



A FOREVER RETURN

Photo by Samantha Muljat

MOLLY TUTTLE SET TO HEADLINE THE CBA FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL, A PLACE WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

by Lee Zimmerman

They say you can never go home again, but Molly Tuttle reckons to prove that wrong when she makes her return to the CBA Father's Day Festival, June 15-18. The 2023 Grammy Award-winner for Best Bluegrass Album first attended the festival at the age of 10, accompanied by her parents: musician and instructor Jack Tuttle, and her mother and music enthusiast Maureen Roddy.

The festival, every Father's Day week on the Nevada County Fairgrounds in Grass Valley, is one of the oldest and largest bluegrass festivals on the West coast. The 2023 gathering marks the 48th anniversary of the first event back in

1976 and is, as always, preceded by the four-day CBA Music Camp.

Molly first enrolled in the CBA Youth Program her first year at the festival, which, in turn, led to her making her debut appearance as a Father's Day Festival performer. "Molly and her dad released a CD, 'The Old Apple Tree,' in 2006, when Molly was 13, and she appeared on our main stage as a duo with her dad at about the same time," recalls Darby Brandli, the long-time head of the Youth Program, a past-president of CBA, an honorary CBA lifetime member, and current vice president of the CBA Youth Program. "I remember

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OUR ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE

by Pete Ludé, CBA Chair



A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

For many of us, the highlight of each summer is our annual journey to Grass Valley. For one week each year we're able to enjoy our favorite pastime of playing and listening to music with our friends under majestic ponderosa pines in the scenic Sierra foothills. CBA's annual summer Music Camp and Father's Day Bluegrass Festival are now just a few months away, so we're dedicating this issue of the Bluegrass Breakdown to preparing for a memorable 2023 event.

The 2023 Father's Day Festival marks the 48th anniversary of CBA's very first event, held in the same place back in 1976. This year we're featuring more than 30 bands on three stages over four days. You'll hear national touring bands, five featured California Showcase bands, and 17 favorite acts from around the state taking their spot on Vern's Stage. We're particularly excited to welcome back Molly Tuttle with her band Golden Highway, having just won this year's Grammy Award for Best Bluegrass Album. Molly started coming to the festival 20 years ago when she was just 10 years old, and was an active participant in the CBA Youth Program. Over the years she's

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FOR OUR NEW FESTIVAL DIRECTORS, FUN IS THE FAMILY BUSINESS

by Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow

You'll see two new faces on the campgrounds at Father's Day Bluegrass Festival this year. Well, not so new – they've actually been walking through the grounds now for months, busy making our dreams of a great festival into reality.

In June, you'll meet Matt Lawsky and Luna Oxenberg, our new 2023 Father's Day Festival Directors. Matt and Luna have been involved in event production for more than 25 years, from the bottom to the top.

Matt took a job as a truck loader at San



Luna Oxenberg



Matt Lawsky

Francisco's Warfield Theater when he first moved to the Bay Area. There, and later with Bill Graham Presents, he took on every job he could, getting hands-on experience in every aspect of concert production. He progressed to stagehand, then crew chief, stage manager, and

production manager. He also toured nationally with several different bands as a lighting designer, audio tech, production manager, and briefly, long-haul truck driver.

Luna also started at the Warfield Theater, substituting as a volunteer usher when a friend couldn't make it. She ended up loving the theater, and so worked her way up through most of the jobs there. She took jobs with other event companies, and eventually worked on almost every aspect of live events.

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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

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delighted Grass Valley audiences with her amazing skills and stage presence, but this is the first time we've been able to have her back as an internationally recognized star. Other main-stage acts this year include past-favorite Rhonda Vincent and the Rage, Blue Highway, Mile 12, Jake Blount, and many others. Something for everyone!

As longtime attendees know, there's a lot more going on than just the three stages of music. Like past years, we'll have a broad range of youth programs for the kids; more than a dozen free workshops from



CBA Chairman Pete Ludé. Photo by Robin Frenette

your favorite musicians; square dancing; arts and crafts merchandise for sale; luthiers; and a range of delicious food options from your favorite vendors. But probably the most notable part about the festival is the liveliest and best bluegrass and old-time jams west of the Rockies, which take over the campgrounds all-night long.

As always, the festival spans four days over the Father's Day weekend, June 15 through June 18. But immediately before the festival starts, CBA hosts our annual summer Music Camp – where students assemble for intensive workshops with world-renowned instructors, informal classes, and lots of camaraderie – starting Sunday, June 11. Many people come out to the Nevada County Fairgrounds for a whole week of focused bluegrass instruction, world-class entertainment, and a unique festival experience. Read more about all of these activities in this month's breakdown or visit us at www.californiabluegrass.org and click on "CBA Events." See you there!

