

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

July/August 1984

Volume 10, Number 4



Perhaps the title of this picture could be: "They came in every type of vehicle to the 9th Annual Summer Grass Valley Bluegrass

Festival." They did come - almost 6,000 attended the festival and pictures and words convey a little of the color and fun of it all.

California Bluegrass Association

Bluegrass Breakdown is published bimonthly at 735 College Street, Woodland, California, 95695 by the California Bluegrass Association. The CBA is a non-profit organization founded in 1975 and is dedicated to the furtherance of Bluegrass, Old Time, and Gospel music. Membership in the CBA costs \$10.00 a year and includes a subscription to the *Bluegrass Breakdown*. A spouse's membership may be added for an additional \$2.50 and children between 16 and 18 years for an additional \$2.50. All children under the age of 16 may be included for an additional \$1.00 total. Band memberships are available to bands with three or more people for \$5.00 per band member. Subscriptions to the *Bluegrass Breakdown* are available only to foreign locations. Make checks payable to California Bluegrass Association and mail along with the membership application located on the inside of the back cover to the address below. Second Class postage is paid in San Francisco, California and at additional mailing offices, *Bluegrass Breakdown* (USPS 315350). Postmaster, please send address changes to:

Bluegrass Breakdown
P.O. Box 11287
San Francisco, CA 94101-7287

Board meetings are usually held the second Sunday of each month and all members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Annual Election Set for Labor Day G.V. Festival

The annual elections meeting of the California Bluegrass Association has been moved by the Board to the Labor Day Festival at Grass Valley.

Ballots will be mailed to the membership prior to the festival and members can mail them in prior to the festival or bring them with them to the festival. As usual several prizes, including tickets to the 1985 June festival will be awarded in a drawing for those who have voted.

Unless otherwise notified, all members of the Board of Directors will be on the ballot. Others desiring to be on the ballot have to submit a petition to the Chairman of the Board, or P.O. Box 11287, San Francisco, CA 94101-7287. The petition must be signed by at least ten members of the Association.

While this is a departure from the traditional October meeting, the Board felt it would keep down expenses for the election by holding it at the festival.

Those petitioning to run must have their petitions in at least 25 days prior to August 31.

July Board Meeting

Next meeting of the Board of CBA will be July 8 at 1:30 p.m. at the office in Berkeley. A number of important items need to be discussed, including a new long-term contract with the Fairgrounds.

Thanks

Thanks for helping on this issue to Suzanne M. Reynolds and Glenn Christensen for the Grass Valley review, Glenn and Robbie Macdonald for record reviews, Ken Donnell for his column, and Melissa and Anne Powell for helping me get it mailed.

Deadlines

Deadline for stories for the September/October issue of the *Breakdown* will be on Monday, August 20, 1984, with a mailing date of September 6, 1984. If you have events for the Special Events listing, please get them in and list events that will happen through December. All advertising needs to be in by this date also.

Board of Directors/Officers of CBA

Esther Anderson
Membership Vice President
2025 Clement St., Apt. 3
San Francisco, CA 94121
(415) 221-3183

Diana Deininger
Secretary
735 Hacienda Avenue
Campbell, CA 95008
(408) 379-5056

***Ray Edlund**
Chairman of the Board
33501 S. Hwy 1
Gualala, CA 95445
(707) 884-3195

***Mike Johnson, Treasurer**
9025 Alcosta Blvd., #233
San Ramon, CA 94583
(415) 828-1389

***Bob Lawrence**
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1624 Candace Way
Los Altos, CA 94022
(415) 962-8341

***Carl Pagter, President**
Legal Advisor
1809 Meadow Lane
Walnut Creek, CA 94595
(415) 938-4221

***Don Powell**
Breakdown Editor
735 College Street
Woodland, CA 95695
(916) 662-2906; 662-2041

***Kathleen Schoggins**
39936 Michelle Street
Fremont, CA 94538
(415) 656-6156

***Kathy Tyler**
Vice-Chairman of the Board
P.O. Box 9317
Stockton, CA 95208
(209) 478-8106

***Fred Volz**
Publicity Chairman
8215 Colonial Drive
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(209) 473-3212

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Oakland, CA 94610
(415) 763-2580

*** Indicates a member of the
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Special Events

July 7 - 3rd Annual Sierra Nevada Old Time Fiddling Championship, Plumas County Fairgrounds, Quincy, CA. Admission - \$4, Seniors and under 18 - \$2. Info: Johnny McDonald, P.O. Box 3459, Quincy, CA 95971. Message phone (916) 283-1870.

July 21-22 - Yankee Bluegrass Family Festival at the Sante Fe Dam Recreation Area, Irwindale. Featuring Seldom Scene, Yankee Bluegrass, and others. Overnight camping in rough. National Tug-O-War championships. Plenty of activities and music (See advertisement in this issue).

July 22 - Dave Van Ronk at the Julia Morgan Theater 2640 College Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704. \$7 in advance, \$8 at door. Mail order accepted but send SASE. Info: (415) 548-7234.

July 22 - Long Beach Veteran's Stadium, Country Bluegrass Festival, 10 a.m. - 6:30 p.m., featuring Ray Park & The Rangers, Wild Oats, and others. Info: World of Strings, 1738 E. 7th St., Long Beach, (213) 599-3913 Advance - \$6, At gate - \$7. Seniors over 65 and Children under 10 with adult - free.

July 29 - Bluegrass At The Lighthouse, Gryphon Quintet and Heartland in a benefit for the Montara Lighthouse Hostel, 1-4 p.m., \$5 at the Gate, 16th and Highway 1 in Montara. Info: 726-6442

Change in volunteer entry for Labor Day Festival

A number of CBA members have volunteered to help with the festival in recent years. In June over 200 people volunteered, were given the right to come up early to camp and were given free tickets. Unfortunately, only 37 ever showed up to help in any capacity.

This did two things: It unfairly deprived the CBA of close to \$3,000 in revenue and 2) it unfairly deprived others of campsites taken by the early, non-workers.

Because of this problem, and to make it possible to continue to have the volunteer program, which helps the CBA operate the gates and get the work done, we are asking that anyone volunteering purchase a member ticket, call Don Powell at (916) 662-2041 or 662-5691 or Mike Johnson at (415) 828-1389 to offer your service and then sign-in at Grass Valley and work 6 hours. Upon working the six hours, the ticket will be refunded. Also the individual will be able to enter the grounds early just as before, but if they do not work, they will be asked to leave at 4 p.m. Thursday and re-enter with the regular crowd.

