

BLUEGRASS

BY THE BAY

SPOTLIGHTING BLUEGRASS AND RELATED FORMS OF ACOUSTIC MUSIC

February 2007

Can't You Hear Me Calling?

VOLUME 26 - NUMBER 2

NCBS San Mateo Bluegrass Series Continues

By Michael Hall

The NCBS First Thursday Night bluegrass music series in San Mateo will continue at the same location despite the closure of the Prince of Wales Pub. The "Swingin Door" is the new venue at 106 East 25th Avenue in San Mateo and bluegrass will continue as it has in the past. Hours are 7:00-10:00pm. Bands will be paid. NCBS volunteer Mike Russell will book the bands. On February 1st, Rogue River of Santa Cruz will take the stage. Be there!

Michael Hall Named Chair Of IBMA's Leadership Bluegrass Alumni Committee

Michael Hall has been named the new chairman of the IBMA's Leadership Bluegrass Alumni Committee by Greg Cahill, board chairman of the International Bluegrass Music Association and leader of the Chicago-based bluegrass band Special Consensus. Hall succeeds founding chair Archie Warnock of Baltimore.

Hall has served on the Leadership Bluegrass Alumni Committee since its founding in 2004. He is past president and a member of the board of directors of the Northern California Bluegrass Society since 1990. He is a Leadership Bluegrass graduate, Class of 2003.

The International Bluegrass Music Association, Nashville, is the worldwide trade association for bluegrass music. Leadership Bluegrass, founded in 2000, is an intensive annual IBMA course of study for the emerging leadership of the world's

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San Francisco "All Girl Bluegrass Benefit"

Review by Ted Silverman

Café Du Nord, January, 10, 2007: The Pending Eighth Annual **San Francisco Bluegrass and Old Time Festival** requires a great deal of preparation, resources and cold hard cash to present. This year, 2 benefits were held to support this ever growing roots music extravaganza **presented by the Northern California Bluegrass Society**. This article reviews the Wednesday evening, January 10, benefit with several bands. The event took place at the Café Du Nord, San Francisco's classic speakeasy under Market Street.

Shelby Ash of the West Portal Music Store is the driving force and booker for both the fest and its preliminary events and he gathered together some of the Bay Area's most beloved female fronted bands in an "all girl" salute to the SFBOT.

The venue slowly filled with paying attendees who forked over a \$10-\$20 dollar sliding scale door entry but by the time Lynn Quinones and Her Alhambra Valley Band took the stage a solid core of local fans had filled out the dance floor and gathered round to catch the action.

Lynn was in great voice and as always, leads her capable crew with a confidence and grace to be emulated. With a long history as a Bay Area Bluegrass band leader, Lynn always manages to pull together some of the region's best talents.

This version of the AVB featured Lynn's stalwart sidekick, Jill Crucey who fiddles with imagination, tonal clarity and power. The humor of bassist Bruce Campbell comes through with every bouncing note from the bottom and the energy of mandolin picker, Dan Large and banjoist,

Mitch Polzac really infuse this band with big entertainment value. Standout tunes from their set included fine instrumentals such as Monroe's "Big Mon," and a barn burner from the Pen of Mitch Polzac titled, "The American Standard Breakdown."

Jeannie and Chuck Poling, a talented long-time fixture on the local scene front the terrific Country Roundup band featuring both bluegrass and classic country music in their sets. This version of the Roundup featured the hot flat picker, Dr. Yvonne Walbroel and the always well attired Steve Swan on double bass. Doug Holloway did some fine work on the fiddle and midway through the set the band was joined by former Roundup Fiddler, Diana Greenberg (perhaps the busiest local musician in San Francisco) for a hot twin fiddle take on "June Apple." Jeannie has the bona fide country vocal skills with Chuck penning many of their terrific songs. Chuck crooned a few of his originals, including "These 18 Wheels," and "No Hard Feelings," among others. Though the personnel in the Roundup often changes the quality of the entertainment is always remarkable.

Belle Monroe & Her Brewglass Boys were highly anticipated by the gathered crowd who surrounded the stage prior to the band's set and helped replace the spirit usually brought to the fore by Dobro Picker Rick Hendricks; absent from the proceedings due a recent bout of illness. The remaining quintet put on a hot performance aided and abetted at times by Mitch Polzac of the Alambra Valley Band who put on a flatpickin' show on two fiddle tunes: "The Clinch Mountain

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It's not too late. Tell us how you got hooked on bluegrass. Just [click here](#).

Rick Cornish of the California Bluegrass Association is asking you to share your story of how you got hooked on bluegrass music. Go to the CBA website at www.cbaontheweb and look on the home page for the fish. Click on that to start typing!

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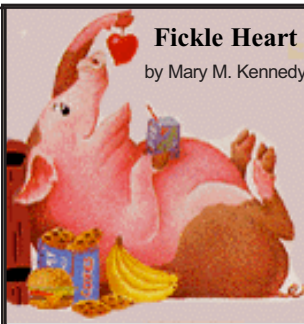
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Fickle Heart
by Mary M. Kennedy

Chorus:

Fickle Heart--I've got a Fick-le Heart,

I really love you-- but my heart can not stay true,

So don't be sad when you find me gone

And don't be mad--I've got to be moving on

Verse: Fickle Heart--Like a kid in a candy store
Hearts are such tasty treats, I just got to have one more
When I'm done with Lemon-Lime, I want a Strawberry Creme,
Or bunch of Red-Hot Hots, or a Carmel Toffee Dream

Chorus:

Verse: Fickle Heart--Mine finds you sweet my dear
I love to kiss your tasty lips, but my heart will not stay near

I'll find another one with a smile so sweet,
I'll fall in love, love, love--be swept off my feet

Chorus:

Finale: So don't be sad when you find me gone
And don't be mad, mad, mad--I've got to be moving on
---Fick-le--Heart-----!

For tune, ask me at the next jam--Yer Editor-MK ©2005

Bluegrass By The Bay is published monthly by the **Northern California Bluegrass Society**, an all volunteer, non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Founded in 1982 as the Santa Cruz Bluegrass Society, it continues to be known by that name in the greater Santa Cruz County area. The name was changed in 1999 to reflect the expanded scope of the Society's activities, from Marin to Monterey, California. The Society brings people together for the preservation, enjoyment and advancement of bluegrass and related acoustic music through jams, instructional workshops, concerts, community festivals and this monthly newsletter, via hard copy & electronic form, © 2006

Bluegrass By the Bay staff and contributors

Thanks to writers/contributors: Brenda Hough, Larry Carlin, Chuck Poling, Ted Silverman, Mike Hall, Peter Thompson, Patrick Wheldon. Photographs, graphics by Mary Kennedy, Mark Varner, Nancy Zuniga, and others.