Learn more, buy festival tickets, or register for music camp →



CBA LAUNCHES EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND FOR INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

by the Bluegrass Breakdown

We all know someone in the professional bluegrass music community impacted by hardship brought on by injury or illness. Thanks to generous donations, CBA is now proud to launch the Bluegrass Entertainer Artist Relief (BEAR) Fund to provide short-term financial help to qualified artists and music professionals impacted by unforeseen emergencies, and without the immediate resources necessary to meet those needs.

To be eligible for a CBA BEAR Fund grant, one must have been involved as a performing artist, songwriter, event promoter, luthier, or manager in "American folk music," including bluegrass and old-time, for at least five years; and derive at least 50% of their income from these activities. The fund accepts applications from people based throughout North America, but gives priority to those in California or with deep California roots.

"An emergency is a one-time, unexpected condition resulting from illness, a sudden medical event, or an accident requiring treatment to ensure your ability to get along day-to-day, and to carry out your

profession," Pete Ludé, CBA board chair, said.

Grants to individuals are selected by the BEAR Fund Committee, with all information kept strictly confidential, Ludé added; grants are awarded based objectively on eligibility and financial need alone.

Please visit the page linked to the QR code here to learn more, donate to the BEAR fund, or apply for an emergency grant.



BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

April 2023

The Bluegrass Breakdown is the monthly publication of the California Bluegrass Association since April 1975, keeping CBA members and the world of bluegrass up-to-date with coverage of CBA events, musicians, promotions, and volunteer opportunities. Each issue is published as both a printed and a digital newsletter and distributed to more than 7,500 readers around the world.

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NEW FESTIVAL DIRECTORS

cont'd from front page

Matt says that between the two of them, they have done every frontline job there is. "It's good because if someone doesn't show up, we can jump in. And when there's a job to do, we understand what you're asking a person to do."

Along the way, the two paths' crossed, and they married. In 2004 they decided to form a company, Taylor Street Productions, named after the location of the stage door at the Warfield Theater. Since then they have created events of all sizes, for many types of clients. You may have been to one. Their events include the Bay to Breakers Race (2014-2019), Alice Radio Summerthing (2005-2015), the Nike Women's Marathon - San Francisco (2005-2015), the Mountain Aire Festival (2010), and Country Music Television Festival in Toronto (2016). It was at their own Siesta Valley Strings & Things festival in Orinda where they met Pete Ludé, and learned about our need for a Father's Day Festival director.

Matt and Luna will be on-site for the festival. They will also be bringing their Volkswagen van, "Daisy" with them.



Matt & Luna with AJ and Scott Gates of AJ Lee & Blue Summit in 2022. Photo by Robin Frenette.

They've had it for 20 years, and the family likes to go camping around the North Coast in it. At the festival it will double as their mobile production office. The van is called "Daisy" because it once hauled a vanload of daisies to be handed out on stage.

Matt and Luna are especially excited about the CBA Kids Program because families and kids are very important to them. One of their daughters plays Irish fiddle and another plays the ukulele.

Please say hello to Matt, Luna, and their kids, Magnolia and River, at the festival. The kids will be jumping in and working

as stage hands and production assistants, learning the business just as their parents did. Look for the next generation to be helping to put on a Father's Day Festival in a few more years.



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County Sales is celebrating 50 years of serving you and the rest of the globe from Floyd, Virginia! For over half a century we have been your destination for new and classic bluegrass, old-time and traditional music. Now as a non-profit, we're excited for new projects like reissuing classic County Records LPs to start our next 50 years.

Drop by our newly revamped website and use the discount code **CBA15** at checkout for 15% off of your entire order throughout April 2023. We've got new releases, independent releases, new old stock vinyl and everything in between!



Looking for a worthy cause in bluegrass/old-time/traditional music? Check out our non-profit educational program, The Handmade Music School at handmademusicschool.com

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Molly, AJ Lee, and Angelica Grim in 2005. CBA File photo.



Frank Sullivan, Molly, and Angelica Grim, 2006. CBA file photo.



The Tutttles and AJ Lee. Photo courtesy of Jack Tuttle.

MOLLY TUTTLE

cont'd from front page

Molly singing mostly Hazel Dickens songs at that time. We showcased her amazing collaboration, The Tutttles with AJ Lee, at numerous events. That band, formed when Molly was about 15, was a definite springboard for their talents.”