The directors did not want to do this, but a number

Aug. 11 - 5th Annual Mountain Music Festival at Coulterville, CA. 12 noon to 9 p.m. at Coulterville Community Park, corner Highways 49 and 132. Adults - \$3, children 12 and under - free. Info: (209) 878-3418.

Aug. 24-25-26 - Carson City, Nevada, Western Division Old-Time Fiddler's Contest, Mills Park. NOTFA sanctioned and certified. Nine divisions, \$6,000 in prize fund. Info: (800) 492-4774 or (702) 882-1565.

Aug. 31 - Norman Blake and The Rising Fawn String Ensemble at the Julia Morgan Theater, 2640 College Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704. \$5 advance, \$7 at door or available through BASS. Mail order accepted with SASE. Info: (415) 548-7234.

Aug. 31 - Sept. 1-2 - Grass Valley Labor Day Bluegrass Festival, Nevada County Fairgrounds. A tremendous way to end the summer - under the pines at Grass Valley listening to Country Gazette, High Country, Good Ol' Persons, 8th Avenue String Band and others, PLUS the fabulous Rose Maddox. Tickets are now available and will be available at the June festival.

October 27-28 - Fall Porterville Bluegrass Festival, Chuck's Hidden Lake, featuring Sherbrook Family, Newgrass, and others. Sat. \$6., Sun. \$5. Advance 2-day - \$10. Children 12 years and under and 65 and over - free. Info and tickets: Jack Ramsey, 2089 N. Spruce, Exeter, CA 93221.

New attraction in Nashville

The newest tourist attraction in Nashville is The Bill Monroe Bluegrass Hall of Fame and Museum. Recently opened, the attraction contains a Bill Monroe Room, Bluegrass Boys Wall, Hall of Fame Room, Country Music Stars Room, Walkway of Bluegrass Songs, and the site for the statue to honor Bill Monroe.

Grant Street plays with symphony

Although not the first bluegrass group to play with a symphony, Grant Street String Band was the first California group to do so.

On June 2 they played with the Napa Valley Symphony at the Robert Mondavi Winery in Oakville. The results were so impressive that officials in charge of the program are thinking about making a bluegrass with the symphony an annual event in their Wine Country Pops series.

have somewhat ruined it for those who work and enjoy helping at the festivals.

1984 Grass Valley BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

Sponsored by the California Bluegrass Association

Aug. 31, Sept. 1-2
Nevada County Fairgrounds
Grass Valley, California

Enjoy great bluegrass music, workshops, camping, clinics, food and music related concessions at the most beautiful fairgrounds in California

and Featuring:



Country Gazette



Rose Maddox

and

- ★ Bluegrass Monarchs ★ Heartland ★
- ★ High Country ★ Done Gone ★
- ★ Eighth Avenue String Band ★ Good
- Ol' Persons ★ Gryphon Quintet ★
- ★ Sidesaddle ★ Arkansas Shieks ★
- ★ Foggy Mountain Cloggers ★

TICKET INFORMATION

General Public Adult tickets and ALL single day tickets are sold at:



Charge by Phone
(415) 893-2277
(408) 998-2277
(916) 369-2277

TICKETRON® TELE-TRON®
(415) 974-6391



	Friday only	Saturday only	Sunday only	Friday & Sat.	Saturday & Sun	3-Day at gate	3-Day advance
CBA member adult	\$8.00	\$12.00	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$22.00	\$30.00	\$18.00
General Public Adult	\$8.00	\$12.00	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$22.00	\$30.00	\$23.00
Under 12	*****FREE*****						

✓ NOTE THAT DISCOUNTS ARE AVAILABLE ONLY ON 3-DAY ADVANCE TICKETS. ✓
Tickets also available at San Francisco and Berkeley Fifth String Stores

Mike Johnson, 9025 Alcosta Blvd., #233, San Ramon, CA 94583 (415) 828-1389
Kathy Tyler, P.O. Box 9317, Stockton, CA 95208, (209) 478-8106

CBA members buying 3-day tickets and CBA member seniors (over 65) and juniors (under 12) should order tickets from address above. Make check or money order to California Bluegrass Association. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. No tickets will be held at the gate. (Members may buy same number of adult tickets as there are adult [12 years of age or over] on their membership card at the office.

Deadline for mail order tickets is one week prior to festival

No Dogs Will Be Permitted at the Festival

Advance Tickets: Limited Tickets available

CAMPING: Camping in the rough; there is no additional charge for camping DURING the festival. Camping area opens at 5 p.m. Thursday. Camping Thursday night is \$5, payable at the gate on entry. **THERE IS NO CAMPING SUNDAY NIGHT.**

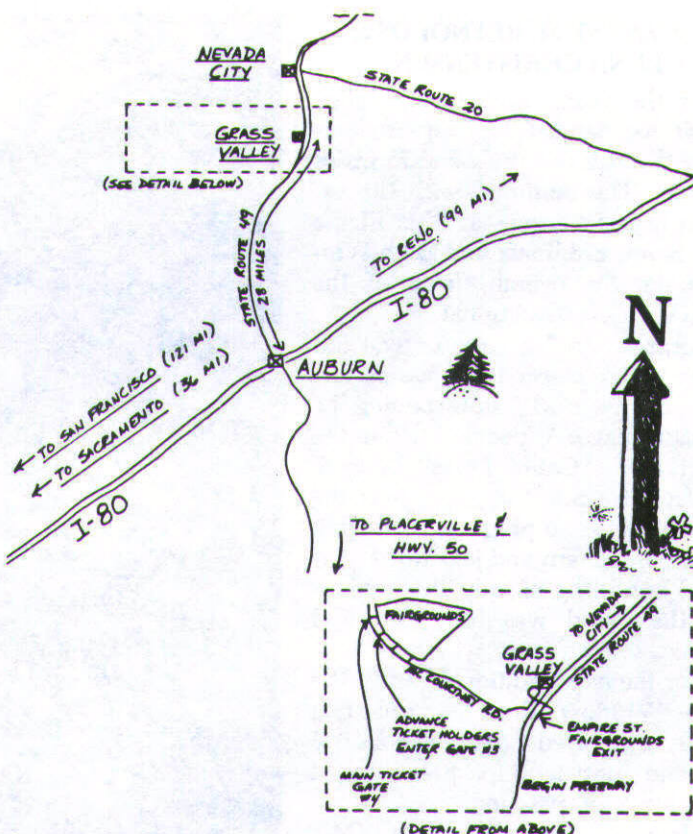
SEATING: On the ground. Bring blankets, lawn chairs, etc., if you wish.

