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INSIDE THIS ISSUE!
The Legacy Of Tony Rice,
Album Reviews, Late Bloomer,
and more...



Oregon Bluegrass Association
www.oregonbluegrass.org

Bluegrass *Express*

Local Guitarists Remember Tony Rice

By Dennis Christensen

On Christmas morning, December 25, 2020, the music world was rattled by the loss of legendary guitarist Tony Rice. Many of you “Bluegrass Express” readers are undoubtedly aware of Tony’s work and its impact on the music we love. For those who are unfamiliar with Tony Rice, know that the imprint he left on bluegrass is immeasurable and the words to describe his lasting effect are difficult to conjure. Even that term “impact” seems inadequate.

Tony Rice forever altered bluegrass music.

As a publication dedicated to promoting and building awareness of this music, to not address the death of such an icon would seem improper. But with countless folks around the bluegrass world already offering their own eulogies (and all more touching, poignant and sincere than anything I could write), I chose to honor Mr. Rice in a different way. I decided to turn to a few local/regional pickers, to get their thoughts on Tony and what he meant to each of them personally. As I see it, the only way to quantify the importance of an artist like Tony Rice is through recognizing the influence he had on the folks that came after. I reached out to Dale Adkins, Kathy

Barwick, Patrick Connell, Aaron Stocck, and Joe Suskind. They were gracious with their time and eager to talk about Tony. I have included excerpts of the conversations I had with each of them, with my intention being two-fold: For those



reading this who already have your own feelings about Tony and what he means to you, may you perhaps find some solace and healing in the shared feelings of others. For those looking to begin a journey to understanding Tony, perhaps think of this exercise as an “Intro to Tony.”

I know you as a practitioner of the flatpicking style. Did you discover Tony Rice through learning to flatpick? Or did you learn to flatpick BECAUSE of Tony?

PC: The latter. When I first got interested in the guitar, I was about 21 years old and someone gave me two CDs, Blue Highway and Cold on the Shoulder. Those were my first two bluegrass albums. I had no idea what I was listening to. I was living in a shack with someone who was learning the banjo. I took those two CDs back to the shack to play, and they blew me away. But I still didn’t understand what I was hearing. I had been exposed to bluegrass by my dad. He picked a couple fiddle tunes around the house, played some Doc Watson songs, and some Nitty Gritty stuff that was the connective tissue between acoustic rock and bluegrass. But going from that music to Cold on the Shoulder was a big leap. Right then and there, I wanted to learn how to flatpick.

JS: I learned to flatpick because of my dad and Doc Watson. Doc was my first “Here’s what you need to do” hero. I had already been flatpicking before I heard Tony Rice, or intentionally started listening to Tony Rice.

DA: I started flatpicking just before or maybe right around the time I first heard Tony. Tony was just on the scene and

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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
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Portland, OR 97207

Website

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

www.oregonbluegrass.org

Article and Editorial Submissions

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

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president@oregonbluegrass.org

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secretary@oregonbluegrass.org

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treasurer@oregonbluegrass.org

Liz Crain
OBA Roseburg Chapter President
lizcrain42@gmail.com

Eric Herman - Webmaster
webmaster@oregonbluegrass.org

Dave Hausner - Membership
membership@oregonbluegrass.org

Linda Leavitt - OBA Express
expressnews@oregonbluegrass.org

Pat Connell - Ad Sales
obaexpressads@oregonbluegrass.org

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AD RATES AND DIMENSIONS

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WEBSITE RATES AND DIMENSIONS

Size	Dimension	Cost	With Print Ad
Leaderboard	728 x 90 px	\$50.00	\$30.00
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When submitting an advertisement to the OBA, please be sure the ad is accurate and the file is black and white, 300 dpi and in either PDF, TIFF, or JPEG format. If you have questions about your file please email John Nice-Snowdy at nicetunz@gmail.com.

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

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

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

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Oregon Bluegrass Association
www.oregonbluegrass.org

Bluegrass Express

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

Bluegrass Express Staff

EDITOR

Linda Leavitt
expressnews@oregonbluegrass.org

COPY EDITOR

Nancy Christie
nancy.d.christie@gmail.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN & LAYOUT

John Nice-Snowdy
nicetunz@gmail.com
(805)748-6648

ADVERTISING

Pat Connell
obaexpressads@oregonbluegrass.org

WEBMASTER & WEB CONTENT

Eric Herman
webmaster@oregonbluegrass.org

ONLINE CALENDAR

Donna Dunaif
calendar@oregonbluegrass.org



President's Message

Save the date!

Be sure to join us for the OBA's Annual Membership Meeting!

Except for the Bluegrass Express and OBA Web Radio, our Association has spent much of the last year working under the radar, but we need you, our trusty members, to help us as we prepare to resume full operations.

We will meet on Zoom: Sunday, April 11, at 1:00 p.m. Watch your e-mail for a meeting link.

In accordance with our bylaws, we will elect a slate of Directors. Although the current Directors have indicated their willingness to serve another term, we have room for additional Board members. Nominations are now open, and will close at midnight on Friday, April 9. Please forward nominations to Ron Preston at secretary@oregonbluegrass.org. And, as always, I welcome your questions.

I feel hopeful. I hope you do, too.

I can't remember a year that brought more promise with the songbirds and the crocuses. The pace of COVID-19 vaccination is picking up and, with it, the possibility of some in-person activities in the coming months. I have seen two regional festivals that have announced dates in 2021 and I've heard reliable rumors of some concerts in the works. Reports are arriving of the first open jams happening, with more planned as the weather warms up. I won't be surprised if we have a picking-party explosion as safety and weather concerns reach critical mass. A lot of woodshedding has been going on, and a lot of us are looking to showcase what we've been up to.

The OBA Web Calendar is back in business. Check it often—as in the good old days, we are committed to being THE place to find what's happening. If you're hosting an event, posting it to the Calendar yourself is quick, easy, and has a surprisingly wide reach.

The Most Important Thing

Yeah, I know. Tuning, timing, and taste are the ultimate bluegrass values. But right up there with them is membership.

As I wrote above, we kept the lights on at the Bluegrass Express and OBA Radio during the pandemic, and our all-volunteer staff kept our administrative house in order. Most of our other functions went up to the attic.

Knowing that there were enough hard times to go around, we chose to allow our membership numbers to seek their own level, and to no one's surprise, they have declined.

To those of us who renewed during the last year, thank you. To everyone else, this would be a particularly good time to join or renew your membership. Plain and simple, your donations are what make it possible for us to promote, encourage, foster and cultivate the preservation, appreciation, understanding, enjoyment, support and performance of bluegrass and other closely related music.

Does our mission statement have a lot of moving parts? Yes. So does our organization. The most important part is you, dear member.

Until we meet again, my wholehearted thanks for your support.

Chris

Chris Knight
OBA President



Photo By Doug Olmstead

What's Playing On The Radio

Local Radio Bluegrass and Country Listings

Everywhere And Free

Oregon Bluegrass Radio
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

"Shady Grove" Saturdays 7-9pm
Regular folk program

Monday thru Friday 10am - noon
with bluegrass included

Columbia Gorge - KBOO

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

Corvallis - KOAC 550 AM

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

Eugene - KLCC 89.7 FM

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

Eugene - KRVM 91.9 FM

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

Pendleton - KWHT 104.5 FM

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

Portland - KBOO 90.7 FM

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

Santiam Canyon - KYAC 94.9 FM

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

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

Salem - KMUZ 88.5 & 100.7

"Ken 'til 10" 6-8am M-F
Simulcast with KYAC.
kmuz.org, all bluegrass

Local Guitarists Remember Tony Rice

Cont. from page 1

getting established as I was beginning to develop as a guitar player. It was that mid-seventies, post-Clarence White era and there were a lot of guitar players influenced by him (White). Tony came out with the Guitar record in 1973. That was an important record for me because it was so early, so influenced by Clarence, and so different from everything else that was happening. It was so raw. And there was the “Whiskey Before Breakfast” record from Norman Blake, so there is all this stuff going on with the guitar. And of course, Doc had been around since the sixties. Those three musicians made a major push so there was lots to listen to that was new. I was heavily into Doc Watson, then I started hearing Clarence White, and then Tony Rice and Dan Crary and Mark O’Connor came a little bit later. Tony came as part of that listening package. It wasn’t just Tony. There was a lot of great music being made then.

KB: Neither. I started on banjo. I went through a Norman Blake period before I got into bluegrass at all. I became aware of Tony as he was putting out those early albums in the mid-to-late ‘70s. That was the new music as I was coming up in bluegrass music. I started flatpicking probably in 1978 or ‘79. There was the one album he did with the green cover (Tony Rice), some fiddle tunes that he did early on like “Billy in the Lowground”—the whole reason I learned “Temperance Reel” on the guitar is because he recorded it. Same with “Stony Point.” That is when I became aware of him. I came up with Clarence freaks. After Clarence died, Tony took on that mantle and popularized the guitar in the bluegrass band setting. But Clarence did it first.