Brandli said that they had originally discussed Molly’s return to the festival in 2022 to coincide with the release of her album “Crooked Tree,” but due to the fact that it was the event’s initial return following the shutdown due to Covid, it was decided that 2023 would be a more opportune time.

“Father’s Day Festival was the first music festival I ever went to with my dad,” Molly muses. “I was 10 years old and I had been playing guitar for a couple years. It was such a wonderful experience and I ended up going back to Grass Valley for many years to come, learning to jam, making lifelong friends, and seeing so many of my favorite bands on the stage.”

Molly’s mother echoes those sentiments. “From the start, Molly loved hearing her father play fiddle, banjo, guitar, or mandolin in our home every day,” she recalls. “Jack almost always had an instrument in hand when he had a free moment, and she seemed drawn to his playing. Even as a baby, she would stop crying when he played banjo. When she was three, she would repeatedly tell us ‘I want to play fiddle like daddy!’ She tried fiddle

and piano lessons at a young age, then fell in love with guitar. She later picked up banjo from hearing her father play.”

Jack Tuttle shares his own recollection of those early endeavors.

“I bought Molly a Baby Taylor guitar for her 8th birthday,” Jack Tuttle reflects. “My full-time job is as a bluegrass teacher, so I immediately started giving her lessons. For about a year, she was at a pretty normal progression, but once she realized she was getting the hang of things and gained more confidence, she became more involved with the music and I had to really step up the pace and level of things I was teaching her. I’d had some prodigy level students already, so I’d say I was more prepared for the experience as a teacher than I otherwise might have been. At the same time, my two younger sons were playing and progressing at an extremely fast level, so I was very busy teaching at my job and at home!”

According to Jack, that quickly developed into a professional partnership.

“At first, we did very low-key performances,” he explains. “Things like school fairs. By the time we were doing that, my sons had already become good enough to play with us, so it was a four piece: Sullivan on guitar, Michael on mandolin, Molly, and me on varying bluegrass instruments. I began teaching Molly bluegrass banjo, which to be honest, required very little instruction, so she added that into the performing



Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway.

Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway

at Father’s Day Festival

**Catch Molly Tuttle’s
Grammy Award
winning band at
9:40pm on Friday
and Saturday nights
on the Main Stage!**

“I wanted to write a song about where it all began for me so I ended up writing ‘Grass Valley’ about Father’s Day Festival”

- Molly Tuttle



Molly Tuttle, from “Crooked Tree” release. Photo by Samantha Muljat

mix. A bit later I brought in two other very talented kid students, and we played some low-key gigs with them. Finally, we started a band with our friend AJ Lee, who by then was about nine years old, and we called ourselves “The Tuttles with AJ Lee.” We played maybe eight times a year and kept it pretty low key. I wanted all of the kids to have a normal kid life, so we were pretty picky about what we’d do. We did end up flying in to some festivals and doing various nice concerts around California. Very fun times, and it got Molly and AJ some early national recognition, but without any major life disruptions.”

Fast forward to the present, and Brandli continues to laud praise on the young prodigy. “The CBA is known for its support of young people and Molly is one of the very successful participants from the CBA Youth Program. We are thrilled to showcase her immense talents. Molly

has never really left – she has come back to teach at our Music Camp, to just visit on trips home, or to show up at CBA events and showcases at IBMA’s World of Bluegrass. We have watched and applauded Molly’s rise every step of the way. We are so very proud of her.”

That said, it’s clear in retrospect that Molly Tuttle’s involvement with CBA made an emphatic imprint on her career, one that resonates even now.

“While writing my album ‘Crooked Tree,’ I was feeling so inspired by those early musical memories and the songs that I learned around the campsite at bluegrass jams back home,” she insists. “I wanted to write a song about where it all began for me so I ended up writing ‘Grass Valley’ about Father’s Day Festival. I’m so excited to return to Grass Valley this summer and headline the festival that I grew up at.”



Molly Tuttle. Photo by Samantha Muljat

FATHER’S DAY FESTIVAL MUSIC WORKSHOPS

by Steve Hogle, Father’s Day Festival Workshop Coordinator

We have set a high bar for the Father’s Day Festival workshops, and this year is shaping up to be no exception. Great presenters from the festival’s bands sharing their fine wisdom and experience, along with truly seasoned instructors will convene workshops from Thursday to Saturday during the lunch and dinner breaks.

Look for workshops on various instrument techniques, song repertoire, and jamming. Some presentations of note include Dave Magram’s banjo

workshops; the Kody Norris Band’s vocals workshop; Chris Carney on old-time fiddle; Davis Elsenbroich with a four-part harmony sacred harp workshop; Christine Wilhoite on warm-up exercises and physical therapy for musicians ... and last but not least, Greg Deering’s ever-popular workshop on banjo set-up. Many others are being scheduled, so check the festival program for details and locations of all the workshops – and see you there!