FACILITIES: Rest rooms with sinks, showers, plus portable restrooms throughout the festival site. Hotels and motels throughout the area - **MAKE RESERVATIONS EARLY!!**

FOOD: There will be food concessions at the festival, or you may prepare your own meals. (NO OPEN CAMPFIRE! Off-the-ground campstoves or hibachi-type cooking only!) There are also a number of good eating places close by in Nevada City and Grass Valley.

For additional information:
Don Powell (H) 916-662-2041 or (W) 916-662-2906
Fred Volz 209-473-3212

Music begins at 5 p.m. on Friday and 10 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Music ends at 11:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 6 p.m. on Sunday.



(DETAIL FROM ABOVE)
FOLLOW THE FAIRGROUNDS
AND BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL
SIGNS!



Paul Shelasky joins the Sally Mountain Show for some fine twin fiddle playing with Rhonda on Sunday.

Music, food, friends, pickin' - Grass Valley

by SUZANNE M. REYNOLDS &
GLENN CHRISTENSEN

Over the years, each Grass Valley Festival has tended to lean predominantly towards one of several forms of bluegrass. This summer, with the exception of such groups as **Blue Flame String Band**, **Fiddlestix** and **High Window Boys**, the overall flavor of the festival was quite traditional.

"**Bluegrass One**" got the festival underway with a classic bluegrass performance, complete with suits echoing the east coast image. As people filled in the concert area, "**Cabin Fever**", a local band from Nevada City, took over the stage with a varied program, including the Kazoo, western and jazz tunes. For a band consisting of only three members, the sound was full, rich and dynamic.

As for the non-traditional bands, the "**High Window Boys**", from Los Angeles, displayed great control of voice and musicianship, presenting a solid contemporary sound.

"**Fiddlestix**", from Columbia, CA., was probably one of the most innovative and uninhibited groups ever to



Fiddlestix, although hidden by mikes, was one of the most innovative groups playing at the June festival. They gave the audience some outlandish arrangements of old familiars.

appear on the Grass Valley stage. From straight bluegrass to jazz and obscure and original material, this band was extremely well-received, after capturing the audience with "The Beer Song". Incorporating the melody of "I've Been Everywhere" with their own original lyrics, Fiddlestix sang about beers that they had drunk rather than towns that they had visited.

This festival's headliners, the "**Sally Mountain Show**", brought a veritable stage show that ran the gamut of down-home music. Talented, professional and highly energetic, this group, hailing from the "Show-Me" state of Missouri, showed how a working family band can grow into a group of highly polished entertainers.

It was great to have "**Grant Street String Band**" and the "**Vern Williams Band**" back again, as they brought a well-rounded familiar traditional sound to the festival.

"**A Touch of Grass**" fans were treated to a tenth anniversary performance, (same four guys together for ten years), and had the pleasure of hearing this fine band wind up the festival. They received three encores which included not only a medley of standards, but also a fine jazz rendition of Paul Shelasky's "Rutabaga Boogie". All-in-all, it was a terrific line-up of enjoyable bands for the Ninth Annual Summer Festival.



(Above) A festival goer buys a shirt from the CBA booth. (Below) Members of the Foggy Mountain Cloggers begin another of their crowd pleasing clogging demonstrations.



Editor comments on Grass Valley and other things

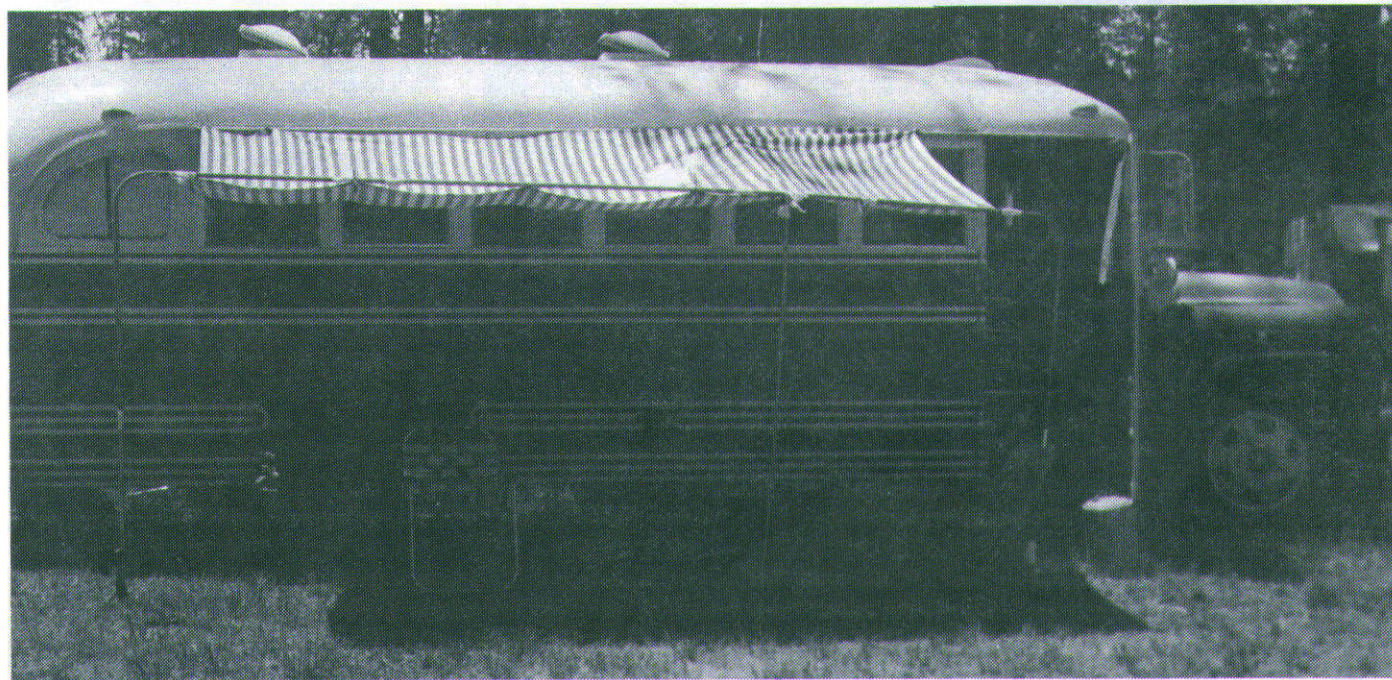
Some quick looks at the Summer Bluegrass Festival and other things....