AS: I learned to flatpick BECAUSE of Tony. I grew up in a bluegrass family; my dad was a bluegrass nut. I grew up going to festivals and watching my dad play, but

I was never into bluegrass music until the first festival that struck me in 1989. I went to a festival called Winterhawk in upstate New York (now called Grey Fox) and Tony Rice was there. I remember afterward looking through my dad’s record collection and trying to find music with Tony on it, and I found Cold on the Shoulder. It had “Mule Skinner Blues” on it. As soon as I heard that, I wanted to play like that. I remember taking a recording of that song to my guitar teacher, because I was playing folky, fingerpicking stuff, and asked, “Can you teach me how to play this?” and he said “No.”



J.D. Crowe and The New South. (Tony Rice on Guitar)

How were you introduced to Tony Rice?

DA: It was probably either “Freeborn Man” or “Salt Creek” off the Guitar record. It was long enough ago that the formative stuff for me just melds together.

AS: It was when I first heard him at Winterhawk ‘89. That was the spark that made me feel I would like to play guitar like that. I went again in 1991 and saw not only the Tony Rice Unit, but also Tony and Norman Blake together.

JS: When I started playing bluegrass in about 2007-08, I saw a YouTube video of the Tony Rice Unit doing “Freeborn Man” live at MerleFest in 1985.

PC: Cold on the Shoulder. I worked my way back from Cold on the Shoulder. In this region I might qualify now as a traditionalist, but that certainly wasn’t the case then. I had to work my way backwards to see what preceded all that greatness, so ten years later when I had a renewed set of ears for Cold on the Shoulder, it was a new learning experience.

KB: I don’t remember. It was too long ago! It was the music that was new at that time. I was fortunate to be discovering his stuff as it was happening. He was a contemporary. He was out of my league, but I was there at the Great American Music Hall the night of the Grisman band’s first performance. I had friends who recorded with Tony. I was living in Sacramento, but I spent a lot of time in the Bay Area playing music. I knew people who knew him well. I could be playing at Paul’s Saloon in San Francisco, and Tony and David Grisman would walk in—yikes! Recently I went into Spotify and pulled up a discography, and there was so much I’d never listened to. I can go back and discover it now, like the music with Peter Rowan—I love that stuff.

What was the first song that made you take notice? What was your “This cat is different” moment?

JS: Again, the “Freeborn Man” video. It made bluegrass look cool. Doc Watson is cool, but not as cool as Tony. Tony Rice made bluegrass guitar badass, in a way that was accessible to me as a young man. My dad played country music and bluegrass, and I rebelled against it. I played rock, blues, and jazz. Tony did the same thing,

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The Things That Don't Exist

by Scott Candey

Nora had played the banjo in her 20s. She'd been in bands in San Diego and Austin, but she hadn't played in years when I met her in 2003. She played guitar and fiddle from time to time, but she missed the banjo, more than she realized. For Nora, playing music was writing songs. To create something that didn't exist was part of her. She did it with fiber arts, poetry, in the kitchen, and most passionately with music. When she picked up an instrument, she was writing something new or fine-tuning something she'd already written.

In 2014, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. After a couple rough years, it appeared she'd beaten it. Several residual challenges remained, but she was in remission. During all this, music became even more important for her. In late 2017 she discovered Taborgrass, and her world bloomed. She often played, had even taken up Celtic harp, but as I'm sure some of you know, motivation in a vacuum is sometimes elusive. Taborgrass prompted her to get her banjo chops back. The welcome and support she received was truly like a homecoming. The Handsome Ladies jam group made that even more profound.

This community meant the world to her. Shortly after the cancer returned in late 2018, Nora had a dream that she equated with heaven. Blindfolded in the dream, she was taken to a place she called a "lifestyle mall." Nora wasn't a mall person, but if you met her, you'd know that she certainly liked to shop. As symbols go, it checked all the boxes. Inside, she could hear a bluegrass jam. Even though she couldn't see, she recognized who was there by their playing, their voices, and the harmonies. The overwhelming feeling she had was that everyone was welcome, everyone. She wanted to join in but she couldn't take off

her blindfold. She left knowing at some point she would be welcomed back.

She was in pain all the time. Festivals and jams took a lot out of her, but there was never any question she wanted to be



there. When her banjo was getting too heavy for her to lift, Tom Nechville had a lighter-weight solution that allowed her to continue to play. It filled her up. Playing, writing, being part of this community. I can't overstate that.

She would fret about repertoire sometimes, feeling like she wasn't keeping up. She still primarily wanted to write songs. She'd often spend her practice time improving that skill rather than learning a jam tune. She did have fun playing the old tunes. If you saw her playing Cluck Old Hen at Menucha with Laurie Lewis and company, or drop Groundspeed on the folks at the grange, you witnessed it. That wasn't the

point, though. The point was to make things that didn't exist.

Nora intended to record an album with friends during the summer of 2020. The pandemic hit, so she used that time to practice and write. But by fall, the treatments weren't working like they had been. It became difficult for her to play or get upstairs where we could record. As my emotional fortitude allows, I'm collecting as many recordings and lyrics as I can from all the voice memos, videos, and studio snippets so that people can hear them.

We used to talk about "the muse." I related this when I posted to social media about her passing. She believed the songs are there, in some divine space, waiting. You don't write them so much as discover them and give them form. There are a lucky few that notice, that snatch them when they are able. As I said then, I believe she's in that place where the songs come from now. Joe Newberry, whose friendship she cherished, was gracious enough to give that sentiment form in a song of his own.

Remember her for all the things that made her the singular human that she clearly was, but above all she would love to be remembered as a songwriter. For bringing music that didn't exist before she passed through this life and snatched it up. If you have songs in you, if you spot one peering out from that aetheric place, give them their due. Help them find their form. It would make her so proud. She loved the banjo, she loved writing for these pages, and she loved you all for welcoming her so warmly.

Editor's note: In memory of Nora Candey, her husband Scott has established an annual songwriting grant. Look for more information about the grant in the summer issue of the Oregon Bluegrass Express.

Into the Great Unknown

by Nora Candey

Some say that death is like life, only better
And when I cast off these earthly fetters
I'll be relieved of my need for sin
In that perfect state of grace I'll be in

I might go up, I might go down
Might come back here and go one more round
Might be transmuted into light or into sound
But one thing's for certain, I don't know where I'm bound

They could be wrong or they could be right
I wonder if these questions ever keep 'em up at night
They say it's gonna feel just like going home
When I step into that great unknown

It's an endless ocean in which we dwell
They say you'll go to Heaven, they say you're gonna go to Hell
And a lotta people would like to think
That they know where they go when they dive in that drink

I look back on my life at the things I've done wrong
How I've tried to do better and tried to atone
And I wonder will it matter, will I reap what I have sown
When I step into that great unknown

A lot of people would like to try
To get some reassurance on what happens when we die
They like to compare it to what they know now
And they love to fight about it like they're sure of it somehow

We might live forever, we might just rot
Or it might be so different it just can't be thought
And I hope we'll be together but we take that step alone
When we step into the great unknown



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Local Guitarists Remember Tony Rice

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but brought all those types of music into bluegrass, which made bluegrass more inclusive. People responded to it. Now, every time I have any doubts about playing this style, I watch that video again and think “Yeah, this is what I am supposed to be doing.”

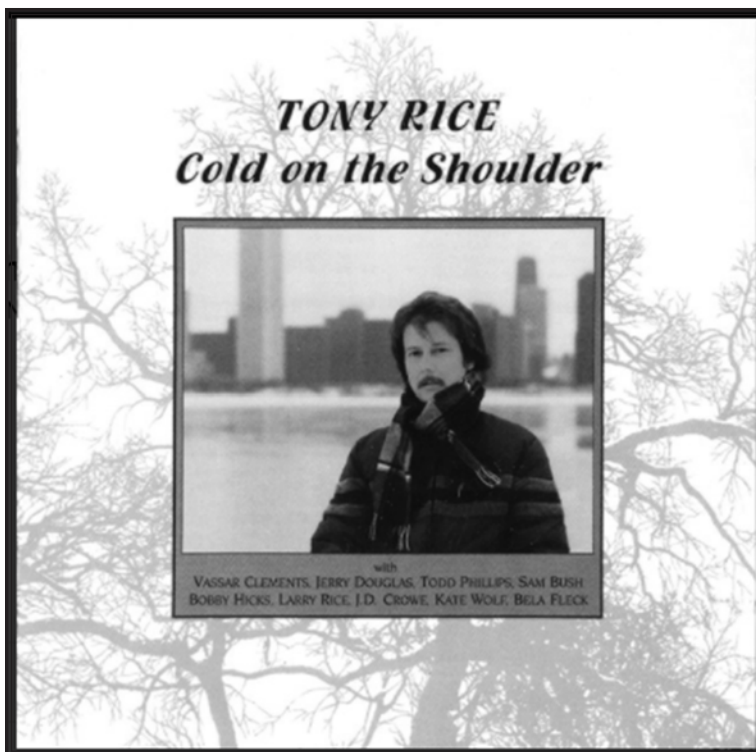
AS: “Muleskinner Blues” was the one that first blew me away. When I was young, I wanted to play hot and flashy. That song typifies that muscular style. As I developed, I became more interested in his other music.

