enjoy his unique perspective on the bluegrass world.

## Interview

**BGE:** Can you tell me about your begin-



nings with bluegrass and the 5-string banjo? Why banjo? What piqued your interest, how did that interest develop, and what kept you on the path? What were your early influences and reasons for wanting to make this music your life?

**Justin:** As a child, I was watching a video of a musical show that included a bluegrass band and it had a joke about Jesus going on vacation. I remembered that much of the story, but I didn't know the name of the show until recently, when a friend googled the information I remembered and discovered it was *Cotton Patch Gospel*, a satirical 1980s retelling of the Christian gospel, in a bluegrass musical style. That show made me want to play the banjo. I was six years old. Wild. But it's kind of perfect, you know? This is how bluegrass works. This is especially how the banjo and three-finger style work.

They capture people's attention, their imagination, and almost force follow-up, discovery, and rapt adoration.

I distinctly remember my parents telling me, "If you still want to play banjo in a year, we'll get you a banjo." I also remember meeting a banjo player at a church service — the faith tradition through-line in this story is only occurring to me right now, in telling this — and he asked me to stretch out my hand against his. Of course, my tiny six-year-old hand was nothing compared to his. He told my parents something about how I wasn't big enough to play it yet. That might have factored into their having me wait a year, if not just to try to dissuade a young kid from a whim like a *banjo*.

**Spoiler alert:** I still wanted a banjo. I started on a piece of literal junk. The resonator was screwed onto the banjo with one giant flathead screw on the exact BACK of the resonator. I couldn't even reach the tuning pegs. When I started lessons, I learned to read tablature; probably the first four or five years were just reading tab. But what really got me into bluegrass, kept me going, showing me the kind of expansive horizons of

the music, was when I started going to jam sessions. Jamming forced me to improvise. The jammers encouraged me in a safe and supportive way. They became my first example of the inseparable community aspect of bluegrass.

The final nail in the coffin for me wanting to do this for a living was being in a family band with my brothers — "The Hiltner Brothers." Yes, so original. We started playing "shows," when I was about ten. Performing was my favorite thing in the world. I was one of those kids who thought the spotlight was on me all the time, but definitely thrived when it was actually true.

**BGE:** What do you feel made the difference between being a banjo hobbyist/enthusiast, and becoming a professional

*Continued on page 22*

# A Voice For Change: Justin Hiltner Talks Bluegrass

Cont. from page 21

musician? What sacrifices did you have to make, what epiphanies did you have along the way, and what wisdom have you learned that you can pass on to aspiring bluegrass musicians?

**Justin:** I had a reckoning with myself after my first year of college where I asked myself what I wanted to do for a living. My plan had been to get a degree in music and a degree in geoscience, but I was worried about debt and unsure that a degree in Western European music with a few roots music classes tacked on was the education I wanted. So I decided to do the thing: Move to Nashville, and see if I could make a living as a professional musician.

I had been filing my income taxes as a musician since I was about 14, yet I hadn't thought of myself as a professional musician until I moved to Nashville. The cognitive dissonance of that is striking to me now. I don't think that being a hobbyist/enthusiast and a professional are two diametric opposites, or that it's binary at all. The wisdom I like to pass on, that was also something of an epiphany for me, was passed on to me from Béla Fleck. When I first met Béla, he gave me something like an impromptu lesson before his soundcheck at a show with Zakir Hussain and Edgar Meyer near my hometown in Ohio. He walked me through a few techniques, things to help "open up" my fretboard a little more, and in wrapping up thanked me because he was on his way to Boston soon to guest teach at Berklee. I immediately felt inferior and said something like, "Oh, well, I'm sure they'll be much more adept students than I am." (My self-deprecating streak persists to this day!)

When he heard me say that, he stopped what he was doing and turned to look at me and said something like, "It's not about being 'best' or better than anyone else. It's about being the best version of you that you can be."

I needed to hear that as a teenager and I think everyone who picks up an instrument, especially a banjo, needs to hear that. It's not competitive, it's not about being the technically best player or performer or creator. It's about expressing

your selfhood as genuinely as you can, as precisely as possible.