The crowd approached 6,000, yet it was one of the mellowest festivals of recent years. This reflects the increased parking (rough, but a place to park), no turnaways (just creative methods of finding parking places), and a friendly, helpful attitude by all.

Variety was one of the words for transportation used to get to the festival. A young couple from Cool, headed for Bend, Oregon, arrived by covered wagon. Children, of all ages, flocked out to observe, talk to the couple, and pet the horses and a young foal. Was a touch of the past. Just like the teepee for camping put up by another group and a beautifully converted school bus being used by another couple. I did mean variety!

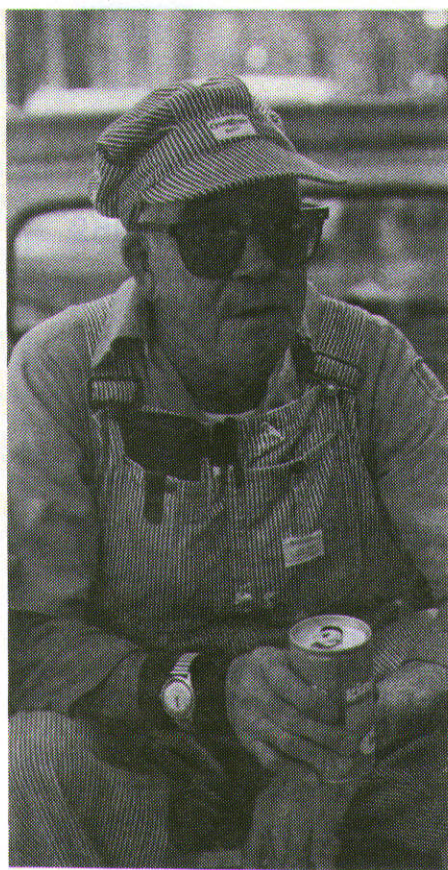
A special handicapped parking area was tried - worked fine until some non-handicapped types pitched tents in it. We will try again as we do have members who need to park at the audience area in order to listen to the music.

Fantastic twin fiddling during the Sunday Sally Mountain Show set, as Paul Shelasky teamed with Rhonda Vincent for some of the sweetest sounds heard. They really provided the





(Above) Country Ham and company
(Below) Bill White. (Opposite top)
Teepee living arrived. (Bottom)
And a remade bus!



audience with an outstanding example of bluegrass at its finest.

Speaking of finest - it was a thrill to hear the clear voice and sound of Vern Williams. His playing and singing always send a chill up my spine. His band always adds a touch of class and professionalism to Grass Valley.

Was great to see A Touch of Grass finally make it to the June show. They have always played the September show and it was about time they played June. They provided real audience thrills and the audience responded by asking for a number of encores.

Some of the best workshops ever held at Grass Valley. Dispersing the workshops all over the place helped and getting a new location on the terrace of the building above the parking lot was great.

Biggest line-up of concessions in Grass Valley history, with a greater variety of food and goods being sold. A real hole opened the day before the festival when the BBQ rib concession was forced to withdraw due to work commitments and equipment failures. A local Grass Valley person is looking at trying to fill the void - a butcher, he provided the Italian Bomber sandwich at the festival. The new ice cream wagon was the most popular place around. They literally drained the

Mother Lodge dry of ingredients for the ice cream and had to close early on Sunday. Midge Hobbs, and husband Charlie, and their crew did a fantastic job of getting the concessions area and audience areas ready.

Fiddlestix provided some of the fun highlights of the show with their antics on stage and their tight, structured music. A great group!

The Labor Day Festival is just ahead and the line-up gets better all the time. Just heard the tape from the June Country Gazette concert and they are superb musicians - you are in for a real treat. Talk about stage presence! Wow!

When you think - High Country and Good Ol' Persons on the same bill as well. Just listen to their dynamite new records to get an idea of what they will be doing at Grass Valley.....And then the flashing lights and driving sounds of Sidesaddle. These girls just get better and better with each performance. Also on the show are two outstanding bands - the 8th Avenue String Band from Chico with their great stage show and swing music - and the Arkansas Shieks and their world-wide ranging musical styles. They play almost everything - not just well - but exceptionally well. I always love their Irish and Scottish tunes, reminding me of some of the roots of the music we call old-time and bluegrass.



Concessions lines were long for the good food being produced. The Ice Cream Shop was a favorite.

MORE

Special Listings

July 7-8 - 9th Twain Harte Summer Festival, Twain Harte, Fiddletix, Possum Hollow. Free admission. Info: (209) 533-3473.

July 14 - Anderson River Park Bluegrass Festival, hosted by the 8th Avenue String Band. Contests for banjo, guitar, mandolin, fiddle (Beginning, intermediate and advanced). Bluegrass band contest - 1st place - \$300., 2nd - \$150. Anderson River Park, 10 miles south of Redding on I-5, camping available, Info: Anderson Recreation Dept., 1887 Howard St., Anderson, CA 96007 (916) 365-5447. Admission - \$3.00 for 13-adult. 6-12 and seniors - \$1.50 and children 5 and under - free.

Aug. 4 - 3rd Annual Hunters Valley Music Festival, Mariposa. 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Bluegrass, folk and blues from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., then country-rock and dancing until 11 p.m. Downwind, Fiddletix, Stoney Creek, Sierra Mt. Bluegrass. Located between Hornitos and Bear Valley off road J-16 about 3 miles west of Highway 49. Tickets - \$4. Kids under 15 free. Info: Emory Kile, 7945 Hunters Valley Road, Mariposa, CA 95338 (209) 376-2397.



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Repair Workshop: Fiddles

(Ken Donnell has been building and repairing stringed instruments for 11 years. His workshop is located at Marriott's Music, 392 Elm Avenue, Auburn, CA 95603, (916) 823-8404. Ken is also known as the "travelling luthier", having been the resident luthier at several California music festivals.)

by KEN DONNELL

Having written about fretted instruments for the past several articles, I now want to turn our attention to violins. There is a special place in my heart for these fine instruments and working on one that is 50, 100, maybe even 200 or more years old thrills me in a way I can't describe. While holding an old violin, I love to fantasize what its maker must have been thinking on the day it was first strung, while dreaming that my own creations may someday be looked upon with such loving eyes. To modern craftsmen, the old master violin makers are the saints of lutherie.