PC: I bought the Guitar album and heard “Lonesome Ruben,” a 9-minute recording. His second or third solo quotes “Norwegian Wood” from the Beatles, and I remember thinking “This isn’t an insulated genre of music that I am peeking into.” It occurred to me then that this music style was much more familiar to me than I thought. It was much more accessible to me. I realized flatpicking is a limitless enterprise, and you can do anything you want. It is a general tool for musical expression, rather than a settled thing, which you might be able to say for George Shuffler, but Tony Rice was showing me this unlimited potential for music sounds.

As a teacher, a new student comes to you and says “I want to play bluegrass guitar like Billy Strings or Molly Tuttle. I have heard them speak of Tony Rice, but I have never listened to his music.” Which songs/performances/albums do you direct them to?

JS: Honestly, I wouldn’t. As a teacher I would direct them to Doc first. The evolution is Doc Watson, Clarence White, Norman Blake, and THEN Tony Rice, in that order. But I would tell them to listen to Tony Rice Plays and Sings Bluegrass. As a beginning student, trying to play like

Tony has caused casualties. People want to play like Tony, so they emulate him. But they don’t know where it came from or its evolution. That can cripple their ability to be creative and be independent thinkers. That’s the paradox with Tony: Everyone wants to play like him, but no one can sound like him. I equate it to learning four sentences in a foreign language, and being able to say those four sentences clearly, but you don’t know what they mean in the context of the entire language. Turning students on to Tony, especially beginners, is tough. We all want to play like him. But that is so far away that to even teach it in a way that is digestible is a big task.



KB: If they want to play like Billy Strings, they have to listen to Doc Watson. As a teacher, the Bluegrass Albums are the ones I insist my students buy and play along with, if they want to play bluegrass. When you play along with that stuff, you internalize that sense of timing. I think you can group Tony’s work into three major categories: The bluegrass stuff, the jazz/swing stuff and the folkly stuff. The folkly stuff he plays just the way I like to hear it.

It is based out of a chord and very melodic. In the bluegrass stuff he tends to play a lot of pentatonic licks over things, which are interesting and hard to do, but for me doesn’t always have enough of a relationship to the melody, although I recently heard his version of “You Don’t Know My Mind” and he is playing a JD Crowe banjo solo, more or less, channeling that on his own solo, so that pentatonic scale criticism isn’t universal. Sometimes he is playing more melody and sometimes he is more “out there” with his playing. It is the “out there” part that catches people’s ears and they go overboard with that aspect of his lead playing. People take that pentatonic scale and build their style around that one little portion of his leads.

Tony used it more as a spice, not the main meal.

DA: You can’t go wrong with the Guitar record, Church Street Blues, or Skaggs and Rice. Tony is so versatile that you can also get into all the Grisman music. I would start with Skaggs and Rice. That’s the one I typically direct people to if we are working on rhythm, because it’s accessible and easy to hear what’s going on. In the context of a bluegrass band, I would listen to any of the Bluegrass Album Band records. Those are important recordings. I didn’t start by listening to Bill Monroe or Flatt and Scruggs. I started with the Bluegrass Album Band, and I think a lot of folks my age did that. Depending on what direction the student wants to

go, the Tone Poems album is so rich. It’s where you see Tony shine because he plays so many different styles on those different instruments. It’s a phenomenal series of recordings.

AS: That’s a great question to ask because there is huge breadth of work by Tony and I think different albums appeal to different people for different reasons. I would definitely recommend listening to Skaggs

Local Guitarists Remember Tony Rice

and Rice. I think that is a great way to get into Tony, because it is approachable. You can hear Tony's rhythm back-up. Nobody has ever played back-up rhythm like he did. He does this beautiful crosspicking fill style all the time. It's almost like someone is playing piano in the background, but it is also a great album to listen to because you can figure out the breaks by ear. They are not crazy-difficult, whereas if you dig into Manzanita—I tried to learn "Blackberry Blossom" off Manzanita and I spent hours trying to get it, but that is also essential listening. I would also encourage people to listen to Rounder 0044 (JD Crowe and the New South), one of the best bluegrass albums of all time.

The Bluegrass Album volumes 1 and 2 are essential listening. Tony is not playing breaks on every song, but his rhythm work is peerless. It is driving that band, really.

PC: If they are interested in playing bluegrass, I send them straight to the Bluegrass Album Band. If they are "guitar people" who love Billy Strings, love Molly Tuttle, love Tony Rice, but don't necessarily have the same commitment to bluegrass, Doc Watson is a good place to start. Doc Watson is not a good place to start if you're looking to be a Tony Rice player. Tony was a consummate band member and before he had put a stamp on his own style, he had mastered traditional bluegrass guitar. It is important to consider his trajectory as something that was born out of being dead center in traditional bluegrass and then working outward. His commitment to traditional bluegrass shows in things like not taking a break on "Lonesome Moonlight Waltz," because he doesn't think Mr. Monroe would approve. You can definitely imagine Billy Strings or Molly Tuttle taking a break on that, and it would sound great, but I like the reservation and the compartmentalizing that Tony Rice appeared to have done over his career. He would be the first to say, when he has the Tony Rice Unit up there, "This

is not bluegrass. This is whatever it is, but it is NOT bluegrass." He has a pretty strict and narrow definition of what the genre is and is not. While most of us are pushing to expand the definition of what bluegrass is, I think he did the opposite. And I appreciate that.

What is your favorite performance? Is there a YouTube video that you keep going back to?

AS: One that stands out to me is one of the later ones he did. It was "Shenandoah" and he was at MerleFest in the pouring rain. It was just him, solo. It was on a bluegrass

most aggressive bluegrass you ever heard. And the guitar is very present. You can hear everything that is happening. You're hearing him at a vulnerable young age when he is not yet a hero. He is searching around the guitar for the notes and making mistakes and beginning to establish his musical identity. And I feel that with such an idolized person, it is important to hear them when they still have all their humanity about them. And something you hear all the time is "Tony never makes mistakes," which is inaccurate. He made mistakes all the time, live. But his ability to cruise through them because he has those good jazz sensibilities is the strength that

people are referencing when they say he doesn't make mistakes. In these recordings, you can hear those mistakes.

What is your favorite album?

KB: His discography has been blended and mixed up and sorted out. It doesn't look now like it did when it was issued. Everything has been reissued. For example, all the recordings with Gordon Lightfoot are now on one album. That is not the way we heard it as it was coming out. It was all distributed on the different records. But Manzanita would probably be my favorite. I haven't heard it in decades, but I know every note on that record. Everyone always asks, "What is the definition of bluegrass?" Some say that if you don't have a banjo, it can't

be bluegrass. For me it has to do with the rhythmic balance of the ensemble, and the overall sense of the timing underneath it. Manzanita has no banjo in it, but it pushes like a freight train. And that is still bluegrass to me. I think that is a subliminal, on my part, awareness of Tony's driving rhythm style.

DA: I don't really do "favorites," even of Tony's records. If I HAD to choose a favorite, it would probably be the Skaggs and Rice record. Church Street Blues is great because it is a different style of playing. When he plays guitar with another person,



documentary, Bluegrass Journey. I think he reinvented himself toward the end of his career. He was starting to suffer from arthritis, and I think playing was becoming more difficult.

PC: I have the audio of a 1983 live show at the Birchmere (a music hall in Alexandria, Virginia) that people have been passing around on the internet. It is out of this world. The classic performances at the Holiday Inn's Red Slipper Lounge (Lexington, Kentucky). To me it's important to hear how and where this person established himself. It is hardcore, some of the

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I think he plays differently than when he is accompanying himself.

JS: I would say Sings and Plays Bluegrass. Then Cold on the Shoulder. When I listen to Drive (Béla Fleck album) or JD Crowe and the New South, or the Bluegrass Album, I feel that his signature is strong and powerful in his rhythm playing in anything that he is on. I have listened to The Bluegrass Album more than any of Tony's solo albums. It was his rhythm playing that shifted the entire paradigm of bluegrass guitar into what is now modern bluegrass.

AS: Cold on the Shoulder might be one of my favorites, and I don't feel like people talk about it very much. There are a lot of good songs on there.