NCBS Board of Directors

Brenda Hough, hufstuff@oakapple.net, Mary Kennedy, kennedymk@comcast.net, 408 241-5920 - Gary Mansperger, garym@ncbs.us, 408 272 9579, Michael Hall, hallmw@gmail.com, 650-596-9332, Susy Varian, susyvarianhammond@sbcglobal.net 650-328-1125, Mike McKinley, president, mike@harmonygrits.com, Mike Fisher, treasurer@ncbs.us, bubberry@sbcglobal.net, 831-336-2185, Penny Godlis, pennyg44@gte.net, James Cossey, jimcossey@comcast.net

Committee Chairs

Susy Varian, Membership Chair, 650-328-1125, susyvarianhammond@sbcglobal.net
Penny Godlis, Volunteers - pennyg44@gte.net

Mary Kennedy, BBB Editor, 408-241-5920, bluegrassbythebay@gmail.com
Gary Mansperger, Webmeister, 408-251-8002, admin@scbs.org

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February is all about the San Francisco Bluegrass and Old-Time Festival, February 1st through 10th, and

rather than list event after event, I recommend, nay, urge you to hightail it over to www.sfbbluegrass.org and check out 10 days of twangin' nirvana, San Francisco style. I'm sure many of you have already mapped out your strategy for which shows you're attending on each night and which days you'll be calling in sick to work. There's a highly contagious bluegrass fever going around.

Ohmygawd! Did you hear the Stairwell Sisters performing on Prairie Home Companion?

They were on stage at the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House as Garrison Keillor brought the world of Lake Wobegone to San Francisco on January 13. The Stairwells tore it up, playing three songs including their hambone specialty, Jump Back, which had the crowd stomping and clapping along in a most un-opera like manner. Good time gals playing old-time music, you make us proud.

And coming this March is big news from **Grizzly Peak**, one of San Francisco's premier traditional style bluegrass bands. Their debut CD, **Heartbreak and Loneliness**, is in the final



stages of production as we go to press, and CD release parties are planned for March 1st at the Atlas Café in San Francisco and March 9 at McGrath's Pub in Alameda. The CD features Ted Garber on dobro and vocals, Patti Garber on bass, Dan Norton on banjo, Bernie

Bishop on guitar and vocals, Steve Kallai on fiddle and Matt Kendall on mandolin (Kendall has since left the band and has been at least temporarily replaced by the talented Jerry Barush.)

The song selection focuses on sturdy bluegrass standards (see below), and with that in mind, Grizzly Peak turned to all-around musical maestro Pat Campbell to produce their maiden effort. Pat made his bones playing with Jerry Garcia and Frank Wakefield back in the 70s and, while he may not have seen it all, he's seen a lot. And heard a lot, too.

I recently spoke with Patti Garber about the recording process and how a band cutting its first CD is forced to learn on the fly. The key, she pointed out, is preparation. "Pat worked extensively with us, helping arrange the songs to attempt to show off each person's vocal or instrumental strength," said Patti. "He watched us perform in public, spent time with us at rehearsals, and then scheduled a series of pre-production rehearsals that he essentially choreographed." The skull sessions paid off, and the band went into the studio confident that they knew their material frontwards, backwards and upside down.

Grizzly Peak's traditional style and song selection led producer

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GRIZZLY PEAK IS CELEBRATING THE RELEASE OF THEIR FIRST CD HEARTBREAK AND LONELINESS



There will be two special performances, one for our East Bay friends, and another for our SF friends

McGrath's Pub, Fri March 2, 8-11pm
1539 Lincoln Ave Alameda www.mcgrathspub.com

Atlas Cafe, Thurs March 8, 8-10pm
3049 20th St (at Alabama) SF www.atlascafe.net

www.grizzlypeakbluegrass.com

Cover art by Frank Holmes Produced by Pat Campbell
Recorded at Emeryville Recording Company

The Lumberjack Bluegrass Festival is off and running. Keep your Saturday, 2/17/07, afternoon free to enjoy 5, venerable, California Bluegrass Bands for FREE!.

We'll be starting off with Autumn and The FALL GUYS. Autumn Rose has put together some very talented Composers/Lyric Writers from the East Coast and Mid-West. I join them with my Dobro and Musical Saw to produce a Set of truly unique Old Timey & Americana Music. Bring your musical mind to this Band.

The Alhambra Valley Band is a name that breeds enthusiasm for the larger Bluegrass audience. With a "Kids Music" branch of the Band, these folks are an amazing compilation of Talent, Vision and Sensitivity that makes California Bluegrass a force.

Diana (Donnelly) and The Yes Ma'ams are a long time favorite of mine. I know most of these folks and Diana has been a long time Bluegrass Icon for me. I'm hoping to persuade some old-time Country Music out of their Lj BGF performance. Cabin Fever is still another Bluegrass

Staple of the SF Bayarea. The addition of Bryan McClenahan is a stroke of Bluegrass genius. I've known Bryan for decades, having attended the Friday Night, BG, Jam for 30 years. You needed to be there to appreciate the contribution that Sunshine has made to the Bluegrass Universe.

Lastly, Sidesaddle and Co. is blessing this event with their incredible music. I remember these folks from the "Barney Steel", Redwood City, Bluegrass Sundays. I was part of the "Bluegrass Clown" squad that performed between the real Bands taking the stage. Sidesaddle put up with my Spike Jones-esque clowning with the Ohio version of the Hose-O-Phone. No hype involved, these folks are a valued heritage, for Bluegrass, in this area.

General Admission is now FREE. Wheelchair access is in place. Seating is limited to 350 and the seating is first come, first served. ❖



Classified Ads

Note: Classified ads run for four consecutive months, and are free to NCBS members. Graphics added where space allows. Contact editor at bluegrassbythebay@gmail.com

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You made it through January, your New Year's resolutions are a distant memory, and the holiday credit card bills have all been paid. You need to celebrate! There

is bluegrass galore going on in the North Bay and SF at the start of this month, so clear the calendars and get out and have some fun!

Carltone Productions has once again strung together the virtual 4th Annual North Bay Bluegrass Festival – shows at different venues in Marin and Sonoma Counties over the course of two weeks. It began on January 24th, and it runs until the 11th. Some highlights still to come are Hot Buttered Rum at Sweetwater on the 7th (see below), Adobe Creek Bluegrass on the 9th at Murphy's in Sonoma, Peter Rowan and Keystone Crossing at the Dance Palace in Point Reyes Station on the 9th, and Peter Rowan at the Larkspur Café Theatre on the 11th.