Most of the repair needs found in violins fall into three categories:

1. Glue failure
2. Cracks
3. Set-up (bridges, pegs, nut, tail-hanger, etc.)

One of the major reasons for the long life of violins is that they are designed and built with future repairs in mind. Most older instruments have been rebuilt several times, and many have received major design modifications. The key factor that allows this to occur is the glue. Unlike most modern instruments, violins are built and repaired almost exclusively with hide glue.

Hide glue is a gelatin that is derived from processing waste fish and animal parts, and is the oldest adhesive known to man. Traces of hide glue have been found in 3,000 year old Egyptian tombs. It has the unique quality of effecting a strong bond between two pieces of wood until it comes in contact with hot water, at which point the glue breaks down and the bond is released. Thus, with a hot knife and boiling water, trained hands can dissect an ailing instrument with minimal damage.

The major disadvantage of hide glue is that, being an organic substance,



micro-organisms can grow and feed on the glue until it is literally eaten away and the bond released. Anyone who has had a neck tear free from the body in the midst of a breakdown can testify to the fragility of hide glue. I recommend that all of the joints be regularly checked to avoid the warping, buzzes, and inconvenience of glue failure. When loose parts are found, they should be repaired as soon as possible.

Cracks can be caused either by impact damage, or by expansion and contraction of the wood due to humidity changes. The instrument in most susceptible to the latter during periods of intense low humidity. The best method to protect your violin is by placing a

humidifier in the instrument's case, or soundhole. The "Dampit" is the most effective model available. Cracks should be repaired as soon as possible, although minor cracks in in-accessible parts of the instrument are sometimes left until the top is removed for major repairs.

Set-up repairs are a lot like tuning up your car: they may not be necessary, but it makes the trip a lot more enjoyable. A properly adjusted violin not only looks and plays better, it *sounds* better. Even subtle manipulations of the bridge, soundpost, or tailpiece can radically alter the sound of your instrument. Inexperienced players often trade or sell a valuable, but poor sounding violin, only to be later amazed at the beauty of tone when the instrument is properly set-up.

In the coming issues of the *Bluegrass Breakdown*, I'll offer more specific information about accomplishing these repairs. I'll also be offering a special workshop on fiddle repairs at the Labor Day Grass Valley Festival, and encourage you to bring your instruments and questions.

Until then.....HAPPY PLAYING.

I want to thank all of my friends, readers, and customers for being so patient with me during the previous year. Having had two music stores (where I had set up shop) go out of business, my schedules and locations have been erratic. But, I've now found a permanent home in Auburn at Marriott's Music, and look forward to serving you there. If anyone is interested in owning a small retail music store/workshop, my store in Nevada City (Manzanita Music) is for sale. You can contact me at (916) 265-9661 for more information.



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'Home to Me' High Country's finest to date



Side One: *Blues For Your Own; Battle Mountain; Love Is A Summer Rose; Home To Me; Nearer My God To Thee; Hard Times; Can't You Hear Me Calling.*
Side Two: *Say You Only Will Be Mine; Who's That Knocking At My Door; Big Hendy Grove; Footprints In The Snow; Heaven Here On Earth; Stay Away From Me; and A Lonesome Highway.*
 Swallow LP 2004.

The definition of bluegrass music has broadened considerably in the last twenty-five years. Peripheral fans might feel that the music encompasses everyone from Charlie Daniels to David Grisman and might even dismiss Bill Monroe or Ralph Stanley as out-of-date. Unfortunately, traditionalists like me feel that the original sounds have not been appreciably improved upon. A large percentage of new bands make their music conform to more popular styles and the emotionally-charged haunting music of the source bands is being transformed into an over-technical, homogenized kind of sub-species. It's not bad music but is isn't satisfying to those who crave the hard core yet elegant sounds of traditional bluegrass.

Admittedly, presenting vintage material that isn't simply mimicry is a difficult job. For the West Coast city-bred musician it can be difficult and frustrating to write creative country music. A lot of study and devotion is necessary - one must develop a deep attachment to the music, an attachment which seems to be relatively rare.

"Home To Me," High Country's new album is a fine example of how a

dedicated group of California musicians can become a force in the bluegrass music world. Led by the amazingly persistent and hard working Butch Waller, High Country has been together since the late sixties playing straightforward bluegrass music throughout the country. Surviving countless personnel changes, Butch has now gathered a talented, compatible bunch who've really done their homework; in a short time they've put together a fresh and interesting sound that still contains the essential components of good bluegrass music. In addition to mandolinist Butch Waller and long time (11 years) banjoist Larry Cohea, High Country currently consists of Jack Liederman on fiddle, Keith Little on guitar (and lead vocals) and Steve Pottier on bass (and lead guitar).

"Home To Me" represents a blossoming for High Country; this group has always tried to search out interesting material but, until this album were content to do other people's material. Eight of the fourteen cuts are band originals, one has been recorded once, one not at all. The album is much like a performance with a satisfying mix of tempos and arrangements. The album is recorded live: the rhythm and leads are recorded together. I think bluegrass sounds much better this way. The modern approach of recording rhythm and lead tracks separately seems to partially negate the spontaneity and interplay that is such an appealing part of the music. There is a bit of overdubbing here, but it is limited to an occasional harmony fiddle part. In an addition to the classic bluegrass format (banjo, fiddle, mandolin, guitar and bass) "Home To Me" offers some nice variations that really add to a listener's interest. Twin mandolin, twin fiddle and some excellent lead guitar are included on several cuts.

In my opinion, "Home To Me" is High Country's finest work to date:

- The band just sounds good. The overall tone is rich and powerful. All the musicians play with a firm hand that allows the instruments to sing out; this produces power without harshness. This power is a characteristic of all the traditional bands. When I finally got to see artists like Bill Monroe and Flatt

and Scruggs, I realized that they played with much greater volume than the bands I was used to. These musicians could get a musical tone while playing all out. This firmness of attack limits how many notes can be played but compensates by adding a feeling of excitement. Besides, the complexity of a bluegrass band comes from the interplay between the voices and instruments rather than from any individual contribution. High Country has learned the proper restraint so that their sound is clear, never frantic or muddy. Lack of good band tone and poor group dynamics is probably the most common failing in today's bluegrass bands - they often sound like they are flying without much of a rhythmic reference point.