PC: Church Street Blues is a favorite, because it is just guitar. Cold on the Shoulder is a masterpiece. The Bluegrass Album Band records are amazing, but if I had to pick one it's Church Street Blues. All of my sentiments aside about "If there is no banjo there is no bluegrass,"—none of that matters on Church Street Blues. But an earlier album, Guitar, might be my favorite because it is so raw. It is not so much a masterpiece as it is an insight into the awesome musical career this person is about to embark on.

Did you go through a "note-for-note" period in your development?

AS: I did. I still do! I got "New Acoustic Guitar: Taught by Tony Rice" on Home-spun tapes. It was six cassettes along with hand-written transcriptions. "Hold Whatcha Got" was the only one that was approachable to me at first. I spent a lot of time with that. He does a great break with the Rice brothers on "I May Take You Back Again." I spent a lot of time transcribing his music.

JS: No. Mostly because I couldn't. I don't read music and I loathe tablature, so that

didn't work for me, except for one occasion where Wyatt Rice offered to show me how his brother (Tony) played "Manzanita," so I sat with him and learned "Manzanita." But that was the only time. That's not the way I learn.

DA: I found a transcription of "Gold Rush." I struggled with transcribing and executing Tony's solos note-for-note. I had similar things I could do that sounded Tony-ish, but I struggled with his incredible way of using his right hand. There were combinations of notes he was able to put together that I struggled with, so I found slightly different ways of working around it. That's the definition of style—covering up your own inadequacies. That



was my strategy for transcriptions for a lot of Tony's music.

PC: I definitely spent some note-for-note time. I got the Tony Rice Tab book. It was riddled with mistakes, but it was pretty good. There was this short period where I would come home from work and practice the kick-off for "Freeborn Man" for an hour, listening to it and looking at the tab. It wasn't too long before I realized I couldn't use tabs to understand Tony Rice. Some things are hard to put on paper, and after a while I felt like I was missing the point, and went back to listening. There are Tony Rice-isms that are fairly easy to hear

compared to other styles of flatpicking, like the way he kicks off a break, that I still spend a lot of time listening to and trying to replicate. But I think that Tony would be the first to tell you that if you are trying to replicate what he has recorded, you're missing the point. Although the exercise of learning that way is invaluable, recreating and replicating it with the intention of playing that specific lick is not something I do anymore. It takes a lot of time. There are things that interfere with being able to spend 8 hours a day listening to the same track. But I wish I could do that all the time.

KB: Maybe some of the early stuff. I am pretty sure that when I play "Temperance Reel" now it's because I learned it note for note from Tony. Like the Tony Rice-isms, that characteristic stuff, some of that creeps into my playing and I recognize it when I am playing. I have been playing so long that sometimes the pieces just get incorporated. I have been playing for 50 years, and it is hard to unpack all those years of influences. I recorded "Red Haired Boy" on one of my solo records and in the middle solo I made it into a minor. The person who reviewed

it for Bluegrass Unlimited said I must be channeling Tony. I had forgotten that he recorded "Red Haired Boy" and "Gilderoy" as a medley. They are the same tune except one is major and one is minor. I had done that too, and had completely forgotten that Tony had done the same thing. But even Tony synthesized all the things that he heard into his own style.

Is there a tune of Tony's that still eludes you?

DA: Tons. Not just 1 tune. I have become a more melodic player later in life, and I definitely struggle with some of the jazzier

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music. There is not one particular song, but on any record it's most of them, if not all. I did learn a couple of his songs note-for-note, where I had these transcriptions that someone else had done. I think it was important to go through that exercise and I recommend it. But anymore, I get to where I try to NOT sound like Tony.

AS: I worked forever on "Home from the Forest." I always think I am close to getting it and then I listen to it again. I have also spent a lot of time trying to get "Church Street Blues" down. That one is so hard.

KB: Tony's playing is so muscular. There are two players that I have never really tried to emulate. One is Tony and the other is Larry Sparks. They are so masculine in their power; I would sound weak trying to do that. I don't feel that is something I can pull off in a credible manner. His pick manipulation, the way he holds his pick, is interesting. And pick direction, all up and down strokes—I can't do that. I'm good at the down-down-up crosspicking. We all have to choose which way we are going to do something.

JS: All of them. His approach to rhythm eludes me. I will always and forever be trying to play rhythm like Tony. His leads were great and give me goose bumps, but it's what he did to support other people playing on top of him—that is the contribution I look for. As an ensemble player, that is more fun for me now than playing lead. Learning how to play for other people and push the pocket the way Tony did.

PC: Yeah, most of them. Playing his music, even on my best day, is an approximation of what he is doing. I feel like he eludes everybody. Wyatt (Rice) can replicate him, and so can Richard Bennett. If I can get the gist of what Tony is doing and then fill in the gaps with my own sounds, that is a success for me.

There is a tradition in bluegrass that you hand down your instrument to the next

generation. If you could personally choose one of the next-generation pickers to receive the legendary Martin D-28 guitar, who would it be?

DA: I hate to choose just one person. I would probably choose Molly Tuttle. I would love to hear her play that guitar.

JS: Billy Strings has the reverence for Doc. As a player and singer, he understands traditionally what is right, he has an inherent knowledge and he sings his ass off. I am not crazy about the jam thing, but if there is anyone who is going to make bluegrass cool again, it's going to be Billy. What Tony did for our generation, Billy Strings is doing for kids now. He is the one who will be gathering people together and getting people into this music.



AS: My guess is that guitar is going to get sold to a collector. It's worth a lot of money. I'm sure there is some collector out there who would love to have Clarence and Tony's guitar, but I think Josh Williams would be great. He played with Tony for a long time. He exemplifies Tony's style. I think he would play it; you would like to see that it gets played.

PC: Someone who is deserving, has no means, and will play it. With it being

worth so much, someone should take ownership and take out a loan against it and use that money to start a foundation and start giving that money to people who need it. It almost doesn't matter how much it is worth. If we were to come up with criteria to get it, I don't know if there is anyone who stands out that much more than anyone else. Maximizing the utility of its worth is the angle I would take if it were up to me. Maybe I'd give it to David Grisman and let him determine who is worthy. How do we get out ahead of some collector buying it to prevent that from happening? If it gets a price tag on it, suddenly the demographic of people who could consider buying it are few, and they probably don't play much guitar. People who spend ten hours a day playing guitar often don't have much income. I would love to hear Morgan McNamara play that guitar.

Among local people who have a handle on the Clarence White/Tony Rice sound, he's got it.

KB: Wyatt Rice already has it—that's what I heard. I heard that Wyatt was always going to get it. The day Tony died, people were asking about it and I heard Wyatt was getting it or already has it.

Who is the next-generation picker that, in your opinion, best exemplifies or represents Tony's playing?

DA: Most of the new successful players have elements of Tony in them. They are able to draw from many resources. Jake Workman, for instance, plays a little bit of Tony's music, but has so much more to draw from that you can hear many

influences in his playing. Same with Molly Tuttle, who is absolutely amazing, so I struggle to pick one. That's why they are successful—they were able to carve out their own guitar-playing niche.

JS: I don't think there is ONE player. Everyone touches on Tony. Bryan Sutton was the heir apparent, because he can do it all. What I love about Sutton is how you can hear the thread of melody through his playing. But he is not edgy. He is not a

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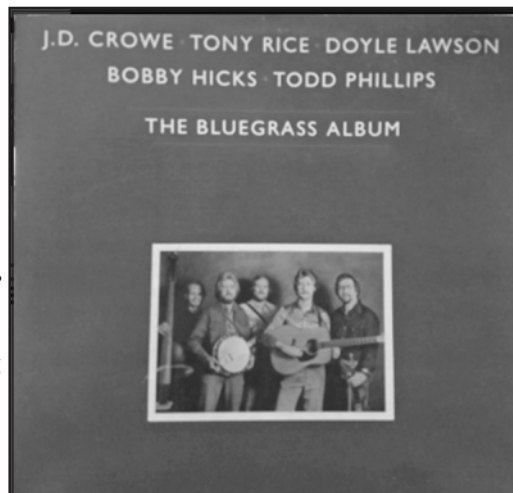
gunslinger like Tony was in a way that is very confident but not arrogant. Josh Williams carries the gunslinger torch to some degree, but when I think of who is going to make that next push in terms of technique, I think it's going to be Jake Workman. But Jake doesn't sing, so there is another sticking point, because Tony did it all.

KB: Bryan Sutton, not so much that I think of Tony when he takes a lead, but the power and speed in his playing, and the role that he plays in the context of a band. Some people are just playing guitar and it's their turn for a lead, but with Tony, and Bryan, it's not just that they are doing their individual part. They are a big piece of the sound. That is where Bryan reminds me of Tony, not in the way he plays but in the role he plays. When I heard Bryan's last two solo albums, and his work with Hot Rize, I immediately thought, "There is the new TR." The whole package: spectacular and innovative guitar work, great variety of material, beautiful baritone lead vocals. To be the "next TR" you need all of those things, and not so much the "new TR", but filling that space that TR left.