Photo by Patick Campbell

FATHER'S DAY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

MAIN STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 15

10:00 am Water Tower
 11:00 am Mile Twelve
 12:00 pm Jake Blount
 2:55 pm Rhonda Vincent & The Rage
 3:55 pm Music Camp All-Stars
 4:55 pm Seth Mulder & Midnight Run
 7:45 pm Jake Blount
 8:50 pm Seth Mulder & Midnight Run
 9:55 pm Rhonda Vincent & The Rage

FRIDAY, JUNE 16

10:00 am Clinton Davis String Band
 11:00 am Seth Mulder & Midnight Run
 12:00 pm Jake Blount
 2:55 pm Matt and George and their Pleasant Valley Boys
 3:55 pm Mile Twelve
 4:55 pm Kids on Bluegrass
 7:30 pm The Kody Norris Show
 8:35 pm Rhonda Vincent & The Rage
 9:40 pm Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway

SATURDAY, JUNE 17

10:00 am Hot October
 11:00 am Never Come Down
 12:00 pm The Kody Norris Show
 2:55 pm Allison de Groot & Tatiana Hargreaves
 3:55 pm East Nash Grass
 4:50 pm Lifetime Membership Awards
 5:00 pm Kids on Bluegrass Alumni
 7:30 pm Never Come Down
 8:35 pm Blue Highway
 9:40 pm Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway

SUNDAY, JUNE 18

10:00 am West 45
 11:00 am Blue Highway
 12:00 pm Allison de Groot & Tatiana Hargreaves
 2:00 pm Blue Highway
 3:00 pm East Nash Grass

PIONEER STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 15

12:55 pm Clinton Davis String Band
 5:50 pm Mile Twelve

FRIDAY, JUNE 16

12:55 pm The Kody Norris Show
 5:50 pm Water Tower

SATURDAY, JUNE 17

12:55 pm East Nash Grass
 1:55 pm Matt and George and their Pleasant Valley Boys
 3:00 pm Youth Academy Show
 5:50 pm West 45

SUNDAY, JUNE 18

12:55 pm Never Come Down
 1:55 pm Hot October

VERN'S STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 15

12:50 pm The Strung Nugget Gang
 1:35 pm The Dry Diggins Stringband
 2:20 pm Matt Michienzie Band
 6:10 pm The L.A. River Boys
 6:55 pm One Button Suit

FRIDAY, JUNE 16

12:50 pm The Angel City Bluegrass Boys
 1:35 pm Whole Hog
 2:20 pm Caltucky
 6:00 pm Dark Hollow
 6:45 pm Trouble Town

SATURDAY, JUNE 17

12:50 pm DeltaGrass
 1:35 pm Salty Sally
 2:20 pm Wilhoite and Sauber
 5:45 pm The Corn Lickers
 6:30 pm Crying Uncle Bluegrass Band

SUNDAY, JUNE 18

12:50 pm Birches Bend
 1:30 pm Marin County Breakdown



SQUARE DANCE!
7:00PM
FRIDAY & SATURDAY
WHITNEY PAVILLION
NEAR VERN'S STAGE

Audience at the Main Stage. Photo by John Woodworth.



by Jim Duber, Vern's Stage Entertainment Coordinator

In his report on the Vern's Stage inaugural year, David Zimmerman captured the motivations and experiences that lead to this unique stage, and every year since, at Father's Day Bluegrass Festival:

"The 2007 Father's Day Festival was the site for the first year of a side stage operated in conjunction with the beer and wine pavilion. In honor of the late Vern Williams, one of the fathers of California bluegrass, the area was called "Vern's." The idea was to give Vern's almost a pub or beer-garden type feel ...

My concept for identifying bands to play at Vern's was to look at the bands that seemed to be carrying on or, in some way, moving forward the idea of California bluegrass ... I wanted Vern's to be an opportunity to acknowledge some smaller bands that may not (or may!) be ready for the main stage, but are nonetheless out playing shows every week in small bars and venues, bringing the music to new audiences ..."

Over the years, the situation at Vern's Stage has changed, but only slightly. The audience area still has an intimate beer and wine garden feeling. However, there have been many notable additions and improvements along the way. In 2007, there were only six band slots available, and David ran sound using a mixer and PA system borrowed from his band, Homespun Rowdy. By 2009, Vern's Stage had clearly proven to be a success – and an integral part of the festival. The number of bands on Vern's shot up to 17 that year, and has pretty much remained there ever



Niko Quayle on Vern's Stage, 2022. Photo by Bob Free.