Marin bluegrass jam. The dates for the jam this month are the 1st and the 15th. The location is the Marin Lutheran Church in Corte Madera, and the time is 7:30-10 p.m.

The SF Bluegrass & Old-Time Festival will run from February 1st-10th. Go to their site for more info.

Murphy's Irish Pub in the town of Sonoma is the place to go for good music in Sonoma County, with no cover charge. Featured there this month are The Sonoma Mountain Band on the 2nd, Kevin Russell & Friend on the 8th, Adobe Creek Bluegrass on the 9th, The Acmes on the 10th, High Country on the 24th, and much more.

Jammin' in Sebastopol. The place to be on Saturdays is the Coffee Catz, from 2-5

p.m. On the 3rd and the 10th it is bluegrass, old-time, old country, acoustic picking and fiddling; on the 17th it will be swing music, and on the 24th it will be pickers' choice.

Bluegrass Gold at Sweetwater in Mill Valley is produced by Carltone Music and co-sponsored by the NCBS, and the show on the 7th at 8:30 p.m. will feature **Hot**



Buttered Rum as the headliner and The Mountain Boys as the opener. Hot Buttered Rum is a young band that plays what they call "high altitude bluegrass," and they feature hot pickin' and singing with a mix of original and traditional songs played with lots of energy. They are attracting a truly multi-generational audience with its ability to create an undeniably hip and fresh sound that weaves together the grounded traditions of folk and bluegrass with the modern influences of rock-n-roll, reggae and acoustic singer/songwriters. Hot Buttered Rum's musical evolution has not only defined their sound, with their extensive touring schedule, the band has become established as one of the nation's hottest young touring acts since setting off as a group of friends on a trail in the high Sierras in the early part of the decade. Their most recent CD is titled Well Oiled Machine. The Mountain Boys is a new trio featuring Jacob Groopman (Lost Coast Bluegrass) on guitar, Tim Hicks on mandolin, and Andrew Conklin on bass.

The David Thom Band will be playing a house concert in the town of Sonoma on the 6th, and will also be picking traditional bluegrass at The Black Rose in Santa Rosa on the 16th.

Music is brewing at the Iron Springs Pub & Brewery in Fairfax. Bands play on Wednesdays starting at 8 p.m. No cover, and great beer, food and music. On the 7th it will be Ida Viper, Bermuda Grass on the 14th, Jelly on the 21st, and the Riff Riders on the 28th.

Blue Highway will be headlining a show at the Mystic Theatre in Petaluma on the 18th, with Jim Nunally & Keith Little opening.

There is some good pickin' going on up in Sebastopol on the 25th. It is a gospel, bluegrass and old-time gathering, and it takes place from 2-5 p.m. at the Sebastopol Christian Church.

Ed Neff and Friends pick bluegrass every Thursday at the Willowbrook Ale House in Petaluma from 6:30-9:30 p.m. Call (707) 775-4232 for info. No cover.

Keep on pickin'!

Comments? News? Send e-mail to carltone1@yahoo.com or for more information go to www.carltone.com. ❖



More reviews by Brenda are available in the Possum Pages online- Editor



Mary McCaslin: Better Late Than Never
 PO Box 3394
 Santa Cruz, CA 95063
 c.2006
www.marymccaslin.com

Song list: Acres of Houses, Lights of Spartanburg, Unchained Melody, Bei Mir Bist Du Schon, Oildale, Sabres and Guns, Standing in the Doorway, Losing End, Losing End, Missing, You've Forgotten, To Some Cool Blue-Iced Shore, California Joe.



Mary McCaslin has been part of the Santa Cruz folk scene for many years and her music covers the gamut from pop standards to quirky observations of modern times. Her guitar playing in various open tunings and clawhammer banjo instrumentals have made her song interpretations unique.

The song selection includes the sentimental classic, "Unchained Melody" and an upbeat "Bei Mir Bist Du Schon" with clawhammer banjo. "Oildale" is a Mike Beck song celebrating the California Okie town: "there ain't no yuppies in Oildale.....you won't find no soccer moms riding in SUVs" that is a song deserving more airplay. "Acres of Houses" is Mary's adaptation of the old folk song, "Acres of Clams," and laments farmland changing to sprawling houses. Mary's songwriting skills are strongest in the vignettes of sadness and loneliness around her. She wrote "Missing," the sad tale of a missing child whose remains were found months later close to home. The poignant "Standing in the Doorway" focuses on the forgotten Hollywood star who now

"stands alone (with) handouts from strangers" in the doorway of the Salvation Army. The song also has some classic lines: "give up every pleasure, the monthly check just pays the rent and leaves so little more." It's heartening to see that there are still singer songwriters making stories of our times and Mary is one of the best.

Eric Lambert: Doin' Alright
Woodpicker Music
 219-218-2301
 ©2006
www.ericlambert.com

Song list: Green, Doin' Alright, Scott's Rag, Time Is Now, Leaves, More Pretty in E, Red Haired 12, Les on the Mountainside, Grasshopper, Coon Valley Stomp, Cumberland Blues.

Sometimes music flows from the CD to the heart and the effect is timeless. Eric Lambert's guitar and mandolin music take the instruments into carefully crafted tapestries of sound. While the songs are mostly instrumentals, each one stands on its own with melodies that leave little dancing notes in your head. "Green" has a lovely Celtic lilt, and "Doin' Alright" is a great vocal to sing along and pack with you on a gloomy day. "Leaves" is a gentle, flowing guitar piece with melodic passages that bring images of the great outdoors. His version of "Red Haired Boy" has great depth and melodic variations that jam session players would be happy to imitate. Eric has managed to make the recording immediate and intimate and the listener feels like the concert is presented right in the living room. ❖



bluegrass community, including the IBMA's future leadership.

The alumni committee will organize the Leadership Bluegrass participation in the IBMA World of Bluegrass convention, October 1-7, 2007 in Nashville, the pre-convention Master Class for LB alumni, the LB mentor program, and the the LB retreat weekend.