PC: If we are talking about the preservation of or crystallizing the sound of Tony Rice and saving it for posterity, I think it would be Richard Bennett. There is a handful of people who, through their own work, have become heirs to his sound. Then the question becomes "Is that his legacy?" Or is it people who are pushing it the way Tony did and therefore are not necessarily sounding like Tony Rice, but are following the model of getting steeped in something and moving outward. I think if that were the criteria I would say Grant Gordy or Chris Eldridge. They understood the arc of Tony's career, embraced it, and are taking it to the next domain. Grant Gordy, who played with Dawg (David Grisman), got a lot of Tony Rice mojo through his own career trajectory, though he doesn't sound like Tony Rice. People who sound like Tony are more numerous than the people who effectively recreate the impact he had on bluegrass. Eldridge and Gordy come to mind in terms of taking that torch into uncharted territory, which is exactly what Tony did.

AS: Josh Williams would qualify as a next-generation picker. He is similar to Tony in a lot of what he is playing. He reminds me a lot of Tony. But with the next-generation pickers, I think they all have pieces of Tony in their playing, without sounding just like Tony, which is important. I don't know if there is any next-generation picker who best exemplifies Tony. But I don't know that we should want one.

There is only one Tony Rice.



Multi-instrumentalist Kathy Barwick is the guitarist in the music duo Barwick and Siegfried. Kathy is a founding member of the All Girl Boys, and has performed with Bill Grant & Delia Bell, Brad Davis and the Mike Justis Band. She was a regular contributor to Flatpicking Guitar Magazine for over a decade.

Aaron Stoczek plays guitar with The Loafers.

Guitarist Joe Suskind writes songs and performs with Never Come Down, the winner of the 2019 RockyGrass Best Band competition. Never Come Down's new album, Better Late Than Never, was released in January 2021.

Patrick Connell is the co-director of Taborgrass. He has performed with Whistlin' Rufus, The Portland Radio Ponies and with Julie & The WayVes.

Renowned acoustic guitar player and flat-picker Dale Adkins is a performer, media producer, engineer and teacher. Dale is the president of Acoustic Sound, and the artistic director for the Wheeler County Bluegrass Festival. He is the artistic force behind Big Owl Studio, where he has produced recordings by such luminaries as Kate McKenzie. He performs with Old Growth Quartet and Rock Ridge. Dale is a Preston Thompson Guitars Endorsing Artist.

Dennis Christensen is a fledgling picker and warbly caterwauler, who dreams of one day being a sideman in a family band with his wife and two young children.



Steering The Ship

By Joe Ross

Music Organization Leaders Navigate Rough Waters During the Pandemic

If you're feeling a tad lonely, you're certainly not the only one! However, I'm encouraged by some of the virtual events, collaborations and partnerships that have occurred during the past year. Perhaps you made it to the 2020 IBMA Virtual "World of Bluegrass." During the week of February 22, I spent about 20 hours on-line at "Folk Unlocked," Folk Alliance International's debut digital event. The week was packed with speakers, panels, workshops, showcases, exhibitors and gatherings. IBMA had a high profile there. Several bands were part of IBMA's bluegrass showcase, including Hayde Bluegrass Orchestra, Crying Uncle, Barbaro, Becky Buller, Amanda Cook Band, and Michael Cleveland. The IBMA also introduced international programs offered by The Bluegrass Ambassadors.

Throughout the conference, a big emphasis was put on ways to build unity, share inspiration and technology. One interesting collaboration was the **Global Music Marathon**. Last fall, 14 music export organizations from around the world united for a nine-week program called **Global Music Match**. It was envisioned by Sounds Australia, Showcase Scotland Expo, and Canada's East Coast Music Association (ECMA). Global Music Match was piloted with nearly 100 different artists to help them raise their profiles in international music markets despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Musicians worked in teams, and then returned for the big four-hour Global Music Marathon to close out Folk Alliance's conference.

It's interesting to see how artists, presenters, businesses, music exporters, and industry organizations are weathering the pandemic. In June 2020, Folk Alliance hosted a webinar, "Steering the Ship through the Storm." They hosted leaders of the Americana Music Association, Blues Foundation, GlobalFest, International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA), and Folk Alliance to see what they were doing

to protect their organizations and support members. They talked candidly about fiscal responsibility, health, safety, and social justice.

In February 2021 at **Folk Unlocked**, leaders of these organizations addressed what's changing, what's new, and how they see their roles now. A common thread is that we're all still learning and trying to master our virtual lives. Crucial conversations revolved around how to sustain communities in a time like no other. Access and technology are issues. The leaders also encouraged us to confront racism, oppression, roadblocks and struggles in creating an equitable, fruitful, inclusive world. Many issues (e.g., logistics, artistic ideals, diversity, community building) have become intertwined with political environments. I appreciated how the leaders have

Aden stated, "We must be true to our mission and engage constituents in meaningful ways. Virtual meetings allow The Blues Foundation to go beyond borders. We expanded audiences to new and larger ones. We plan to have a social media campaign to engage and pay tribute to blues artists. The cadence will be different. We must grab the audience and hold their attention. We must look at what the programming is about."

They've surveyed audiences to get to know them in a more intimate way. "We learned new things," says Aden. "About monetizing events, we had anticipated a certain price point but found there wasn't an appetite for that price point. Also, audiences have a limited appetite for longer programs. They desire shorter programs. We continue to refine. As you expand virtual programming, there are different voices in the room, and not always traditional voices. We'll have to take steps to make sure we're inclusive."

Our own bluegrass community can learn from folks in other music communities. Aden told us that the blues community includes some who are marginalized, especially if we look at older, African-American audiences. She says we need to take steps to include them as their voice is critical to the blues. It's important to think about the role of your music, its social

and political meaning, its aura and especially how it relates in this time of social injustice.

President Aden talked about how the connection between artists and audiences needs to change. "Music maintains its relevance, even more so than years ago," she declares. "Blues music was born of oppression, and you can track 19th- and 20th-century history and the music through Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights and other key points in history."

She said to think about the themes in your music. "Although much in the blues is about trial and resistance, there's a con-



found ways to facilitate and continue connections among us, whether we're music makers, facilitators, listeners or all of the above. Each organization has held creative events and found ways to build and sustain their community.

Patricia Wilson Aden, President of The Blues Foundation, has over three decades of experience as a senior executive in non-profit management. With their May 2020 Awards Show, she was one of first to face the challenge of having an online event. She brought experience from having worked at the African American Museum in Philadelphia. She recognized the role of virtual events in building and sustaining their community.

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sistent thread about defiance and willful self-determination. Messages are very empowering and underscore the relevance of blues and its contribution to other music. There's a tension with recognizing that authentic history. We should lift up voices of the creators, preserve and amplify them."

"We need to do more about presenting the historical context of the music. While the music has resonance, its history adds context, dimension and understanding. You can't separate one from the other. That's a challenge for some of our members. Some of our audiences are older white men and not necessarily steeped in that history. We want to be very purposeful in orchestrating some conversations. I'm in a comfortable place for uncomfortable conversations and plan to delve into those kinds of conversations."

Jed Hilly, Executive Director of the Americana Music Association, has experience in digital music, marketing,

recording and merchandising. Americana Music has been challenged to confront its own need for redefinition. In 2011, "Americana" as a musical term was added to the

Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, meaning "a genre of American music having roots in early folk and country music." About 2012, the association's mission changed from business centric to one advocating for the authentic voice of American roots music. After this last summer of protests raised consciousness, the need was felt even more so than before.

Hilly's organization held an online "Thriving Roots" event to serve the Americana community. They chose that title to represent the health of Americana music in 2020. "We believe that to be true," says

Hilly. "We're all going through hard times. We're all struggling to make it through to next year. We're all missing gathering with each other and experiencing live music. The Americana community is strong, healthy and passionate."

Hilly explains how his board and staff set priorities and figured things out. "I'd like to say we had a bunch of geniuses," laughs Hilly, "but it was very organic. We had built this brand called AmericanaFest that had drawn 20-30,000 a year to Nashville, and there was a lot of discussion about how not to use that brand to draw people to our virtual event. There's no substitute for the community actually gathering in clubs, backyards ... and being in the moment of the Americana awards show. We chose to create an entirely new event called 'Thriving Roots.' We chose not to brand through AmericanaFest."

"Before any planning began, Jackson Browne said he wanted an oral history project and proposed to do a conversation with Mavis Staples. Then we called Rosanne Cash and asked her what she'd like to do. She wanted to do a history of protest music. Rosanne said, 'I want to get

some old friends, Bonnie Raitt and Ry Cooder, and some new friends, Alice Randall and Angela Davis, to play songs and talk with me about the history of protest music, the long, hard journey of Black musicians to achieve justice, and the anger and longing of the present moment.'"