**BGE:** You have a distinctive playing style that is strongly based in Scruggs, but goes beyond that. Your playing is extremely clean and punchy. When I hear a track you play on, I can tell it's you. How did you develop your own style, and do you have a musical "secret weapon"?

**Justin:** This is a perfect question to follow my last answer, because what I would call my "secret weapon" is that expression of self that I described. I just want to step on stage, or in front of a microphone, and play what's happening in my head. It turns out my head thinks in a pretty bluegrass vocabulary most of the time, but here



and there the edges are frayed or splitting open and some weird, random, oblique colors and textures come in. Which is just a really fancy way of saying I never really play the same thing twice. Except I always play the same things a lot. It's a banjo. It's all the same.

Innovation, that individualistic expression, is an intrinsic part of banjo playing. It's how Earl invented this entire style. Think about Don Reno, Ralph Stanley, Sonny Osborne, J.D. Crowe, Eddie Adcock, Alison Brown, Kristin Scott Benson — they all are who they are because they sound like themselves. Because they're constantly asking themselves what they want to sound like, whether they're

consciously responding to that question or not!

**BGE:** I've heard you say you consider yourself a songwriter first, and a banjo player second. I know you also teach and hold an influential position within the community as Social Media Director with The Bluegrass Situation. You've also been a change agent due to your involvement in Bluegrass Pride. Given all this, how do you view your overall role within the bluegrass world?

**Justin:** I hope it's not too self-aggrandizing to say that wearing all those different hats, being all these different things to all these different people, is as bluegrass as bluegrass gets. This is "homespun" music. It's always been promoted and performed and propagated by the folks who make it. I see myself as just one link in that long traditional bluegrass chain.

That "homespun" nature doesn't mean we have to be ass backwards, though. We can operate at industry standard levels and not just with the bluegrass community and industry as our standard. We can hold ourselves accountable for the future of the music, and own our responsibility for its past as well. We can really step up and deliver on the quality and potential of this music, if we hold all these things in mind. But all that being said, I just want to be able to make a living making music. All my other tangential, accidental, or purposeful sidebars in my career will remain secondary to that dream, even if pragmatically and intellectually and consciously they might beat it out for first here and there.

**BGE:** Do you think there's a resurgence or renaissance happening right now for bluegrass? If so, why do you think that is? If not, what would it take to make that happen? What is different from the past in the current iteration of the music's popularity?

**Justin:** Bluegrass is constantly going through a renaissance cycle, and we're in one now, but people have different views of where we're at in the cycle. Some see us

Continued on page 24

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# A Voice For Change: Justin Hiltner Talks Bluegrass

Cont. from page 22

as on the tail end of the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* renaissance — the film has its 20-year anniversary next year. Others see bluegrass as never being popular enough, never being truly woven into the zeitgeist, never getting its due. There are a lot of differing opinions on this question.

I think that we're at the inception point, the proverbial big bang, of a new renaissance. One born as a result of bluegrass throwing the doors open and looking out into the world and saying, overtly, for the first time in its history, "We want YOU here. Yes, you. No matter who you are or where you come from or how you got here, we want you to be a part of this thing."

It's going to take work, it's going to take a lot of effort and intention, but that's the road I see us on. And only a handful of years into this movement to make bluegrass more representative and inclusive, we're already seeing pretty seismic changes. It's encouraging and bolstering and yeah, I think it validates my point.

**BGE:** How have events and challenges in your personal life shaped your career? What do you bring with you from your personal life into your artistry and writing, and what, if anything, do you choose to leave out?

**Justin:** My songwriting is painfully transparent. I sometimes try to temper it — it seems narcissistic at times — but it turns out the art I create that resonates with me the most, the most compelling stories I want to tell, are just my heart and soul open and accessible to all. At least, that's how it feels to me. I want it to feel like that, I want my work to have that level of emotional intelligence, but it's taxing and sometimes can be a barrier to entry. I try to be intentional and not gratuitous. It's a journey.

Challenges in my personal life are probably why bluegrass has stuck by me so incessantly through the decades. It's great music for dealing with struggles. It was born out of these musics that were created as literal escapes from the horrors of everyday reality. That's what music is. That's what art

and entertainment are. Especially when you add the therapeutic aspect of processing those struggles, pouring them out of yourself in song. Music gets me through. I often say I'm not really a music fan, but music is my life, it's who I am, it's my passion, it's my love.