Michael Hall, a Murfreesboro, TN., native, is a 1975 graduate of Middle Tennessee State University and a 1980 graduate of the Vanderbilt University Law School. The Northern California Bluegrass Society, founded 1982, was the Santa Cruz Bluegrass Society before the name was changed in 1999. Hall was NCBS/SCBS president in 1991-1992, 1995-1996, and 2000-2001. ❖

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- ★ Mar 4: Regular jam and open mike

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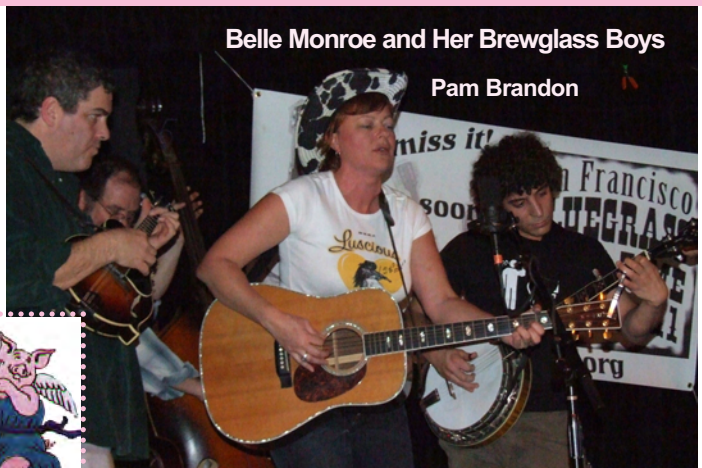
- Beginners' Circle slow jam starts at 2:00.
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Alhambra Valley Band

Lynn Quinones



Belle Monroe and Her Brewglass Boys

Pam Brandon



Cupig



The audience benefits from the great music at Cafe DuNord!



Backstep," and, "Pike County Breakdown." Fiddler Diana Greenberg showed off her skills during the fiddle tune portion of a new song called "Fire on the Mountain," (penned by Maurice Tanney of local alt-country phenoms, 77 El Dora) while in a duet with the always exiting Jordan Klein on Banjo. The band sneaks the classic fiddle tune, "Fire on the Mountain" between choruses of the other similarly named song.

Rounding out the Brewglass Boys was the always powerful Tom Drohan on upright bass and Ted Silverman on Mandolin and vocals who crooned a reworked version of Tim O'Brien's, "Nellie Kane," as well as singing harmonies' throughout the set. The Brewglass Boys never fail to get an audience whooping and hollering for more and they did a solid job despite the absence of Rick Hendricks who was home in bed.

The evening's last set was ably performed



Barefoot Nellies

by the all girl quintet known as the Barefoot Nellies. With Erika Walther out front on rhythm guitar and vocals, Nicole Solis picking' some fine mandolin, Prentice Sellers (of the Lone Mountain Sisters) on banjo, fiddler Liz Wrone and bassist Jess Beebe, this fine five-some did a fantastic job of putting on a good show and lighting up both the stage and audience with a positive vibration. A few standouts from this show included Prentiss Seller's fun banjo romp on "Cripple Creek," and a couple of terrific original songs, "Let Me Down Easy,"

from Erika Walther and "When You Break My Heart," from the pen (and mandolin) of Nicole Solis.

The talent displayed by the fairer sex at this event was remarkable, but all who contributed their time, energy, effort and cash helped the SFBOT to get on its feet for the upcoming February Festival. Look for a lot more fun from these four talented acts as well as many other swell local and national bands at

the upcoming San Francisco Bluegrass & Old Time Festival. ❖

Key Links:

- www.AlhambraValleyband.com
- www.BarefootNellies.com
- www.BrewglassBoys.com
- www.CountryRoundupSF.com
- SFBOT: www.SFBluegrass.org
- www.ShelbyAshPresents.com
- Ted Silverman: www.WorldWideTed.com
- Northern California Bluegrass Society: www.ncbs.us

REPEATING SHOWS & JAMS**MONDAYS**

McGrath's Bluegrass jam, McGrath's Pub, 1539 Lincoln Avenue, Alameda (510-522-6263), 7:30-10:30pm.

Baja Bluegrass jam (invitational), Baja Taqueria, 4070 Piedmont Ave., Oakland (510-547-2252), 8pm. Contact TRman2323@aol.com to play.

Open mic, Red Rock Cafe, 201 Castro St. Mtn. View, (650-967-4473), 7:00 pm.

-1st and 3rd Mondays-

Bean Creek band, Phil's Bluegrass series, Phil's Fish Market, 7600 Sandholdt Road, Moss Landing (831-633-2152), 6:30-8:30pm.

Amnesia Bluegrass series, Amnesia, 853 Valencia St. (at 20th), SF (415-970-8336), 7pm.

-2nd and 4th Mondays-

Courthouse Ramblers band, Phil's Fish Market, 7600 Sandholdt Road, Moss Landing (831-633-2152), 7-9pm.

TUESDAYS

Sam's Bluegrass series, Sam's BBQ, 1110 S. Bascom, San Jose (408-297-9151), 6-9pm: Bean Creek (1st Tues), Carolina Special (2nd Tues), Cabin Fever (3rd Thurs), Saucy Dogs (4th Tues.), Extreme Country (5th Tues.)

-2nd and 4th Tuesdays-

NCBS Bluegrass jam, Dublin Heritage Center Park, 6600 Donlon, Dublin, 7-9pm.

WEDNESDAYS

Bluegrass jam, Fandango Pizza, corner of Middlefield & Loma Verde in Palo Alto, 7-10 pm. Contact info: 650-969-9038 or Fandango Pizza 650-494-2928. azacanti@pacbell.net,

Sam's Bluegrass series, Sam's BBQ, 1110 S. Bascom, San Jose (408-297-9151), 6-9pm: Sidesaddle (1st Wed), Diana and The Yes Ma'ams (2nd Wed), Sidesaddle (3rd Wed), Diana & the Yes Ma'ams (4th Wed), Macrae Brothers (5th Wed), Sidesaddle & Co. (1st and 3rd Wed), Diana & the Yes Ma'ams (2nd & 4th Wed), MacRae Bros. band (5th Wed).

-1st Wednesday-

Jeanie & Chuck's Bluegrass country jam, The Plough and Stars, 116 Clement (at 2nd Ave.), SF (415-751-1122), 8-10:30pm.

-1st and 3rd Wednesdays-

Bluegrass jam, hosted by Tom Sours, Murphy's Irish Pub, 464 First St., Sonoma (707-935-0660), 8-10pm.

Whiskey Brothers band, Albatross Pub, 1822 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley (510-843-2473), 9pm.

THURSDAYS

Atlas Bluegrass series at Atlas Cafe, 3049 20th St. (at Alabama), SF (415-648-1047), 8-

10pm. Dark Hollow (1st Thurs), Jam (Last Thurs), Other shows TBA at www.bluegrass-society.org/calendrix.

Open Mic, Blue Rock Shoot, 14523 Big Basin Way, Saratoga, (408-872-0309)

Fifth String Music Store Bluegrass Jam, 3051 Adeline St, Berkeley (510-548-8282), 8pm.