Director Hilly adds, "I use those two examples as starting the process of self-reflection about the Americana Music Association, and it turned out to be fascinating. Many panels were conceived by the artists. Bob Weir wanted to talk to Oteil Burbridge about African-American influences on the

Grateful Dead. Taj Mahal wanted to have a conversation about the healing power of music and asked Rhiannon Giddens and Ann Powers of NPR to be a part of that. I accept that I don't know what I don't know. I'm privileged to be a part of the Americana Music community. We all knew what needed to be done and what needed to be talked about."

Leaders in this bluegrass community have similar perspectives.

Paul Schiminger is Executive Director of the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). Prior to joining the IBMA about six years ago, he held senior leadership roles with financial services and investment companies. Schiminger relates his experience with IBMA's virtual event that happened two weeks after the Americana Music Association's event. "We had



to navigate from a large in-person event and street festival. We went through a total re-brand to think about the message we're trying to send and what's more consistent and cohesive across the entire event because we have a conference, showcases, awards, and a festival."

Having had "World of Bluegrass" as their brand since the late-1980s, it elevated to the top because people already knew it, and it truly is a world of bluegrass and international in scope. "That brand checked off multiple boxes," offers Schiminger. "So we just added 'virtual' in front of 'world of bluegrass.' It was like trying to find that

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flashlight in the basement when the power goes out. Remember the quote from Earl Weaver – ‘It’s what you learn after you know it all that counts.’”

Because it was such a difficult time, the bluegrass community really needed a World of Bluegrass event to get together and celebrate.

“We felt an urgent need to fulfill our mission and serve our community,” says Schiminger, “as well as what it meant financially. We went to a six-day virtual event with 120 individual events. We had to figure out the platform, what to charge, based on our best guess, and then rely on the community to bring

the important aspects forward, and then hope the community was going to dial in. We used the Ryman Auditorium stage to weave that in.”

“You don’t know if the rocket’s gonna launch until you hit that button on Monday, then you keep launching each booster rocket. Our community reacted so positively. They were starved to get together, share and learn from each other. Our World of Bluegrass emphasizes the deep connection of the Bluegrass community.”

I’d like to share some insights from a few other organization leaders.

Shanta Thake is the co-director of GlobalFEST, North America’s world music festival and non-profit organization whose mission is to foster cultural exchange and to increase the presence of world music in diverse communities nationwide.

Shana Thake says GlobalFEST included people from everywhere, many who hadn’t met. “We’re a lean and mean organization. Three volunteer directors run the organi-

zation to support the global performing artists and incentivize their touring. We started a weekly North American presenter call. Borders closing impacted touring. GlobalFEST started after 9-11. It’s so much more important in this moment to focus on how to bring other cultures into our conversations in America. We try to focus

on artists coming from the margins, like Haitian, or even New Orleans artists after hurricanes. They, in turn, shine a spotlight on their own communities and help bring relief to them. We hope to get some small grants out to artists and managers.”

“I’m constantly learning,” she says. “I learned how much I liked being

in control. Having that taken away was a part of learning. We all need to find that connection across who we are, what we believe in, and how the power of the arts shifts what is happening in our hearts. I personally found a necessity to be joy-centered and artist-centered.”

Folk Alliance International was one of the first organizations to say the pandemic is a real thing, and they made their decision and charted their course early on. “Folk Alliance is unique and so much about intimacy, personal connection and physical proximity,” acknowledges **Aengus Finnan, their Executive Director.**

“Even without people coming from outside the U.S., we were going to run into a critical loss of revenue. It didn’t take long to do the math and realize we’d be tone deaf selling registrations to a community immediately hit by a financial crisis. It wouldn’t have been profitable to proceed with a live event, and we’re going to lose money anyway.”

Finnan’s focus is on professionalizing how Folk Alliance International operates, elevating the credibility of the genre and organization, and most importantly leading on efforts of diversity, inclusion, and internationalism in the organization, community, and genre.

It’s gratifying to learn from each other and to see our peers in the music world succeed. Many things I saw or heard at the Folk Unlocked event will be shared. The silver lining is that we’ll be able to carry ideas back to in-person events that will extend access to folks who either wouldn’t attend or couldn’t due to financial constraints.

Each organization has found ways to directly support artists. IBMA’s Schiminger states, “We all had to figure out how to respond quickly. IBMA has had a Trust Fund in place since 1987 for medical and other emergencies. We quickly created a COVID account. We also created a resource page for folks in our community having difficulties.”

The Blues Foundation followed a similar path. “We established our COVID-19 Blues Musicians Relief Fund,” states Patty Aden, “and raised over \$300,000 to pay mortgages and meet everyday needs as artists try to sustain their livelihood during a



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time that venues have shut down. Some are challenged by technology. We might have an older African-American blues musician who still is using a flip phone. If necessary, we'll take an application over the phone.

Or use our own phones to take images of their bills and receipts. You can't be locked into a mechanized process that isn't user-friendly or helpful."



Aengus Finnan recognizes the need for critical funding during a pandemic. "Our Village Fund isn't late to the game, but it would've been nice to have five years ago. Five years from now, it'll be a benefit for different reasons. So we've launched fundraising efforts. In April 2021, we'll start accepting applications for \$500 grants to folk artists, as well as to industry entrepreneurs like agents, managers, publicists, production crew, anyone experiencing financial hardships. We looked at gaps and identified needs."

This year has certainly changed all of us, whether we function as leaders or followers in our music communities. It's important to rethink our organizations, our sense of belonging, our definition and need for music, and how we fit into the bigger picture.



Jed Hilly admits, "Every year I'm humbled by the participation of the community gathering, AmericanaFest. We didn't have that this year, and it was hard to let go of. We all want to be part of a robust, live music environment again. It's what gets my endorphins going. It's a spell-binding experience for discovery. Our passion and love for the music and musicians is what

will get us through."

Hilly adds, "There will always be a place for Americana music as it has become entrenched in our society and what it represents, in my opinion the very best of American music. It's rooted in tradition and, like any great art form, takes from the past and innovates in the future. In 2019, we formed the Americana Music Association Foundation, a non-

profit philanthropic educational organization that strives to educate on where we came from to maintain the integrity and continuance of a great American art form. In many ways, the AMA Foundation can move the organization, on the whole, back to the essence of why we were created, which was to advocate for the artists we love."

Patty Aden made a major life and geographical change to The Blues Foundation. "It's been an amazing change," she reflects, "and I've discovered a community that's warm, accepting and fulfilling. There are always new frontiers and new challenges. We've had to be nimble and learn new things. This has been a year of learning and adjustment. It makes the job interesting, engaging and fulfilling."

Aengus Finnan reflects on the significance of the word "folk" as he heads up the Folk Alliance. "It's the music of the people. It's all folk music. There are values and ideals at the center of that, but it doesn't give us a pass. This year's issues have driven home the need to continue that really rigorous examination of our organizations and communities, and look at issues like how racism and marginalization exist. Utterly



sitting still, letting go, and letting others do more is important work too. Let your community run with things. I tried to control the conversation too much. It's time to let conversations happen. It does a disservice to an organization if the leader drives the conversations too much."

Paul Schiminger of IBMA offers, "What we've seen in this country has changed all of us. From a music community standpoint, what I've seen is resilience. You typically move or inch along in the evolution of what you do with the business side



as well as how you interact. It's no longer okay to just inch along. We have to address issues about technology, access, involvement and equity. They're forefront. They're paramount. They're challenging, but there are opportunities that come out of it. We learn, and we become more comfortable."

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

Late Bloomer “Stay Calm, Play Bluegrass,” They Told Me

by Gretchen Hunter

“Yeah right,” I said.

You know how, when some bluegrass band is playing, often there’ll be some little kids dancing around unselfconsciously, more-or-less in time to the music, maybe singing, up in front of the stage? Does it make you smile? Is it because of their flawless technique? Of course not! What drives them to dance, and makes us smile, is the irresistible joy in it.



When I was a kid, that was me.

But somewhere along the line, I got so I couldn’t get through 3 measures of a simple tune without hyperventilating and succumbing to despair. Oh, not at home – damn, I rocked, at home. But in front of anyone else? Hah.

What’s wrong with me? It doesn’t appear to have been wrong with me at, say, 9. But why now?

What the experts say

Time to consult Dr. Google! I searched for “solving the yips.” “Yips,” like “choking,” is what happens to athletes, who also are performers, when they get too nervous, or something, to perform as well as they actually can. Here’s one site that offered some advice:

<https://medium.com/on-the-couch/how-to-cure-the-yips-in-golf-and-in-life-a88c3b0bc06d>.