Vern's Stage awaiting the music at Father's Day Festival. Photo by John Woodworth.

since. That same year, Paul Knight and his team at Paul Knight Sound were brought on to engineer and run the sound system. David Thom sums up our assessment of Paul's work in an article he wrote for the August 2012 Bluegrass Today, saying: "Paul Knight is the best soundman on the West Coast, and maybe beyond."

For many years, band invitations required recommendations from CBA's area VPs. In 2017 or so, we were able to begin issuing open calls for bands to apply to perform. Submissions are still judged by a panel of well-qualified experts, all of whom volunteer their time and talents to help curate the lineups each year. And, of course, we're thrilled to see huge growth of both quantity and quality of submissions coming in from all around the state in recent years.

With that long story made short, on to this year's bands – and what a list it is! We've got a handful of returning favorites, including The Angel City Bluegrass Boys, Birches Bend, Crying Uncle Bluegrass Band, Dark Hollow, and One Button Suit – and a whole bunch of new ones. There's something for all tastes, and a solid slate of bands from start to finish: traditional and progressive bluegrass, old time, gospel, classic country, Western swing, and more. Even some traditionalists are astounded at how much they are looking forward to the progressive bands. They quite literally rock – and that can be a very good thing!

If you'd like to know a bit more about the bands on Vern's Stage, while counting down the days till the festival, just follow the QR code. You'll find a list of all the bands that have played Vern's Stage going back as far as 2009, and links to the web and social media pages for the 2023 bands to help you make sure you don't miss your favorite Vern's Stage acts.

Check out Vern's Stage lineup, and all the bands back to 2009!



FDF YOUTH ACTIVITIES



Darbi & kids at Vern's Stage. Photo by Alan Bond.

KidFest

Thursday - Saturday

Outdoor space dedicated to children's crafts. Best for our younger children 3-12, accompanied by a parent.. Located near the Main Stage, look for signs. Free.

Kids on Bluegrass

Thursday & Friday

A 35-year running, two-day performance activity – prepping for a show on the Main Stage! Kids under 18 who can play backup, know a few tunes, and can lead a song or tune are encouraged to audition Thursday morning. Free.

Youth Jams

Thursday & Friday

Lead by Tessa Schwartz and Friends; located at the Kids on Bluegrass site in the campground close to Gate 4. Free.

Youth Academy

Wednesday - Saturday

Four-day music camp for 8-16 year olds at Sugar Pine Lodge, directed by Della Mae's Kimber Ludiker. Kimber is a three-time National Fiddle Champion, and this year is joined by members of North Country Blue and CBA Youth Program graduates. Pre-registration required, limited to 50 people. Scholarships available.

Kids Lending Library Instruments

Pickup or return instruments from CBA's Darrell Johnston Kids Instrument Lending Library. A parent must be a current CBA member and arrange for pickup with our librarian before the festival. We encourage the child with the instrument to attend one of our festivals each year and check in with us to see if the instrument is still in good playing condition and is being used.

Kids Performances

Kids on Bluegrass

4:55 p.m. Friday - Main Stage

Youth Academy Graduation Performance

3:00 p.m. Saturday - Pioneer Stage

Kids on Bluegrass Alumni

5:00 p.m. Saturday - Main Stage



Kids tie dye at 2022 Festival. Photo by Alan Bond

CBA'S JAMMING PROS SHARE THEIR FAVORITE TIPS

by Jason Dilg, Bluegrass Breakdown Managing Editor

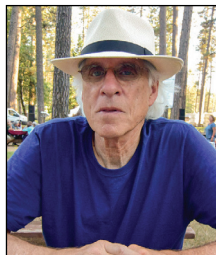
Jamming – playing music by heart with others – is what builds the strongest bonds across the bluegrass community. And it stands to reason; bluegrass is crafted from the fabric of relatable, everyday life – from events like work, love and despair, and worship – in a musical language that is simple to pick up and join in on a journey of acoustic fellowship that might just last a lifetime. A great festival lineup inspires virtuosity, but the roots of our community is music that has been passed knee-to-knee, generation-to-generation, under the stars of Saturday night dances, in Sunday morning choirs, and on shady porches on long, hot summer days – and the Father's Day Bluegrass Festival – for a very long time.

For newcomers, figuring out how to get into your first jam at a festival can sometimes feel a little overwhelming. There's nothing quite like that first time one lays eyes on a group of folks huddled together, manic grins stretched across their faces, eyes beaming, rolling through number after number under a grungy-gray, 10-by-10-foot shelter surrounded by dozens of others, under every single one a variation on the same theme: a group of people who may or may not have known each other before this, having the times of their lives playing and singing together great fiddle tunes and songs by heart to make you want to jump right in!