Ed Neff and Friends jam at Willowbrook Ale House, 3600 Petaluma Blvd. N., Petaluma (707-775-4232), 6:30-9:30pm.

-1st Thursday-

The NCBS' "First Thursdays" bluegrass series at the Prince of Wales Pub, 106 East 25th Avenue, San Mateo (near the entrance to Bay Meadows, 1 block east of El Camino Real), 8:00PM-11:00PM

-3rd Thursday-

Café Amsterdam, 23 Broadway, Fairfax, 8:30PM-11:00PM. 415-256-8020.

-1st and 3rd Thursdays-

Marin Bluegrass jam, Marin Lutheran Church, 649 Meadowsweet, Corte Madera, 7:30-10pm.

Open Mike - South Bay Folks Club, Mission City Coffee Roasting Company, 2221 The Alameda, Santa Clara, (261-2221)

FRIDAYS**-1st Friday-**

1st Friday series at Murphy's Irish Pub, 464 First St., Sonoma (707-935-0660), 8-10pm.

-2nd and 4th Fridays-

Bluegrass slow jam (at Barbra and Eric Burman's), 1145 El Solyo Hghts Drive, Felton (335-3662), 7-9pm.

-SATURDAYS-

Americana, Roots Music series, Atlas Cafe, 3049 20th St. (at Alabama), SF (415-648-1047), 4-7pm.

Bluegrass and acoustic series, San Gregorio General Store, Highway 84 (at Stage Road), San Gregorio (650-726-0565), 11am-5pm.

Bluegrass and acoustic jam, Catz Roastery, 6761 Sebastopol Ave., Sebastopol (707-829-6600), 2-5pm.

-2nd Saturday-

Hootenanny Night folk and acoustic series, Cafe International, 508 Haight St., SF (415-775-0221), 7-10:30pm.

-2nd and 4th Saturdays-

Murphy's Bluegrass series, Murphy's Irish Pub, 464 First St., Sonoma (707-935-0660), 8pm.

SUNDAYS

American Roots Music Show series, The Music Store, 66 W. Portal Ave., SF, (415-664-2044), 3-6pm.

Americana Unplugged Series, Jupiter Brewpub, 2181 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, 5:00pm.

Jupiter old-time jam, Jupiter, 2181 Shattuck

Ave, Berkeley, 7pm.

Bluegrass and acoustic series, San Gregorio General Store, Highway 84 (at Stage Road), San Gregorio (650-726-0565), 11am-5pm.

-1st Sunday-

SCVFA jam, Hoover Middle School, Naglee Ave. at Park Ave, San Jose. 1-5pm.

-2nd and 4th Sundays-

Old-time jam, Progressive Grounds Cafe, 400 Cortland Ave. (Bernal Heights), SF, 3-6pm.

-4th Sunday-

Bluegrass jam, California State Old Time Fiddlers Association, United Methodist Church, Castro Valley (925-455-4970), 1:30-5pm.

OCCASIONAL BLUEGRASS VENUES

Barefoot Coffee Roasters, 5237 Stevens Creek Boulevard, Santa Clara, (408) 248-4500, 7:30pm

Dana Street Coffee Roasting Company, 744 W. Dana Street, Mountain View, (650) 390-9638, 8pm

HMB Music/Events, The Half Moon Bay Brewing Company, 390 Capistrano Avenue, Princeton-by-the-Sea, Half Moon Bay, (650-728-BREW), www.hmbbrewingco.com/calendar.htm, 7-10pm.

San Gregorio Country Store, Highway 84 and Stage Road, San Gregorio, CA 94074, (650) 726-0565, www.sangregoriostore.com

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perform in public, spent time with us at rehearsals, and then scheduled a series of pre-production rehearsals that he essentially choreographed.” The skull sessions paid off, and the band went into the studio confident that they knew their material frontwards, backwards and upside down.

Grizzly Peak’s traditional style and song selection led producer Campbell to encourage the band to record live, rather than on individual tracks at different times that would be mixed together later. The instruments and voices were miked separately, allowing for some adjustment in the final mix, but everyone was in the same room, playing at the same time. While this method results in a more “authentic” sound (the way Bill and Ralph did it) and is the best way to repli-

cate a live performance, it is an absolutely unforgiving experience for the musicians, who know that the slightest mistake will ruin the track.

But the **Grizzlies** were up for the challenge and honed their chops going into the studio. “We wanted to sound ‘real,’ for want of a better word, to sound ‘live’ and Pat convinced us that we could live with the inevitable rawness that will always occur with a live recording,” said Patti. “Pat was unflagging in his support and made us feel that we were working in a professional way, with a professional producer, in a professional atmosphere. That was his main influence.”

The pre-production meetings started last September, and by October the band was in the studio, rarin’ to go. Heartbreak and

Loneliness was recorded at Emeryville Studios with Randy Rood at the board. Randy and Pat Campbell put together the mix, and then it was on to Joe Weed, “the master of the master,” as Patti describes him, for the mastering. With a team of pros like this pulling the levers, you know the CD is a quality product.

Grizzly Peak also scored a real coup when they enlisted the services of graphic artist and bluegrass aficionado Frank Holmes to design the cover artwork. Among Frank’s many accomplishments is his distinctive album cover design for the classic Beach Boys’ album Smile. The CD, *Heartbreak and Loneliness*, is pretty much devoted to those cheerless topics. **Songs include Forty Years of Trouble, 1952 Vincent Black Lightning, This Morning at Nine, Hit Parade of Love, Montana Cowboy, True Life Blues, Your Worries and Troubles are Mine, Those Memories of You and Moonshiner, along with the upbeat instrumentals Back Up and Push and Uptown Blues.** So there’s a little sunshine amidst the gloom after all.

Next up for Grizzly Peak is the San Francisco Bluegrass and Old Time Festival’s post-celebration at the Plough and Stars on Feb. 16. Also appearing will be the Deciders (formerly the Jewgrass Boys). I know there are a lot of folks, including this writer, looking forward to Grizzly Peak’s CD release parties in March as well. Let’s all get out to these performances and put on a big show of support for our local favorites.

Bluegrass Box Score – Tim Flannery is the San Francisco Giants’ new third base coach. Formerly a longtime player, coach and broadcaster for the San Diego Padres, Tim is also an avid bluegrass fan and musician. He was raised in Kentucky and cites the music of Bill Monroe and the Everly Brothers as early influences. He’s released several CDs and is a frequent collaborator with all-around bluegrass wizard Dennis Caplinger. Check out his website at www.timflannery.com and send him a message welcoming him to the Bay Area bluegrass community. ❖

...Review of Mary McCaslin’s New CD on Page 6...