I made a list of Dr. Google’s recommendations, in hopes that they would shed some light on what my 9-year-old self was doing right, or at least what my older-than-9 self might be able to fix.

Expert advice	My 9-year old’s response
Stare down the problem!	What problem?
Check your technique!	Seems ok to me
Make a change!	It’s ALL change already. I haven’t even hit puberty yet!
Switch your focus!	Why? It actually IS all about me
Forget the end game!	Huh?
Reset your goals!	I have goals?
Breathe!	I’ve been doing that very well for 9 years already
Assess your life!	Not much to look at so far

I can see why Dr. Google’s advice could be useful, although the track record for experts curing the yips is spotty at best (see: Shaquille O’Neill shooting free throws, Tiger Woods on the golf course, et al.). At 9, I was good at only three items on the list (checking technique, forgetting the end game, and breathing). Also, I’ve tried most of them already. Since pieces of expert advice don’t adequately answer my question (“What’s wrong with me?”) maybe I’m asking the wrong question.

Here’s a better question: What, exactly, is different about being a nervous adult, failing to play a song for a friendly, supportive teacher or pal, compared to being that smart-ass kid I used to be, dancing and singing unselfconsciously in front of the stage?

I believe that the answer to this question is something more internal, more a matter of something like emotion, which is harder to control through conscious effort and hours of practice. To master those more ephemeral skills, as William W. Purkey put it:

You’ve gotta dance like there’s nobody watching,

Love like you’ll never be hurt,

Sing like there’s nobody listening,

And live like it’s heaven on earth.

How to do unselfconscious joy

If the solution to my problem lies in being able to channel my unselfconscious, joyful inner 9-year-old, then I’m happy to report

that there are people who know something about how to do that. And some of them have kindly shared their wisdom with me. Here’s some of what I found especially useful:

Know what your intent is and be true to it.

“There are two kinds of internal obstacles to performing joyfully: fear of failure, and fear of success. The way around either kind of fear is authenticity. If it’s truly authentic, it can’t be wrong. If you come with the intent to express who you are and what you are moved to share, then no matter where you are in your musical journey, that act of sharing cannot be deemed wrong, because it was you, because it was real” (Crystal Lariza, Never Come Down band musician).

Take a moment to put yourself in a place of excitement and joy:

When you’re getting ready to play for, or with, someone, remember you’re about to do what you love, namely play some music with a friend (Jim Hurst, guitarist). Share the fun: Communicate that you’re having fun. It’s contagious (Linda Leavitt, musician and teacher).

Channel your inner show-off:

Pretend you’re pretty hot stuff (Jim Hurst, guitarist). We’re pretty good at fooling ourselves, so put it to good use for once.

Late Bloomer “Stay Calm, Play Bluegrass,” They Told Me

Reframe your feelings:

“There are good nerves (adrenalin and excitement) and bad nerves (shaky hands, shaky voice, brain freeze).” (Ruth Patterson, musician). Reframing those feelings is something we can actually do IF we pay attention at the time.

Stay in the moment:

“If you get to the middle of the tune and you start thinking about how well you’re playing, I guarantee you will go off the rails. Memorize a few jokes and tell the same ones each time. It is hard to feel uptight if you’re laughing” (Linda Leavitt, musician and teacher).

“Dare to suck”:

(Linda Leavitt). “Mistakes aren’t the end of the world. I’ve survived a variety of them, and people still will root for you and can enjoy the performance” (Julie MacDiarmid, dancer). “You have to trust that the mistakes you make are mistakes you can live with. Flubbed that measure and got lost? Just play a couple of the bass notes if you can, listen for a minute and jump back into the tune” (Jef Fretwell, musician and teacher).

Practice in different contexts,

with a variety of people. It helps to develop a feel for how different you sound in different environments. Play on street corners, play for strangers – anyplace and anyone you might use to expand your confidence (John Ferris, actor).

Play for yourself:

Take videos of yourself. Seeing and hearing how you sound will be a revelation, and where it doesn’t make you happy, it will show you what you need to work on (every expert I talked to).

And here’s possibly the best piece of advice I ever got, about anything, and especially this:

Laugh:

It’s actually kind of ridiculous to take this (whatever it is) so seriously, so give yourself a break. If you are kind to yourself, trust that everyone else will be too; and if they aren’t the sort of people who can be kind, then who cares? (Dr. Dorothea Gropp, psychiatrist, my German host mother, 1969)

Gretchen Hunter lives on what remains of a fourth-generation family farm near Eagle Point, with her husband Bob, a retired attorney. She is retired from a variety of careers including vineyard owner, decision analysis consultant, mechanical engineer, and construction worker. Shortly before the pandemic struck, she, along with Ceridwyn Doucette, Linda Leavitt, Lily McCabe and Glenn Freese, started RoxyGrass, “a supportive community of bluegrass musicians who get together to develop their skills and confidence in a structured jam setting.” We hope RoxyGrass will actually launch this summer, so follow us on Facebook or at Roxygrass.org.



Lily McCabe, Jef Fretwell, Gretchen Hunter, and Keri Ames at Hilltop Music in Phoenix, Oregon (Photo by Kyle Porter)

True North - Ghost Tattoo

Reviewed by Gareth Jenkins

I truly love the energy of good hot picking as well as celestial harmonies, but perhaps more than anything I love a well-crafted song that transports me, tells me a story, and Ghost Tattoo is filled with such songs. For the past decade and a half Salem, Oregon-based True North has been producing recordings with well-crafted songs, tasteful instrumentation and beautiful vocals. Their latest highly acclaimed Ghost Tattoo is easily one of their best thus far.

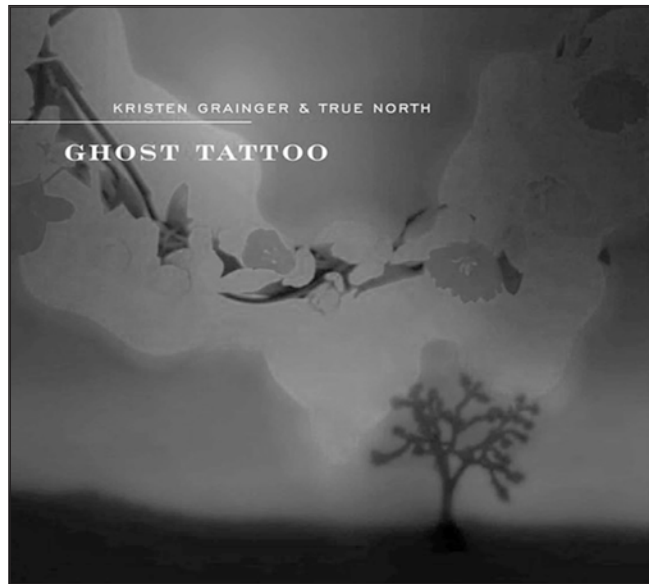
Central to the band's sound is singer and songwriter Kristen Grainger. She possesses a voice that is crystal clear and also emotive. Her award-winning songwriting paints pictures that draw the listener into her vignettes, or in her own words, "My goal is to craft song stories that illuminate extraordinary aspects of ordinary life." Like good poetry or storytelling, or a good solo for that matter, it isn't the number of words or notes, it is what is said with them and she says a lot here.

Their folk music chart-topping Ghost Tattoo and the music of True North is a contemporary blend of bluegrass sensibilities, singer/songwriter craft and a spirit that is willing to go where the song leads them. The harmonies of Kristen and co-band leader and husband Dan Wetzel (guitar, octave mandolin) are beautiful and reveal an intimate depth to them.

Together with Josh Adkins on bass and Martin Stevens on mandolin and fiddle as well as past band member Dale Adkins on banjo and guitar, these 12 intelligent songs are beautifully performed and wrapped in a tasteful, supportive, lush acoustic sound that is expertly captured by Adkins in his Big Owl Studio.

Over their many recordings they have shown a penchant for also interpreting works by other gifted

songwriters such as Hayes Carll, Fred Eaglesmith, Ruth Moody, and Kasey Chambers, just to name a few. On Ghost Tattoo they selected four from Tim O'Brien &



Darrell Scott, Peter Rowan, Secret Sisters and Cahalen Morrison, but the real gems here are the originals, seven written by Kristen and one co-written with Dan.

Others have taken notice of Kristen's songwriting talents. Recently Kristen won second place at the annual USA Songwriting Competition and first in the folk category for "Keep the River on the Right"



from Ghost Tattoo. She also was awarded Folk Song of the Year (for "Be Here Now" from Elsebound) in 2015 at the International Music and Entertainment awards, as well as having won awards at national songwriting competitions such as the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas (a mecca for songwriters), MerleFest and Telluride.