**BGE:** Who are the unsung heroes of your life? Who/what do you look to for inspiration?

**Justin:** My grandma bought "The Hiltner Brothers" our first sound system. We used that cobbled-together PA system for years. It really enabled us to put some "miles" under our performing feet. She passed away last year and it means a lot to me to consider how she's such an integral part of my career, since she was one of the building blocks it grew upon.

Richard Hood, one of my first banjo teachers, is one of the greatest human beings I've ever met. He gave me a banjo I still play today. He taught me how to really learn banjo by ear. He got me started on vinyl records. He was also a college professor, in literature and later in his career in bluegrass, too, so he gave me a gorgeous collection of classic books and even spoke at my homeschool graduation ceremony, reading a poem that's still one of my favorites to this day ("Ithaka" by Constantine Cavafy).

Another banjo teacher who doesn't get enough credit as a picker and a savant, genius walking banjo encyclopedia is Greg Earnest. We banjo nerds know it, but the greater community should know how awesome a guy and musician he is.

As something of an aside, a nice "unsung hero" factoid I like to throw out here and there is that the first recording of a banjo ever made was of a woman player, Samantha Bumgarner. Bad. Ass.

**BGE:** You've collaborated with some bluegrass luminaries such as Jon Weisberger, Laurie Lewis, Tim O'Brien and Roland White, which has led to several IBMA nominations. What were these experiences like, what have you brought to and taken

from them, and who else would you love to collaborate with in the future?

**Justin:** Roland gave me my first gig ever at the Station Inn in Nashville and just this year he gave me my first IBMA Award nomination ever, since he had me play on his record, and our track, "Soldier's Joy/Ragtime Annie" was nominated for Collaborative Recording of the Year. Those are just the most tangible ways he's touched me. I really cannot praise Roland enough for the impact he's had on the music and the influence and inspiration he gives me on a regular basis, but especially any of those incredible times we get to share the stage together.

A couple of years after I moved to town, I was having a casual conversation with a friend about how there just aren't many sideman gigs out there that would be a good fit for me, musically, but also because I'm openly gay. He said, "You know who you should play with? Laurie Lewis." Jump five or six years ahead and I'm playing gigs with Laurie Lewis, pinching myself again, wondering how the stars aligned to bring about these dreams of mine. I think Laurie is one of the best musicians and songwriters to ever cross this globe. She certainly transcends the globe at least, and I take every opportunity I can get to shout that from the rooftops. She's horribly, horribly underappreciated -- even with the heaps and heaps and heaps of accolades and ceaseless acclaim she enjoys. It will just never capture her magic, it's impossible!

If I landed on a desert island with only a complete five-piece bluegrass band (including myself), I'd want it to be Tristan Scroggins, Molly Tuttle, Vickie Vaughn, and Corrina Logston Stephens. But there are many others I want to work with. My friend Yola is taking over the world right now, and I daydream all the time about working with her. I'd like to record an album with only queer artists and musicians. I really want to do a Lee Ann Womack tribute show. I want to write a musical based in North Dakota. I could go on and on.

continued





# A Voice For Change: Justin Hiltner Talks Bluegrass

Cont. from page 24

**BGE:** Bluegrass music is a style that relies heavily on tradition, and there seems to be an ongoing debate regarding what is or isn't traditional, and what that even means. What does tradition mean to you in terms of this music and in terms of modern life? What are some traditions you see as vital, and which ones would you like to see go away forever?

**Justin:** Traditional bluegrass, to me, is pretty easy to identify. It sounds like Bill Monroe on the Opry with Cedric, Chubby, Lester, and Earl. It sounds like Flatt & Scruggs at Carnegie Hall. Or Dr. Ralph with Keith and Ricky.

I don't think the Lonesome River Band, for example, is "traditional bluegrass." Or say, Blue Highway. I think they're about as far afield from "traditional bluegrass" as the Punch Brothers or Crooked Still. Somewhere along the way (*Bluegrass Album Band?* J.D. Crowe & the New South? Osborne Brothers?) the term "traditional bluegrass" has been massaged in such a way that we think this is the most traditional stuff, but really it's more like neo-traditional bluegrass that sounds like '90s singer/songwriter country radio played by a bluegrass band.