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Mary McCaslin has used her ability on clawhammer banjo for her striking renditions of “Bei Mir Bist De Schoen”, the Beatles’ “Blackbird” and the Who’s “Pinball Wizard.” She has 10 recordings to her credit.

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BLUE HIGHWAY

One of the most esteemed and influential groups in contemporary bluegrass, Blue Highway excels at every facet of the music, from instrumental dexterity to impeccable vocal interplay to literate, powerful songwriting.

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and the Bay Area's own Rob Ickes (Dobro) are at the forefront of their respective roles, appearing on innumerable projects as sidemen, songwriters, and solo artists. Together, in Stafford's words, they are "a democracy in the best sense of the word": five gifted artists selflessly merging their talents into a seamlessly brilliant group sound. It's a BAND in the best sense of the word.

Their singing, playing, and songwriting are unsurpassed in contemporary bluegrass; from seven highly-acclaimed albums and constant touring, Blue Highway has topped the Bluegrass Unlimited radio charts, received a Grammy nomination, won a Dove Award and an a dozen International Bluegrass Music Association awards, individually and collectively. "Bluegrass supergroup' may sound like an oxymoron, but you've earned the title when you boast five singer-songwriters whose résumés include stints with Earl Scruggs, Alison Krauss, and Ricky Skaggs. On 'Marbletown,' Blue Highway apply their hot licks and high lonesome vocals to a stack of rueful tunes. Why are these guys super? They can make your heart soar even as it's breaking." - Bob Cannon, *Entertainment Weekly*

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ROB ICKES



Tickets are available online from TicketWeb (www.ticketweb.com) and by mail order: RBA, P.O. Box 390515, Mountain View, CA 94039. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope along with your check or money order, plus a note indicating what you want to order. Tickets are also available at Gryphon Stringed Instruments, 211 Lambert St., Palo Alto. Additional information: 650-691-9982, www.rba.org Thank you for your support!

Bluegrass By the Bay - February 2007

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Inside the Possum Pages

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February 2007

the Possum Pages



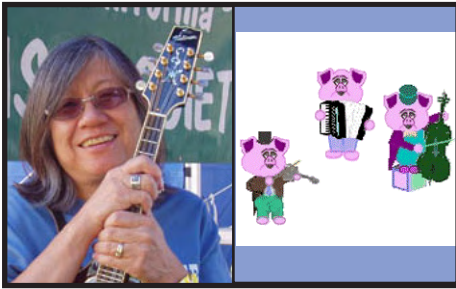
Welcome to the NCBS's publication, **the Possum Pages**, an extension to the Bluegrass By the Bay magazine. You find yourself here because you are clever enough to have elected to receive your club's monthly newspaper online. We will endeavour to entertain and enlighten you who join who join us in the great stride we take to serve the bluegrass community.

Your editor, Mary Kennedy (408)241-5920 bluegrassbythebay@gmail.com

the Possum Pages

CD Reviews

by Brenda Hough



The Infamous Stringdusters: Fork in the Road
 Sugar Hill Records
 ©2007
www.sugarhillrecords.com

Song list: No More to Leave You Behind, Fork in the Road, Starry Night, 3x5, 40 West, Tragic Life, Poor Boy's Delight, No Resolution, My Destination, Letter From Prison, Dream You Back, Moon Man.



In the Southwest, people are warned about flashfloods that appear on cloudless days and sweep away everything in their paths. Though each of the band's six members began his musical journey far from Nashville, their confluence in the music capital has produced a tsunami of powerful music rooted in bluegrass but spiced with youthful energy and experimentation. Fork in the Road is the band's debut album

for Sugar Hill and with Blue Highway veteran Tim Stafford producing, the album is filled with sparkling jam band instrumentals and heartfelt vocals – every bluegrass base is covered and the band has a sure-fire homerun!

Both Jeremy Garrett and Andy Hall have voices that can define heartfelt and they both are equally skilled at writing original songs. Andy's dobro and Chris Pandolfi's banjo punctuate the opening "No More To Leave You Behind" and Jeremy's fiddle adds flourishes to Andy's lead vocal. "Fork in the Road" is another vocal powerhouse with strong instrumentation. In fact, it's hard to choose a favorite instrument: the banjo and dobro are distinctive, but mandolin and fiddle are right there filling in the interludes. Chris' banjo again adds the pulsing rhythm with Travis Book's bass punching the rhythm for emphasis. Jesse Cobb's mandolin is featured in the instrumental "40 West" and his crunchy mandolin solos are fused with banjo, fiddle and guitar solos.

Chris Eldridge, son of Ben Eldridge of the Seldom Scene, carefully crafts melodic guitar leads and he also plays on Chris Thile's new release How To Grow A Woman From The Ground. "Starry Night" has a Blue Highwayesque sound with Jeremy's lead vocal and Andy and Chris adding the harmony vocals. "Poor Boy's Delight" is a delightful change of pace with Travis Book doing the lead vocal in a melodic dance tune. But each tune is just a part of a many-faceted performance gem. There's something for everyone – inspired instrumentation carefully blended, original songs with in the groove vocals, and an overall sense of synergy that makes the whole much more than its separate parts.

Bill Yates & Friends: The Country Gentlemen Tribute
 MasterShield Corporation
 6683 Vista Heights Road
 Bridgewater, VA 22812
 ©2006
www.mastershioldrecords.com

Song list: Redwood Hill, The Secret of the Waterfall, Remembrance of You, East Virginia Blues, Son of Hickory Holler's Tramp, I'll Break Out Again Tonight, Little Bessie, The Young Fisherwoman, Walking Down The Line, Heaven, Two Little Boys, Blue Ridge Mountains Turning Green.

(CD Picture unavailable.)

For many fans, the voice of Charlie Waller was the Country Gentlemen, but many other artists have been part of the band over the years. Bill Yates was the bass player for 18 years and is the sixth member of the band to be inducted into SPBGMA's Preservation Hall Of Greats. The band's signature songs are presented here by Bill and 6 outstanding bluegrass musicians: Mike Phipps whose lead vocals soar and echo Charlie's, Bill with his amazing vocal range that can sing bass, tenor, lead and baritone parts, Darren Beachley on vocals and guitar, Dave Propst on mandolin and vocals, Kevin Mallow on fiddle, Dave MacGlashan on bass and Scott Walker on banjo. It's a fine tuned ensemble with carefully blended banjo from Scott, and rhythm guitar punctuated by Dave's crisp mandolin and the steady bass of Dave MacGlashan.