The best way to slide into a jam is to show respect by knowing a little about the music, and a little about what kind of etiquette might be expected at a FDF jam. So, we asked some of our favorite jammers for some tips to help someone join their first jam with confidence.

To demystify this a bit, a jam is just a gathering of musicians with an intention to play some music together. From there, things get a little complicated.

Small jams (two-to-seven people) are usually intended to be exclusive to players with some experience, shared repertoire, and just one or two of each instrument. Either that, or you just walked into band practice! The music from these jams tends to be pretty high-quality, and make for great listening. This holds true in both old-time and bluegrass sessions, which are typically (though not always) exclusive of the other. These jams are typically not open to drop-ins, especially strangers with limited experience on their instruments or playing with others.



Tom Diamant



Campsite Jam at FDF. Photo by Alan Bond.

Seasoned players cherish these opportunities. "To me, an ideal jam, and I will call it, for lack of a better term, a classic bluegrass jam, is a small one. Think of a classic jam as being one that recreates a classic bluegrass band with bass, fiddle, mandolin, guitar, banjo, and dobro," said Tom Diamant, longtime jammer, Arhoolie Foundation member, and KPFA radio's "Panhandle Country" producer.

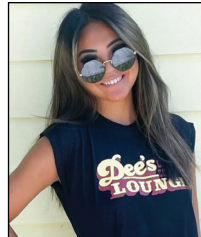
"These days, my personal favorite jam requires only about two-to-five musicians – like two fiddles, banjo, guitar, and mandolin," agrees L.A. based producer, instructor, fiddler, and jammer David Bragger.



David Bragger

To easily start logging playing time, find the bigger jams, Bragger advises. "The big 10-to-30 musician jams can be other-worldly-inspiring experiences for those who are new to the genre and have limited repertoires. And they are often extremely welcoming."

Nevertheless, in any case, "don't be afraid to ask," advises FDF regular and seasoned jammer Helen Ludé. "You're there to pick."



Helen Ludé

But even just listening to what's going on in a jam can give you some clues about what's expected. In fact, it's the first piece of advice jammer, fiddle instructor, and Kathy Kallick Band member Annie Staninec offered: "Walk through the campground and listen."

"Before you join, listen to at least a song or two to see what you'll be getting yourself into. If it seems like it may be a good fit, ask if

it's ok to join," Staninec continued.

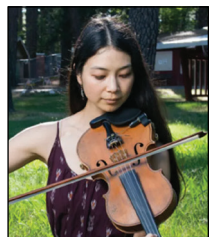
"Normally you can tell the difference based on body language and 'vibe,' Ludé said. "If the jam is 'higher level,' maybe stand back and participate from afar. You can still gain valuable experience from the sidelines rather than jumping into the spotlight."

As you're listening, notice what is being played and the structure of the jam. Ludé elaborated on this idea: "Is there a strong three-part harmony? Is everyone soloing? Who is calling songs? What kinds of songs are being called?"

"Listen to what everyone is doing. How do you fit in? Do you need to play louder, or quieter? Is someone adding some nice instrumental back up to the lead vocal, or maybe you should, or are you playing too busy, taking away from the lead vocal. Keep an ear on the rhythm. Lock in with the other players to the rhythm of the jam," said Diamant.

"Put your ear in the middle of the jam so you can be aware of how and what you're contributing," said Staninec. "It's very easy to get wrapped up in your own breaks, but that is just one small part!"

Once you're in and getting a good feel how the jam works, there are some things you might want to avoid. But the marks of a newbie that will frustrate seasoned players depends on the jam.



Annie Staninec

In the big hootin'-and-hollerin' jams, it's safe to say that almost anything goes. Mando orchestra breaks. Gang singing in something like unison on choruses. All-in on tunes on repeat for 20 minutes. Kazoo solos. Impromptu lyrics. Probably the only rule in these big jams is play (a little?) quieter if one person is singing.

Every jam has a leader – sometimes that leader changes song-to-song, and sometimes it doesn't. "Always be watching. Jams are filled with a series of subtle, or not so subtle, visual cues," Diamant said.

"Listen when someone says 'split the breaks' or 'break on the chorus' or looks at you to take a break. Usually the breaks go around the circle, but the person next to you may not want to take a break and visually hands it to you." Ludé said. "Watch when whoever is leading the song signals the ending or makes a move that indicates there's a repeat tag or a slow down at the end."