- All of the original material is quite strong on this album but three vocals and two tunes are exceptional and stand a good chance of finding their way into the basic bluegrass repertoire. Butch's "Blues For Your Own" has a wonderfully catchy melody and is soulfully sung with Keith supplying the tenor. I find myself humming this tune constantly. Keith Little's talents seem to be endless. He's one of the country's premier banjo players, a top notch vocalist and rhythm guitarist, proficient on mandolin and fiddle and is proving to be quite a songwriter as well. His song (co-authored with Joseph F. Smith) "Love Is A Summer Rose" is as sweet a ballad as you're likely to hear. The pretty twin-guitar leads and Keith's warm vocal really complement the bitter-sweet sentiment of this song. Keith has also composed an instant classic in his gospel "Heaven Here On Earth." High Country sings it as a quartet with Jack Liederman supplying a rich rumbling bass part. Keith's lyrics have a nice humanistic message.

The two instrumentals are Butch's mandolin tunes, "Battle Mountain" and "Big Hendy Grove." Both are done with twin mandolins, Jack playing the harmony part, and both have good melodies with interesting structures. They're pure bluegrass but have their own unique sound. I find these tunes growing on me the way the harmony fiddling on Bill Monroe's "Bluegrass Instrumentals" did twenty years ago.

- Butch's mandolin playing deserves

special mention. He's one of the few young mandolinists who tries for the big sound that characterizes Bill Monroe's playing. Mandolins, with their short scale length and tightly wound strings tend to be shrill and trebly. Butch produces a full, almost bell-like tone from his instrument as well as a percussive effect that I like to hear in bluegrass mandolin. Be sure to catch his break on "Footprints In The Snow"; I don't think it could be played any better.

- I like Jack Liederman's "vocal-style" fiddling. This is the true bluegrass style with its long sustained notes and gutsy tone. Jack has a wonderful exuberance to his playing and just enough of an exciting raw quality to remind you of the fiddling on a lot of early bluegrass recordings.

- It's good to hear Steve Pottier featured on lead guitar on several cuts. Steve is easily one of the finest lead guitarists around, especially for bluegrass. In this age of histrionic, over-jazzed flatpickers, Steve has managed to capture the elegant imaginative rhythmic and tonal concepts of the great Clarence White. Clarence was one of the few lead guitarists who developed a style to fit instrumental and vocal bluegrass.

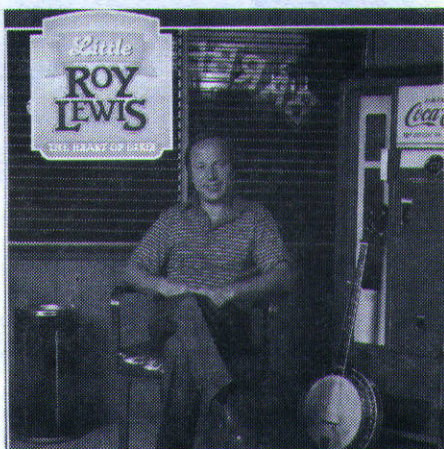
- The album is physically attractive. A well-composed cover photo by Gene Tortora is further enhanced by Beth Weil's hand tinting. I appreciated the well written informative liner notes by Sandy Rothman. I love to know about the musicians and enjoy getting some history behind the material. I feel cheated by albums that merely list the song titles with a few thank-yous thrown in.

- Finally, a comment from a fan's point of view. Butch and Larry were two of the first in person bluegrass musicians I saw. In early 1964, Butch's band "The Pine Valley Boys" knocked me out in a dismal little coffee house in San Jose. A few months later in Bakersfield I ran into Larry in a local hamburger joint. We had attended the same high school and I knew he played some banjo. He was toting his banjo (sans case) in the back seat of his '56 Chevy and came over to my house and played quite a while for me. I bought a banjo a few weeks later.

It gives me much pleasure to get to review a fine record of two old friends. High Country has really fought the war to get bluegrass accepted and I'm glad

to see that their music is better than ever.

by Robbie Macdonald



Little Roy Lewis "The Heart of Dixie" Canaan Records

Side One: Straight From The Heart (Of Dixieland); Homecoming; A Brand New Game; Preacher and The Bear; Bluegrass Medley; Dear Old Dixie, Pike County Breakdown, Bugle Call Rag, Foggy Mountain Breakdown. Side Two: Jordan's Over Yonder; Side By Side; I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover; Cain Lightning Goodtime; Heavenly Waltz in C Major.

Whenever you pick-up a Lewis Family record, whether the whole family, or, as this record is, one featuring Little Roy, you know you are in for good entertainment and fun. With the back-up of Jerry Douglas, 'Pig' Robbins, Jimmy Capps and Buddy Spicher, plus members of the Lewis Family, you know this will be pure entertainment.

As always when Little Roy comes out with a record, it is heavy on two main ingredients - gospel and instrumentals. Thank goodness. For these are the elements that no one does as well. His gospel songs "Homecoming", "Jordan's Over Yonder", "A Brand New Game", and "Side By Side" make you want to get up and join in with a few 'amens' and sing along with the lyrics.

No one holds a close position to the way Little Roy plays. Every song reflects his unique playing ability. The instrumentals, "I'm Looking Over A Four Leaf Clover", "Heavenly Waltz in C Major", and "Bluegrass medley" give all of the powerful sidemen and Little Roy a chance to put themselves in perfect

form. Each song is a joy to listen to and savor. Some of these are 'bluegrassed' for the first time.

Little Roy even includes a few 'fun' songs, as he always does. He is the entertainer no matter what. "Preacher and The Bear" is just such a number. It includes some outstanding dobro licks from Jerry Douglas.

I hope it won't be too long before we see The Lewis Family at Grass Valley. They brought the festival to its feet at every performance last June. Such a show we haven't had before or since. They were worth every cent and then some. Buy this record and lean back for some just pure bluegrass entertainment.

Don't Cheat In Our Home Town

Sugar Hill/Epic FE-38954

Side One: Don't Cheat In Our Home Town; Honey (Open That Door); A Wound Time Can't Erase; A Vision Of Mother, Uncle Pen. Side Two: I'm Head Over Heels In Love, Don't Step Over An Old Love; She's More To Be Pitied; Keep A Memory; and Children Go.

by GLENN CHRISTENSEN

Ricky Scaggs has been one of my favorite singers since I first discovered him with Ralph Stanley's group, and my interest in his music has grown over the years until I can confidently say I am one of his most enthusiastic fans. I have all his albums, and like them all--even this latest one. I'll probably raise some eyebrows now, but I have to say I am disappointed in this latest Scaggs record. It's not a BAD record, mind you--Sugar Hill does not DO bad records--I just happen to find the format a bit too loose.