The Country Gentlemen were the first of the "progressive" bluegrass groups, and

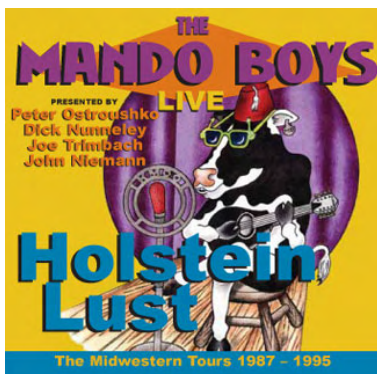
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the band adapted many songs with rock, folk and country roots and transformed them into bluegrass classics. Bob Dylan's "Walking Down The Line" has bouncy banjo and that marvelous vocal interplay between the lead vocal and the response chorus that soars in perfect harmony. "Heaven" is the ultimate gospel song with glorious harmonies and the soaring tenor that touches the tops of the clouds. "Redwood Hill" is a Gordon Lightfoot song that the group has transformed with aggressive vocals and powerful banjo and mandolin interchanges. While some "tribute albums" are pale imitations of the real thing, this album succeeds in capturing the sound and soul of one of bluegrass music's greatest bands – the Country Gentlemen.

The Mando Boys: Holstein Lust
Borderland Productions
PO Box 11952
Minneapolis, MN 55411
www.peterostroushko.com
c.2006

Song list: Russian Rag, Scott Joplin's New Rag, Ester Iris, The Hills of Manchuria, Lady Be Good, Bach's Double Violin Concerto Dm, Roanoke/Wheel Hoss/Big Mon, Ukrainian Medley, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, Hernando's Hideaway, Pineapple Rag, Air Mail Special, La Bamba.



The Mando Boys were a band of four outstanding musicians who donned outrageous clothes and irrepressible humor and played marvelous melodies on an assortment of mandolins and fiddles. Peter Ostroushko (mandolin, mandola, fiddle),

Dick Nunneley (mandolin, mandola, guitar), Joe Trimbach (mandolin, mandola, fiddle), and John Niemann (mandocello, fiddle) became Maxim, Habib, Maurice and Sonny and their joyful romp through unrestrained humor and melodies is captured here in live recordings.

Humor aside, the mandolin performances are spectacular. There are several classical pieces including Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik and a Bach concerto and fugue. Traditional Ukrainian melodies fly by with the Russian "The Hills of Manchuria." There is even a tribute to Bill Monroe with a medley of his Roanoke, Wheel Hoss and Big Mon. You haven't heard "Hernando's Hideaway" until you listen to the version here, but that is topped by the enthusiastic "La Bamba." A great high-stepping collection of tunes designed to delight mandolin lovers everywhere!

Various Artists: The Arkansas Traveler – Music From Little House On The Prairie
Pa's Fiddle Recordings
PO Box 40269
Nashville, TN 37204
c.2006
www.pasfiddle.com

Song list: Battle Cry of Freedom, Old Dan Tucker, The Gum Tree Canoe, Money Musk, Green Grows the Laurel, Daisy Deane, Irish Washerwoman, Roll On Silver Moon, The Blue Juniata, Dixie's Land, Happy Land, The Monkey's Wedding, The Devil's Dream, Oh California, The Gypsy King, Bye Baby Bunting, The Arkansas Traveler, in the pot.



Songs and fiddle tunes were mentioned throughout the Little House on the Prairie

book series, and Dale Cockrell and Butch Baldassari, musicians and teachers in Nashville have gathered fellow musicians and children to perform the songs so that the "unheard music" can be played and enjoyed. Schools should be particularly interested in the series and students studying the American frontier period should experience the music of the times – before MTV and ipods! The 126 songs in the books included parlor songs popular in the day, stage and show songs, patriotic songs from the Civil War, hymns and spirituals, fiddle tunes and play party songs.

Several well-known musicians perform on the project. Mac Wiseman sings "The Monkey's Wedding," which is a nonsensical song based on the Drunken Sailor melody. John Cowan sings a stirring "Battle Cry of Freedom" which inspired the Union Army during the Civil War. The Riders in the Sky sing and play a meandering "Arkansas Traveler" complete with farmer jokes and feisty fiddle. Butch Baldassari on mandolin, Mike Bub on bass, Matt Combs on fiddle, Bob Carlin on banjo and Pat Enright on guitar perform many of the instrumentals including "Irish Washerwoman" and "Money Musk." The hymn "Happy Land" was mentioned many times in the books and the joyous rendition on the album is with the Peggy Duncan Singers.

Rootbound
Henry Koretzky
5609 River Road, 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17110
www.rootboundmusic.com

Song selection: Oh My Little Darling, Dark End of the Street, Are You Lonesome Tonight, There's A Mailbox on the Dark Side of the Moon, I'll Never Grow Tired of You, Fistful of Rain, How Much He Cares, Willie's Last Stand, Brazos River Song, Memories That Bless and Burn, Mining Camp Blues, I wonder Where You Are Tonight, Thousands of Ladies Are Crying, If I Should Fall Behind, Banjo Picking Girl.

Henry Koretzky and Deb Kaufman are a Pennsylvania-based duo who sing and play

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in the carefully choreographed style of the Louvin Brothers. Their mandolin and guitar-playing blend as effortlessly as their



voices, and like the figure skaters that glide across the ice in perfect tandem, this musical pair joins in a note for note glide that makes each song special.

The traditional songs include "Are You Lonesome Tonight" from the Carter Family and "I'll Never Grow Tired of You" from the singing of Carter Stanley. Henry and Deb have a particularly effective vocal harmony ending to "Are You Lonesome Tonight." Ginny Hawker has been one of Deb's mentors and her influence is strong in Deb's vocal interpretation of "I'll Never Grow Tired of You."

Warren Zevon and Bruce Springsteen are definitely not traditional song writers, but Deb and Henry transform Warren's "Fistful of Rain" with a strong bass guitar line and a fast paced mandolin chop, tremolo and lead break. Springsteen's love song "If I Should Fall Behind" has a wonderful guitar accompaniment that wraps itself around the voices. Suzanne Thomas' "Memories That Bless and Burn" is a powerful hymn to a life in the hereafter and the powerful singing of Rootbound makes this song one of the most heartfelt on the album. Deb and Henry have also included some of their own original songs. Henry's "Willie's Last Night" is a twist on the old murder ballads and in this song Willie gets his comeuppance. "Thousands of Ladies Are Crying" is Deb's tale of the soldiers who died at the battle of Gettysburg. Rootbound succeeds in giving life to songs from the roots of old-time and country music and carefully grafts its own branches with their own songs and tunes crafted from other genres.