Don't get me wrong, I freakin' love that style of bluegrass. I love LRB, Sammy Shelor is a genius -- and a Steve Martin prize winner, for good reason. I chose example bands arbitrarily. It's just not "traditional."

I say all this to bring up my main point: Maybe we don't need to worry so much about what is and isn't traditional. Maybe bluegrass isn't just the center of the wheel, from which the spokes radiate, taking the central ideas of the music into more obscure reaches. Maybe it's the entire wheel. Maybe old-time and blues and down-home country music and string band music and jug band music and dance string band music and bluegrass are all the same thing. We can quibble about the distinctions. I love doing that. I write about music for a living, but the quibbling should be because it's fun to talk about music, not because the labels and hard lines and distinctions really matter.

**BGE:** You recently released "Watch It Burn," your well-received collaboration with Jon D. Weisberger on Robust Records. I've spent a lot of time with this record, and it sounds seamless to me -- I can't tell at all who wrote what. Who wrote what, and how did the songs evolve? Will you be touring in support of it, and can we expect a local show here in Oregon?

**Justin:** We would LOVE to play a show in Oregon, so please, all my wonderful OBA folks, drop our names or supplicate the powers that be --and we'll do the same! We weren't able to tour in support of the record because just as it was released, I had some health issues crop up last year, but we are planning on doing some mini touring here and there, because we like each other a lot and like the music and want to make it happen!

As far as who wrote what, pretty easy answer: Jon and I co-wrote everything on it except the tune, "General Kuster," which was written by our mutual friend Brandon Godman. Now, I figure you mean more specifically, of the co-written material on the record, who wrote what bits, but it actually was as seamless as you described. I brought the majority of the ideas to the table, but Jon and I work so well together, pretty much in lock step, the songs built themselves pretty equally.

"This Isn't How I Wanted to Come Home" is a song about my grandma passing, so that one has more of me in it, if you measured by volume, but something I love about working with Jon is that he can be such a thoughtful, genuine, songwriting chameleon. He took the aspects of my life and my relationship with my grandmother that I brought and helped me form them into that song. So yeah, word for word we probably are about equal, even as counter-intuitive as that may seem.

I guess Jon is just really, really good at method acting through song!

**BGE:** What else can we look forward to in your expansive and ever-evolving career? What projects do you have in the works, what are your goals in the coming year,



and what is just a twinkle in your eye?

**Justin:** I have so many ideas rumbling around in my head and heart, I can't wait to see how they all develop and grow. I'm working on recording a solo album, just me, the banjo, and a bunch of my sad songs. I hope to see a single or two early next year with an album drop in 12 to 18 months. Ish! I have so many songs that I'm ready for the world to hear. Since John Hartford, no one has really done solo banjo music that's song-centered. There's plenty of it based on instrumental music, but almost none dedicated to storytelling through song.

The forever twinkle in my eye is taking the diversity showcase that I produce, Shout & Shine, on tour! IBMA's Wide Open Bluegrass festival this year included our fourth annual Shout & Shine as well, we had an amazing lineup, our biggest crowds, a gender/queer inclusive square dance, artists of color, LGBTQ+ folks, an indigenous performer for the first time. I want to take this message, this mission, on the road. Putting it out into the universe now, going to make it happen!

*Nora Candey is a homemaker and bluegrass enthusiast. She lives in Oak Grove, Oregon with her husband and three cats.*