After years of writing, recording and performing and with their highly acclaimed Ghost Tattoo in hand they finally made the jump last year to become full-time musicians with over 40 gigs on the books over the next six months, including concerts and many festivals plus a tour of Ireland. And then all of that came to a screeching halt. Like so many other professional musicians, their careers were put on hold by the COVID-19 outbreak.

No one knows how this pandemic will all play out, of course, but we all hope that Kristen Grainger and True North will be able to rise up and claim the spotlight that they so richly deserve. In the meantime, pick up a copy of Ghost Tattoo and let them lead you into these amazing small worlds showing "extraordinary aspects of ordinary life." You will be rewarded.

Gareth Jenkins lives near Sisters, where he builds guitars. You can hear Gareth every third Saturday on Music from the True Vine on KBOO-FM radio, 90.7, or listen online at kboo.fm.



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Look for a Zoom meeting link in the OBA March Membership email blast.



**OBA ANNUAL
MEETING**

Sunday, April 11

Finding bluegrass (and more) in the time of COVID-19

Compiled by Nancy Christie

There are signs of bluegrass springing up as Oregon and Washington and the western U.S. decide that it may be safe to gather. A review of Facebook and various music association web sites has found the following resources, in-person events, and even FESTIVALS! All times are Pacific (U.S. west coast). ***Since COVID-19 can change plans suddenly, confirm before you pack and go!***

June 3-6, 2021: (Tentatively) Goldendale Pickers Festival, Ekone Park, Goldendale, Washington. facebook.com/goldendalepickersfest/

June 10-13, 2021: (Tentatively) Sacajawea Bluegrass Festival and Dutch Oven Rendezvous, Sacajawea State Park, Pasco, Washington. mctama.org.

June 18-20, 2021: Wenatchee River Bluegrass Festival, Chelan County Expo Center (Fairgrounds), Cashmere, Washington. In person as of this writing. Camping begins June 14. <http://www.cashmerecoffeehouse.com/wrbfest.htm>

July 9-11, 2021: Lost River Bluegrass Festival in Merrill, Oregon (a few miles north of the California border). In person as of this writing. Ticket sales begin May 1. (541) 891-3178, lostriverfestival@gmail.com

July 22-25, 2021: (Tentatively) Columbia Gorge Bluegrass Festival, Skamania County Fairgrounds, Stevenson, Washington. new.columbiagorgebluegrass.net/ Previous campers will be emailed. Never been there? Get on the email list here: parks@co.skamania.wa.us

August 13-15, 2021: Blue Waters Bluegrass Festival, Waterfront Park, Medical Lake, Washington (west of Spokane). In person as of this writing. bluewatersbluegrass.org/#top

August 26-29, 2021: 28th Annual Rainier Bluegrass Festival in Rainier, Washington (14 miles SE of Olympia), Wilkowski Park on Rochester St. E. In person as of this writing. David Wuller, 360-832-8320, rainierpickinparty.com

September 3-6, 2021: North Cascades Bluegrass Festival in Deming (Bellingham), Washington. In person as of this writing. Deming Log Showgrounds, 3295 Cedarville Road. ncbf.fun, info@ncbf.fun, (360) 920-0658

September 10-12, 2021: Bluegrass From The Forest in Shelton, Washington. In person as of this writing. South Mason Youth Soccer Park, 2102 E. Johns Prairie Road. 360-490-8981, bluegrass-fromtheforest.com

Bluegrass on the Tube: A search engine that only finds bluegrass and related videos. If you've read the Tony Rice article in this issue and would like to find videos of Tony, Clarence White, and Doc Watson playing the songs mentioned, give this a try. bluegrassonthetube.com

Fiddle Hell: An online version of a long-running festival for all instruments plus singing. 35 concerts, 35 jams, over 200 workshops. The organizers set this up a few months ago and it was successful, so they are doing it again from April 15-18, 2021. If you register, you'll have access to the entire festival for 3 months afterward. <https://FiddleHell.org>

Finding bluegrass (and more) in the time of COVID-19

Alberta Street Pub: This Portland favorite has almost-daily live music in its outdoor heated covered patio. Not all bluegrass but always interesting. Frequently sold out due to limited capacity so plan ahead. albertastreetpub.com/

Taborgrass has made some changes in response to the COVID-19 restrictions. Kaden Hurst and Patrick Connell host online classes and jams. To register and for more details, go to www.taborgrass.com where you'll also find a list of private instructors.

The Muddy Rudder Down Home Music Hour (Facebook, almost every evening at 7 or 8 p.m.) You'll find John Kael and Annie Staninec (Whiskey Deaf Duet, with occasional guests) on Thursdays. On other nights you might find the Fern Hill Band, Lauren Sheehan, Dan & Fran (Dan Compton & Fran Slefer), and others.

Quarantine Happy Hour: (Facebook, almost every evening at 5:30 p.m.) A variety of live musical performances hosted by Gabrielle Macrae and Barry Southern, with other guest hosts. There's a focus on old-time music but there's bluegrass and other musical styles.

Donate please. If there's a way donate online to a performer or venue when you watch via computer, please do. They will really appreciate it, and your donation may keep them solvent until they can perform in public.

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See back cover for more information





(Photo by Linda Leavitt)

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Are you missing the "Scheduled Jams" pages?

The list will return in the summer issue!!!

Until then, check the OBA Events Calendar at

oregonbluegrass.org/calendar/

Jam organizers:

If your jam information has changed, please send details to calendar@oregonbluegrass.org.



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OBA Supporting Performer Directory

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

Ash Creek

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

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

Corral Creek

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

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

Steve Blanchard

Steve Blanchard is well known as an acoustic flatpicker guitarist, singer and songwriter with a career spanning over four decades. His musical style includes bluegrass, cowboy/western, folk, and Americana. No matter what the style or venue, you're sure to feel Steve's love and passion for his music.

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

Dogwood String Band

Contemporary bluegrass-fueled Americana

Woody Wood
dogwoodstringband@gmail.com
dogwoodstringband.com

Fire & Stone

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

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

The Jamblers

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

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

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
patnellconrick@gmail.com

Lost Creek Bluegrass Band

From Portland, Oregon, Lost Creek delivers a driving blend of bluegrass and old-time standards with terrific vocal harmonies and tasteful instrumentation. For years they've delighted audiences at festivals, pubs, parks, dances, markets, and weddings throughout Oregon and Washington

www.lostcreekmusic.com
lostcreekmusic@gmail.com
971-678-2337

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

Never Come Down

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

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

Pickled Okra

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

Paisley Gray
pickledokraband@gmail.com

OBA Supporting Performer Directory

Rose City Bluegrass Band

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

Charlie Williamson
charliew3@nwlink.com

The Rogue Bluegrass Band

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

Rogue Bluegrass Band
Contact Don at
RogueBluegrassBand@yahoo.com

Rowdy Mountain

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

971-347-6050
rowdymountain@gmail.com

Scratchdog Stringband

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

Steve Eggers
eggers-stephen@gmail.com

Slipshod

Matt Snook (dobro and banjo) and Steve Blanchard (guitar and mandolin) offer listeners a broad and diverse range of music, including originals, familiar melodies and dynamic instrumentals. Check out this dynamic duo on their website, Facebook and YouTube..

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

Sunfish Duo

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

Daniel Fish
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

True North

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

truenorthband@comcast.net
www.truenorthband.com

Wailing Willows

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

Contact: 909-913-3668
andspence@gmail.com

Whistlin' Rufus

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



Murray Nunn and his trusty bass
(Photo by Linda Leavitt)

Obligatory Waltz

Arr. By Bill Hostmann

Dale Adkins
<https://www.daleadkins.com>

♩ = 100

D A Bm G D D A A

9 D A Bm G D A7 D D

17 G F#m Bm Bm E7 E7 A7 A7

25 D A Bm G D A7 D D

Dedicated to Paul Schoenlaub who listened while Dale played his tune for the first time at the Columbia Gorge Bluegrass Festival “a really long time ago.”



Dale Adkins

Where The Songs Come From

By Tim Stafford and Joe Newberry

*Here is a song that Tim Stafford and Joe Newberry wrote in honor of the late Nora Brackenbury Candey.
A fine songwriter, banjo player, and artist, she has gone to the place where the songs come from.
She is missed, and loved.*

In this world, one thing I know
Time will have its say
We harvest days from seeds we sow
Sing this hymn and pray

I'm headed to an endless day
With friends I made along the way
Don't look for me, for I'll be gone
To the place where the songs come from

Although we're gone from earthly bounds
The psalm of life abides
Heaven's filled with joyous sounds
Cross the other side

I'm headed to an endless day
With friends I made along the way
Don't look for me, for I'll be gone
To the place where the songs come from

Through the veil, the lucky few
Remember stories told
Unending love, no sad adieu
Eternity will hold

I'm headed to an endless day
With friends I made along the way
Don't look for me, for I'll be gone
To the place where the songs come from

Tim Stafford and Joe Newberry
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