"Normally, in old-time sessions, fiddlers begin the tunes. If one fiddler is starting every tune at a jam, that's okay. For me, it's preferred," said Bragger. "I love following an elder fiddler who takes us on a participatory and musical journey through their repertoire, stories, and experience. If the jam has a 'leader' who offers others the opportunity to begin tunes, there usually isn't any pressure. Show restraint and common sense. It's not a race to see who can start a tune first. Your turn will come."

With hot picking in tight, small sessions comes those bluegrass harmonies that make your hair stand on end. These folks are usually dead serious about finding the keening tones in the high-lonesome harmonies bluegrass begs us to explore. For these sessions, Ludé puts it succinctly: Don't attempt to sing harmony if there is already a solid trio happening.

"A trio consists of one lead, one tenor, and one baritone part. If those parts are covered, don't sing, even if you know the song," And, she added, if you join a traditional bluegrass jam, call a traditional bluegrass song rather than an old time tune or an original number.

Diamant drove this point home. "I don't care if it's one of the songs you've practiced and were going to call, you do not get to sing along. Same thing with the harmonies. There are only two harmony singers, a baritone and a tenor. The baritone is usually below the lead, but can be above – high baritone. The tenor is above the lead, but sometimes can be below – low tenor. So, if someone jumps in on a harmony first, then they get the part, and you don't get to double them. And, if someone is singing low baritone, you do not get to sing high baritone."

In fact, laying out (playing more quietly and sparsely than everyone else, or not playing at all) can be a great way to ease your way into a situation, and show other jammers respect as you watch, listen, and learn. Once you're in, you can choose to pass on the invitation to play a solo, or "break."

"Generally the person leading the tune or song will look at you to take a break when the time comes, so if you want to pass, let them know with a head shake or some such so they have enough advance notice to pass it to the next person," said Staninec.

"As a newbie, I've never been to an old-time jam where there is an expectation that everyone must start a tune or song. It's always been a kind offer that I had the choice of passing on to someone else, until a day where I felt comfortable to begin one myself," said Bragger. "It's also not uncommon to ask a more experienced fiddler to begin a tune that you'd like to play. Then the pressure is off and you get to enjoy playing along to your favorite tune."

See our favorite jam tips on the next page!



A small jam in the campground. Photo by Patrick Campbell.



Annie Staninec. Photo by Alan Bond.



Taking it easy in the afternoon. Photo by Patrick Campbell.



Camp Old Time Jam. Photo by Alan Bond.

TOP TIPS FOR A FUN JAM

What can you focus on between now and your first jam to make it as fun as can be? If you guessed “listen” you’ll be just fine in your first jam. Our jammers had some more tips, too.

Listen!

“The easiest way to remember song lyrics is to listen on repeat. Make a bluegrass playlist to play on shuffle whenever you get in the car. My bluegrass playlist is over 15 hours long and full of good “jam-able” songs.” - Helen Ludé

Check out a jam

“If you have the opportunity to do so, go to a jam to listen and observe how people play and communicate with each other to pass solos and sing harmony parts. Practice your instrument and build some repertoire, and play/sing along with recordings to get a feel for playing with others.” - Annie Staninec

Practice

“Know how to play your instrument well. Know how to keep good rhythm. Know the chords and the chord numbering

system. Know how to keep good rhythm. Know how to use a capo (if you play an instrument that uses one). Know how to keep good rhythm. Practice at home with a metronome (you can get a free metronome app for your phone). Get comfortable at fast speeds.” - Tom Diamant

“Learn new tunes on Youtube, buy Jack Tuttle’s “Good Book” of songs and learn the first tune you flip to. Recording yourself and listening back is also a good way to figure out what is and isn’t working.” - Helen Ludé

Know some tunes well

Have two or three standards in your back pocket. There are a million songs to choose from!

“My go-to essential album is The Bluegrass Album Band, Vol. 3: California Connection. I’d also brush up on The Stanley Brothers.

Come prepared with a few tunes in basic keys that you’d feel comfortable calling at any jam.” - Helen Ludé

The repertoire in a typical old-time session can vary widely by region and style. In fact, there’s a joke in some old-time circles that goes something like this: the difference between a bluegrass jam and an old-time jam is that everyone in a bluegrass jam knows the tune before you start. Still, having a good feel for a few tunes on your instrument in the keys of A, G, and D will go a long way.

Have some friends waiting for you.

“Join CBA Facebook Groups and start meeting people before the festival! You’ll find the most welcoming, kind, and talented musicians in the CBA. Everyone wants to help each other out!” - Helen Ludé

‘KOMFORT KAMPING’ ARRIVE READY FOR THE FESTIVAL



Camp in style at FDF!