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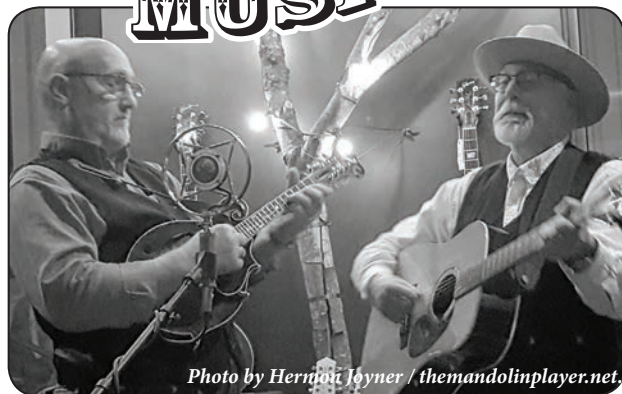
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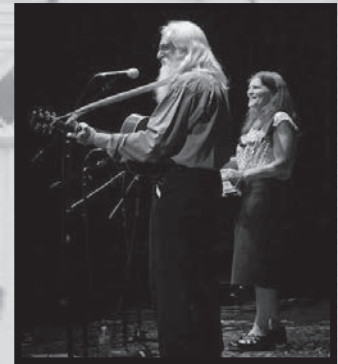
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(503) 206-4911 - [charliew3@nwlinc.com](mailto:charliew3@nwlinc.com)

Christine Palmer & Associates - **Producers of America's Largest Antique & Collectible Shows**

(503) 282-0877 - [www.christinepalmer.net](http://www.christinepalmer.net)

Richard Siewert, GRI - **Owner/Broker, Northwest Classic Properties**

1-800-440-8301 - 2265 Country Club Road, Woodburn, Oregon 97071

"The Connell Team" Alpine Real Estate

Pat Connell 971-207-5993, Patrick Connell 541-261-3609, [pdxconnell@gmail.com](mailto:pdxconnell@gmail.com), [www.areportland.com](http://www.areportland.com)

Woodwork Solutions - **Collaborative Architectural Woodwork and Remodel**

Jack Livingston (503) 729-1743

[www.woodworksolutions.com](http://www.woodworksolutions.com), [jack@woodworksolutions.com](mailto:jack@woodworksolutions.com)

Day Chiropractic

David Day (503) 760-7572

[www.daychiropractic.com](http://www.daychiropractic.com)

Medical Information Integration, LLC

Tony McCormick, CTO

[info@mi-squared.com](mailto:info@mi-squared.com)

Hankins Home Inspections

Tracy Hankins

503-985-7869

Nechville Musical Products

Tom Nechville 952-888-9710

<https://www.nechville.com>, [sales@nechville.com](mailto:sales@nechville.com)

Preston Thompson Guitars

Preston Thompson 541-588-6211

325 East Main Avenue

Sisters, Oregon

Add your business name to this list: If you are a bluegrass-friendly business and would like to actively promote your business by being an OBA supporting partner - now you can, as a Contributing Business Sponsor. A Contributing Business Sponsor can get the recognition and promotional benefits of underwriter-style sponsorship. For \$125 annually, your OBA supporting business gets all the member benefits - plus a year of promotional print and announcement recognition at OBA sponsored shows and promotions, as well as a prominent listing in the Bluegrass Express. For more information please contact the OBA at: [membership@oregonbluegrass.org](mailto:membership@oregonbluegrass.org).

# What's Cookin' - Shows and Events in the Northwest

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*Always check the venue's web site, Facebook page, or phone to confirm. Dates, times, and cover charges may change. We try to list the bluegrass-related shows we know about within our printing deadline. Bands—list your show information on the OBA events calendar page! OBA events calendar:*

*<https://www.oregonbluegrass.org/calendar/>*

**Tuesdays: Bluegrass at The Ranger Station, 4260 SE Hawthorne Blvd, Portland. Free.** 503-894-8455, [rangerstationpdx.com/events/](http://rangerstationpdx.com/events/) or The Ranger Station on Facebook.

**(Some) Thursdays: Bluegrass at The Muddy Rudder, 8105 SE 7th Avenue, Portland. Free. usually 8-10:30 p.m. The Sleepy-Eyed Johns hold down the fort every first and third Thursdays.** 503-233-4410, [muddyrudderpdx.com/music-schedule/](http://muddyrudderpdx.com/music-schedule/)

**Every Thursday: The Floating Glass Balls band with Spud Siegel, Bill's Tavern & Brewhouse, 188 N. Hemlock, Cannon Beach, Oregon.** 503-436-2202.  
<http://www.floatingglassballs.com>