To illustrate my point, look at (well, actually, listen to) the first two songs on side one: the title song sounds as if it is right out of "Sweet Temptations" (which is the Scaggs album that all others will be judged by)--a charming countrified bluegrass number. But the second song goes full circle: all the ingredients of what passes for country music in Nashville these days. You know what I mean...the heavy drums, the electric rock guitars. It's quite unsettling after such a beautiful opening number.

Side one continues after this discord with two very well done country and bluegrass type songs that are pleasing to those of us with more traditional ears. "Uncle Pen", the closing number on

side one, has been updated with drums and electric guitar and will cause Bill Monroe fans to run for the nearest exit, but I really hope this song gets air-play on country stations across the nation because it is a bluegrass song and even though it isn't done that way here, maybe them modern country radio listeners will like it and realize there's some real tradition behind what they are hearing.

Side two begins with Ricky singing in what can only be described as an "Elvis Presley echo" voice, and the whole song takes on a 1950's R&B sound--it's actually quite nicely done, and you might even forget that this was once a bluegrass song. The rest of side two gets down to the country sounds we all love--lots of fiddle; some banjo; sweet, delicious acoustic guitar and of course Rickey's incredible voice. The Whites, Dolly Parton and numerous other backup voices also appear on the album, giving it a fullness that helps make up for the overall unbalance of the album.

My feeling is that the producers of this album were trying to appeal to all country listeners (bluegrass, old country, Nashville country) and may have overreached. But whatever you tastes, buy the album and play the songs you like! They are all well done, and damn, you just can't beat the Ricky Scaggs sound!

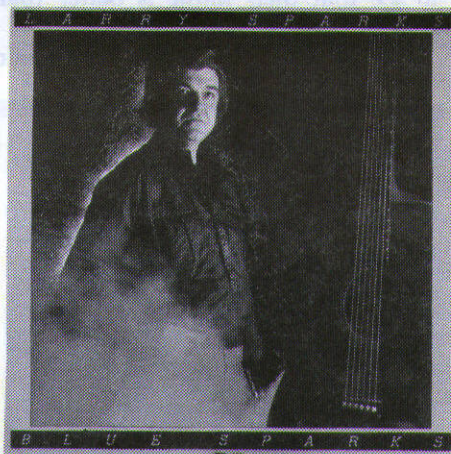


Larry Sparks

"The Testing Times"

(Rebel Records REB 1611)

Side One: He's Everything To Me; I Want To Die Easy, Lord; Mother How I Miss You; He Is Willing To Save Your Soul; Wandering Soul; The Testing Times. Side Two: Take My Hand; Great High Mountain; When My Time Comes To Go; Family Bible; Are You Washed In The Blood; I Am The Man, Thomas.



Larry Sparks

"Blue Sparks"

(Rebel Records REB 1618)

Side One: Come Back, Darling; I Ain't Holding On Any Longer; Shoe Goes On The Other Foot; On The Old Plantation; Lonesome Ride; Brown-Eyed Darling. Side Two: Imitation of The Blues; Doin' My Time; When My Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again; Walking On The Blue Ridge Mountains; Mommy, Please Stay Home With Me; Lonesome and Blue.

by **DON POWELL**

These two recent Larry Sparks releases are the type of albums that show off the outstanding abilities and style of a master of bluegrass.

Spark's style is a little removed from mainline, in that he has a tendency to put a blues tilt to his vocals and playing, but what vocals and playing he does. Crisp, sharp, clear, penetrating.

I first saw him on the Nashville Network's "Fire On The Mountain" show. His high, clear, penetrating voice put goose bumps on my spine. I then bought "The Testing Time" and was sent "Blue Sparks" to review. Both make you want to hear Sparks in person. Perhaps one day CBA will be able to have him in a concert in the Bay Area.

While "The Testing Time" is all-gospel, and has its ups and downs, probably because some parts are reissues and they don't quite mesh with his current works, "Blue Sparks" is bluegrass, powerful and driven. It literally is electrifying, just like the cover photograph. This album shows the fine work that Sparks is capable of. The instrumental "When My Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again" reflects the up-beat, driving sound of the album. Many songs feature good harmony and outstanding instrumental

breaks.

Overall, two albums that reflect the wide abilities of a bluegrass superstar - Larry Sparks.

Longer camping permitted at Labor Day Festival

With permission from the Fair Board, people who wish to stay over until 9 a.m. on Labor Day will be permitted to do so. The only stipulation is that you police up your areas and help with a couple of minutes of grounds pick-up. If you desire to stay, please call the festival coordinator, Don Powell at 662-2041 or 662;5691 and leave a message.

Coming in the next Bluegrass Breakdown

More of the fine reviews, including one on Jim Moss's new fiddle record, *Tanyards*. This record was selling fast at Grass Valley and is an outstanding first record. Also being reviewed is the new record by Country Ham, *Songs of Yesterday*.

Since the publication date for the Breakdown will be before the Labor Day Festival, the results of the election and the festival review will not appear until the November/December issue.

A new series of artist discographies and histories will begin with the next issue.

Bands should get tapes, etc., in to be considered for next year

Bands wanting to work at next year's Grass Valley festival and other CBA festivals, should send in tapes or update the ones on file to be considered by the band selection committee. They will decide on next year's bands in January.

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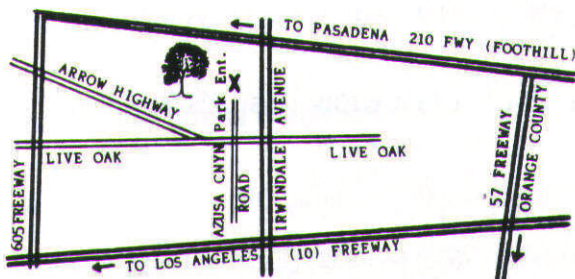
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Mondays - The Mother Lode, Cupertino

BLUE FLAME STRING BAND (415) 535-2432 [San Francisco]

BLUEGRASS MONARCHS (408) 372-1461 [Pacific Grove]
Fridays - Kalisa's, Cannery Row, Monterey

BLUEGRASS ONE (415) 364-6624 [Bay Area]
Tuesdays - Paul's Saloon, San Francisco

CHARLIE'S BAND (Sawplayer Charlie Blacklock) (415) 523-4649 [Alameda]

COUNTRY HAM (415) 938-4221 [Walnut Creek]

DR. CORN'S BLUEGRASS REMEDY (503) 645-0575 [Portland, OR]