Monroe Crossing: Into The Fire
17625 Argon ST NW
Ramsey, MN 55303
C2006
www.monroecrossing.com

Song list: Into The Fire, The Touch of God's Hand, Just A Closer Walk With Thee, One Life, A Mother's Last Word to Her Daughter, The Old Cross Road, Oak Grove Church, He Did Rise, Orphan Girl, Satan's Jeweled Crown, Who's That Knocking At My Door, Standing in the Need of Prayer, The Far Side Banks of Jordan, Shut Up in the Mines at Coal Creek, Get Thee Behind Me.



Monroe Crossing is a Minnesota based band, and is often called the "Midwest's Premier Bluegrass and Gospel Quintet." This 7th CD certainly shows that the title is well deserved. They will also be performing at the 2007 Grass Valley Festival, so California fans new and old will be able to cheer on this great band.

Obviously named after Bill Monroe, the band has strong roots in the traditional bluegrass sound. The vocals and lead guitar of Art Blackburn and the powerful fiddle and lead vocals of Lisa Fuglie combine with Matt Thompson's crystal clear mandolin playing to produce a band sound that is powerful, heartfelt and totally satisfying. Rounding out the band are Mark Anderson on bass and bass vocals and Jason Ericsson on banjo. (The superb guitar and mandolin playing may be as much a tribute to luthier Lloyd LaPlant as to Matt and Art's skills)

"Into The Fire" opens the album and Lisa Fuglie's original song has a slow mandolin opening joined with a powerful gui-

tar and banjo rhythm as the song builds with blended vocals to retell the story of Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego. Fiddle and banjo dance a counterpoint to Lisa's solo vocal and Matt's mandolin just shimmers. Mark Anderson wrote "He Did Rise," a joyous song with four part harmonies and lots of scintillating mandolin.

The remaining other 13 songs are from other sources including Gillian Welch's popular "Orphan Girl" that Lisa fills with the heartfelt emotion that doesn't always come out in other versions. Lisa also does the lead vocal in the classic "Just A Closer Walk With Thee." Ronnie Bowman's "One Life" is an inspiring message of giving love and not hate. Bill Monroe's "The Old Cross Road" is the nod at the band's namesake and the band puts a special spin on their version with a strong mandolin rhythm punctuated with bass tapping. The band recorded the songs "live" on a Decca tree mike set-up and the resulting sound has all the excitement of a live performance and the energy of a band playing in its groove.

Blue Railroad Train: Going Back to the Riverside
Redstart Records
©2006
contact@bluerailroadtrain.com

Song list: Fast Train to Paris, Bound to Ride, Blue Trail of Sorrow, Riding My Thumb to Mexico, Je resterai un jour (I Will Stay Someday), Good Deal Lucille, Douce Katie (Katy Dear), It Doesn't Matter Any More, Turkey in the Strawberries, Sittin' in an All-Nite Café, The Honky Tonk Song, I'm Going Back to the Riverside, Mole in the Ground, Big Mamou, Slow Train to Dunmore.

(CD Picture not available.)

Take an American bluegrass veteran of the Charles River Valley Boys and the New York City Ramblers (one of David Grisman's first bands) and add 4 French musicians, and you have a bistro bluegrass blend with carefully blended harmonies, straight-ahead bluegrass instrumentation and a Gallic charm that has made this

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group one of the top European bands at the European World of Bluegrass festivals.

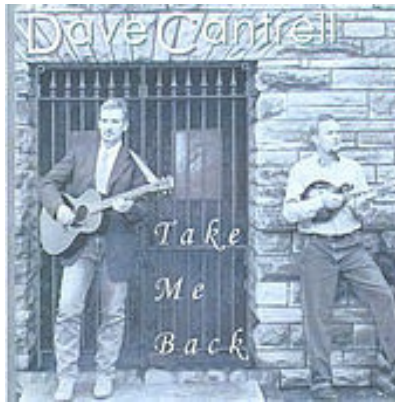
James Field is the lead vocalist and guitar player that fronts the band. His bluegrass background and love for old country songs gives the group an eclectic song selection that includes Ralph Stanley's "Bound to Ride" and the delightful Johnny Rodriguez tune, "Riding My Thumb to Mexico." Philippe Perrard is a prize winning guitarist, Thierry Lecocoq plays both fiddle and mandolin with exquisite taste and writes many of the group's songs. Sharon Lombardi plays bass and Jean-Marie Redon adds the hard-driving banjo to the group's sound.

The haunting "Douce Katie" (Katy Dear) has Sharon's lyrics and lead vocal. There's smooth harmonies in Thierry's "Fast Train to Paris" and sparkling mandolin combined with crisp banjo in all the instrumentals. The group does a great swing-jazz "Turkey in the Strawberries." Even Paul Anka's "It Doesn't Matter Anymore" gets a Eurograss treatment. Even the allure of the country gets a French twist. Thierry's "I'm Going Back to the Riverside" yearns for the "valley of the Rhone with a cottage made of stone." All the stops are off in the band's performance of "Big Mamou" complete with fast fiddling, sparkling banjo and a few well-chosen hoots and hollers in French. Definitely a special listening experience.

Dave Cantrell: Take Me Back
2014 Shiloh Church Road
Seymour, TN 37865
davecantrell@bellsouth.net
c. 2004

Song list: Young Like You Again, House of Gold, Aragon Mill, They Don't Make Country Music Like They Used To, You'll Never Leave Harlan Alive, Year of 35, How Mountain Girls Can Love, You Don't Know, Kentucky Waltz, Go Rest High on That Mountain, Faraway Land, Peace in the Valley.

Dave Cantrell was hailed as "prime example of musical artistry" in Bluegrass



Unlimited, and this CD gives Dave and Steve Ison an opportunity to display their excellent instrumental skills and their brother duet harmonies. The guitar and mandolin have a very strong presence with the punctuating notes of the mandolin blending well with the rhythm guitar. "They Don't Make Country Music Like They Used To" is one of Dave's original songs, and the guitar picking and lyrics evoke the early country sound of '52 before "Garth and that whole bunch come along." Dave's lyrical tenor shines on "You'll Never Leave Harlan Alive," and his voice has a layer of heartbreak on "You Don't Know," another Cantrell original. Steve and Dave have that duet high lonesome sound mastered on the gospel song "Go Rest High on That Mountain," and they add a Celtic flavor to Dave's gospel song, "Faraway Land." Dave and Steve have an excellent core sound and future projects with a full band and more intense harmonies could be the beginning of a fine bluegrass band. ❖

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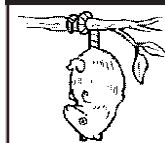
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TAIL END



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