**Saturdays: Taborgrass, bluegrass classes and jams every Saturday, October – April. Waverly UCC, 3300 SE Woodward St., Portland. \$15.** Greg Stone, 971-207-3195, [taborgrass.com](http://taborgrass.com)

**Every Second Saturday at The Multnomah Grange #71.**  
<https://www.multnomahgrange71.com/upcoming-events>

## Other venues often hosting bluegrass:

**Alberta Street Pub**, 1036 NE Alberta St, Portland, OR 97211. 503-284-7665, [albertastreetpub.com/music](http://albertastreetpub.com/music)

**Aladdin Theater**, 3017 Milwaukie Ave, Portland, OR 97202

**Al's Den**, 303 SW 12th Ave, Portland 97205. [www.mcmenamins.com/crystal-hotel/als-den](http://www.mcmenamins.com/crystal-hotel/als-den)

**Ashland Folk Collective**, Unitarian Church, 87 4<sup>th</sup> St., Ashland, OR. Doors 6:00, show 7:00-9:30 p.m  
[www.ashlandfolkcollective.com/shows.html](http://www.ashlandfolkcollective.com/shows.html)

**Bit House Saloon**, 727 SE Grand Ave., Portland, OR 97214. 503-954-3913, [bithousesaloon.com/new-events](http://bithousesaloon.com/new-events).

**Butteville General Store**, 10767 Butte St NE, Aurora, OR 97002. 503-678-1605, Butteville General Store on Facebook.

**Clatskanie Art Center**, 75 S. Nehalem St., PO Box 243, Clatskanie, OR 97016.

<https://clatskaniefoundation.com/cultural-center>.

**Landmark Saloon**, 4847 SE Division St, Portland, OR 97206. 503-894-8132, Landmark Saloon on Facebook.

**LaurelThirst Public House**, 2958 NE Glisan, Portland, OR 97232. 503-232-1504. [laurelthirst.com/events/](http://laurelthirst.com/events/)

**Mississippi Pizza**, 3552 N. Mississippi Ave, Portland, OR 97227. 503-288-3231, [mississippipizza.com/events/](http://mississippipizza.com/events/)

**Strum (pub and guitar store)**, 1415 SE Stark St #C, Portland, OR 97214. 971-229-0161, [strumpdx.com/](http://strumpdx.com/)

**Willamette Ale & Cider House**, 1720 Willamette Falls Drive, West Linn, OR 97068. 503-305-6273, [aleandcider.com/events.html](http://aleandcider.com/events.html)

# Scheduled Jams: Oregon and SW Washington

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

## 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 147<sup>th</sup>. 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 lizcrain42@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*

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

*Continued on page 40*

# Scheduled Jams: Oregon and SW Washington

cont. from page 39

## 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, WA. 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**

ZCBJ Hall, 38704 N Main St. Scio, OR  
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.

**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, 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 listing via the public calendar at [oregonbluegrass.org](http://oregonbluegrass.org) or email: [calendar@oregonbluegrass.org](mailto:calendar@oregonbluegrass.org).



Steve Smith and Tim May at The Ranger Station, Portland



John Montgomery Band at Multnomah Grange #71, Gresham



# 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](mailto:pywaterfalls@yahoo.com)  
[corralcreekbluegrass.com](http://corralcreekbluegrass.com)  
**For bookings please call 503-319-5672**

## **Steve Blanchard Music**

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**

Contemporary bluegrass-fueled Americana

**Woody Wood**  
[dogwoodstringband@gmail.com](mailto:dogwoodstringband@gmail.com)  
[dogwoodstringband.com](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:info@jamblers.com)**  
**503-702-1867**

## **Kathy Boyd & Phoenix Rising**

IMEA 2015 Bluegrass Group of the Year. Kathy Boyd & Phoenix Rising is all about the stories, and the stories of everyday America are what you get from these four personable entertainers. With over a dozen years of awards on the shelves, the quartet has longevity in the performance arena and an extended fanbase worldwide! This hard-working group of songwriters is guaranteed to deliver a high-energy family-friendly performance that is a delight for all ages.