8TH AVENUE STRING BAND (916) 872-8536 [Chico]
July 14 - Anderson Bluegrass Festival, Anderson
Aug. 31, Sept. 1-2 - Labor Day Grass Valley Festival

FIDDLE DUSTERS (707) 422-7838 [Fairfield]

FINGER PICKIN' GOOD (503) 474-2214 [Grants Pass, OR]

FOGGY MOUNTAIN CLOGGERS (415) 828-9016 [San Ramon]

GOLD RUSH (503) 266-5061 [Portland, OR]

GOOD 'N' COUNTRY (503) 686-9325 [Eugene, OR]

GOOD OL' PERSONS (415) 832-2176 [San Francisco]

Friday's at Red Vest Pizza Parlor, El Cerrito
July 10 - Country Palace, Concord
July 13-14, Vancouver Folk Festival, Vancouver, BC
July 17 - Julie's Kouzina, Monroe Center, Seattle, WA
July 19 - Concert at the "G" Note, Seattle, WA
July 20-22 - World Music Festival, Portland, OR
July 23-24 - Sonoma Co. Fair, Santa Rosa Fairgrounds
July 27-29 - Northern Rocky Folk Festival, Sun Valley, Idaho
Aug. 4-5 - Laguna Seca Bluegrass Festival, Monterrey
Aug. 11 - Paul's Saloon, 3251 Scott St., SF, 9:30-1:30
Aug. 12 - Country Palace, Concord with High Country

Aug. 31, Sept. 1-2 - Grass Valley Labor Day Bluegrass Festival, Grass Valley

GRANT STREET STRING BAND (415) 548-3021 [East Bay]

July 5 - The City Celebration, band shell, Golden Gate Park, SF, 1-3 p.m.
July 13-15 - Vancouver, British Columbia
July 19 - Paul's Saloon, 3251 Scott, SF
July 28-29 - Portland and Corvallis, Oregon

GRASS MENAGERIE (408) 358-1524 [San Jose]

HEARTLAND, (415) 935-9295 [Walnut Creek]
Saturdays - Carrousel Pizza, Concord
Sundays - Paul's Saloon, San Francisco

HIGH COUNTRY (415) 763-2580 [San Francisco]

When in town - Wednesdays and Fridays at Paul's Saloon
July 15 - Fireside Saloon, 31 Mariposa, Vallejo
July 18 - Jambalaya, Arcata, CA
July 19 - Peter Britt Festival, Jacksonville, OR
July 20-22 - Darrington Bluegrass Festival, Darrington, WA
July 24 - Buck's Bellingham, WA
July 25 - Square Dance at G-Note Tavern, Seattle, WA
July 26 - Show at G-Note Tavern, Seattle, WA
July 27-28 - Great Northern Bluegrass Festival, Cusick Washington
July 29 - Merchant's, Walla Walla, WA
Aug. 1 - Old World Center, Corvallis, OR
Aug. 2 (afternoon) Zoogross Concert, Portland Zoo, Portland, OR
Aug. 2 (Evening) East Avenue Tavern, Portland, OR
Aug. 3 - Murphy's, Seattle, WA
Aug. 4-5 - Coomb's Bluegrass Festival, Vancouver Island, BC, Canada
Aug 12 - Country Palace, Monument Blvd., Concord
Aug. 26 - Country Palace, Monument Blvd., Concord
Aug. 30 - California State Fair, Sacramento
Aug. 31, Sept. 1-2 - Grass Valley Labor Day Bluegrass Festival, Grass Valley

HIGH MOUNTAIN RAMBLERS (503) 779-2532 [Medford, OR]

July 18 - The Brewery, Grants Pass, OR
July 20 - Peter Britt Bluegrass Festival, Jacksonville, OR
July 26 - Western Barbecue, Southern Oregon State College, Ashland
July 28 - Bluegrass Festival, Stayton, OR
July 28 - The Dublin Pub, Portland 9 p.m.-1:30 a.m.
July 29 - Tigard Town and Country Days Festival, Tigard, OR, Cook Park

Aug. 3-4 - Clark College Bluegrass Festival, Vancouver Washington

Aug. 10 - Upper Rogue Festival, Shady Cove, OR

Aug. 11 - Medford Arts Festival, Medford

Aug. 17-18 - Klamath Bluegrass Festival, Klamath Falls, OR with Rose Maddox.

LOST HIGHWAY (714) 826-9928 [San Bernardino]

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SAWTOOTH MOUNTAIN BOYS (503) 838-4095 [Monmouth, OR]

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July 4 - Oak Meadow Park, Los Gatos
July 8 - Club Almaden, San Jose
July 19 - San Jose State University
July 27 - Garlic Festival, Gilroy
July 28 - St. James Park, San Jose
Aug. 4-6 - Laguna Seca Bluegrass Festival, Salinas
Aug. 11 - Down Under Saloon, San Jose
Aug. 12 - Club Almaden Bluegrass Festival, San Jose
Aug. 18-19 - Apple Festival, Santa Rosa
Aug. 31, Sept 1-2 - Grass Valley Labor Day Bluegrass Festival, Grass Valley, CA

SPRING MOUNTAIN HARMONY (209) 784-8268 [Porterville]

SUNNY SOUTH (503) 281-9901 [Portland, OR]

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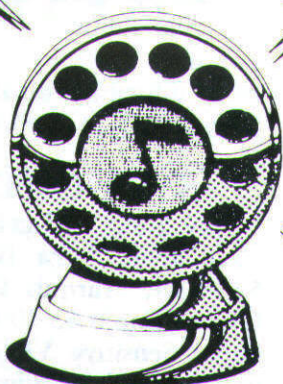
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Bluegrass Breakdown Editor
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Compiled by
Barbara Whitaker



If you know of any other radio shows on the west coast that would be of interest to our readers, please send as much information as possible--especially the name and address of the station--to:

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KNPR 89.5 FM
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Sundays, 2-5 p.m.: *The Bluegrass Express* hosted by Don Lanning, Tom Flagg, Marty Warburton and Butch Baldassari of the Southern Nevada Bluegrass Society.

KLOO 106 FM Phone: (503) 753-4493
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Sunday, 8:30-9: *Bluegrass Show*. They also play bluegrass in their regular format.

KQED 88.5 FM Phone: (415) 553-2129
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KUNR 88.7 FM Phone: (702) 784-6591
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Sundays 3-6 p.m.: *Home Brothers Radio Show*

KUSP 88.9 FM 90.3 translator Phone: (408) 476-2800
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