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:pickledokraband@gmail.com)

## **Rose City Bluegrass Band**

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

**Charlie Williamson**  
[charlie3@nwlink.com](mailto:charlie3@nwlink.com)

Continued on page 42

# OBA Supporting Performer Directory

cont. from page 41

## 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

## 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**  
djoefish@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/  
**Band Website:** www.reverbnation.com/thehardlyheard



Sawtooth and Sons at the Oregon State Capitol

## 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 and 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**



Sam Hill at Trexler Farm, Stayton



Blades of Grass at The Black Sheep Pub, Ashland

# June Apple For Fiddle

Arr. By Greg Stone

System 1: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time. The melody begins with a whole rest followed by a quarter rest, then a series of eighth and quarter notes. The TAB staff shows fret numbers: 0-3, 5-3-0-3-5-3-0-3, 5-3-0, 5-4-5, 0-2, 3-2-0-2-3-2-0-2. Chord labels 'A' and 'G' are placed above the TAB staff.

System 2: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps, 4/4 time. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. The TAB staff shows fret numbers: 3-2-0, 5-4-5, 0-3, 5-3-0-3-5-3-0-3, 5-3-0, 5-4-2-0, 4, 5-4-5, 0-2-0, 5-4. Chord labels 'A' and 'G' are placed above the TAB staff.

System 3: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps, 4/4 time. The melody features a first ending and a second ending. The TAB staff shows fret numbers: 2-4, 0-2-0, 0-3, 0, 0-5, 4-0-2-4-0, 0-2, 4-0-4-5, 0-2-0, 0. Chord labels 'A' are placed above the TAB staff.

System 4: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps, 4/4 time. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. The TAB staff shows fret numbers: 5-4-5, 0-2-0-2-4, 5-4-5, 0-2, 0-5, 4-0-2-4-0, 0-2, 4-0-4-5, 0-2-0, 0. Chord labels 'G', 'D', and 'A' are placed above the TAB staff.

System 5: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps, 4/4 time. The melody features a first ending and a second ending. The TAB staff shows fret numbers: 5-4-5, 0-2-0, 5-4, 2-4, 0-2-0, 0-5, 2-4, 0-2-0. Chord labels 'G' and 'A' are placed above the TAB staff.

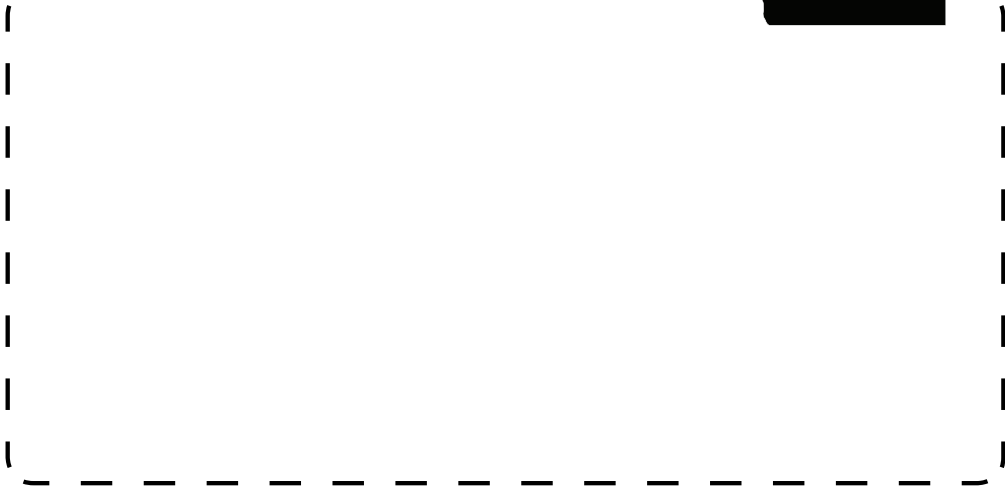
Many thanks to Greg Stone and Taborgrass for allowing The Bluegrass Express to publish this arrangement.

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



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# Oregon Bluegrass Association



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Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Visit [www.oregonbluegrass.org](http://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](mailto:volunteers@oregonbluegrass.org) or contact any board member.

- \$30 Individual Membership
- \$75 Individual Three-Year Membership
- \$50 Supporting Performer Membership
- \$125 Contributing Business Sponsor  
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