Wouldn't it be nice to have your own private, cozy, comfortable tent, ready and waiting for you to arrive at the Father's Day Festival? This year, CBA is offering a new camping alternative at the Father's Day Festival – we're calling it “Komfort Kamping.”

These spacious tents are generously furnished with one or two queen beds, or three single beds, all with Casper-brand memory-foam mattress, hypo-allergenic down sleeping pillows and comforter, and white, luxury cotton linens; a Moroccan throw pillow; Turkish bath towels; two bedside tables; a rechargeable lantern; an area rug; a clothing rack with four hangers; a large doormat; one solar garden lantern, and two chairs – set up and waiting starting Thursday morning near Lion Lake.

This is a perfect alternative for campers flying in from out of town, or just too busy to hunt down all your gear and set it up after your long drive. Only a few Komfort Kamps are available, and tickets are now available on the FathersDayFestival.com website – just click on the “Festival Experience” to find the Camping section to learn more, or follow the QR code.

It's just a couple of months until the Father's Day Festival, and if you're going to be camping in the tents-only area, it's time to start planning for the best bluegrass experience possible. Take it from an old tent-camper: a few hours of preparation will free you up for much more jamming, socializing, and enjoying the great talent at this year's festival.

Over the years, many of us have compiled lists of useful items to have, making packing a whole lot easier. Some folks like to coordinate with a group. Others, like me, have a routine refined over many iterations that allows for maximum flexibility. Once I arrive, I can pick out my campsite independent of anyone else's plans.

As for picking out a campsite, there are two basic rules: 1) first come, first served; and 2) be cool. Many longtime festers have specific spots where they've congregated for years, or even decades. These same people also understand that if they don't get to the fairgrounds until Friday, it's likely someone else will be occupying that space. Of course, you can avoid the crush by arriving at the fairgrounds the weekend before, like more than a few hardcore bluegrassers do. Hey, I think Darby and Bruno are setting up Camp Spam next week, just to make sure they get their preferred location.

Speaking of arriving early, sometimes early birds have that friend who asks to drop a tarp and save a space for them: this is where the "be cool" rule comes in.

I usually come up Wednesday, and I'm willing to put out an 8'-by-10' tarp for a friend – if they're coming up no later than Thursday night, but I think it's unfair to take up real estate for people arriving later than that. That's my take. You may see it differently and I understand – it's only natural to want to camp with your friends, even if you can't all arrive at the same time. You don't like to say no when a friend asks for a favor, but it seems every year I see at least one tarp spread out on the ground until somebody shows up on Saturday night, or perhaps not until Sunday morning, when someone sheepishly packs it up for the friend who never came. Definitely not cool.

This year, we'll be trying out more efficient ways to buy tickets, or just check in and get your wristband upon arrival, so watch the signs as you approach Gate 1. When you enter the camping area of the fairgrounds



An early camp set-up at FDF. CBA file photo.

from Gate 4, you'll see campsite options on either side of that road. To the right is the most densely-packed space, bordered by the stage zone and the irrigation ditch. To the left is more room to spread out, but it's a longer walk to the bathrooms and stage zone. Beyond the irrigation ditch (which we're re-naming "Cripple Creek") is the parking lot and motorhome land. And do take note: the sign for "full hookups" in the motorhome area refers to connections to power, water, and waste disposal rather than romantic activities among festival attendees.

Beyond the parking lot on the left is Old Time Hill, where fiddle and banjo music will go nonstop the entire weekend. If you pass this hill and continue through the parking lot, you'll find another tent camping area across the winding irrigation ditch.

There is no "best place to camp" – it all depends on your preferences and priorities.

Yes, it's convenient to be near a bathroom, but it also means there'll be a lot of foot traffic past your campsite. Wherever you camp, you'll be happy just being around so many people who are as into bluegrass music as you are.

The fairgrounds provide a bucolic setting of towering pines, yet festival attendees are only minutes away from the amenities of the town of Grass Valley. A full-service grocery store is nearby, and if your camp chef decides to take a night off, there are plenty of dining options from which to choose within a 15-minute drive. Plus, there's the convenience of the after-hours hot-dog stand right there on the fairgrounds, where you can also hear some of the best jamming of the long weekend while satisfying your late-night hunger pangs.

Speaking of jamming, it's my humble opinion – as well as that of many others who've attended more festivals than I have – that the Father's Day Festival is one of the most jamtastic events around. There's jamming everywhere. All the time. Constantly. Persistently. If this is your first trip to our wonderful little soiree in the pines, be forewarned: there are no designated quiet spaces or quiet times in the tent camping areas. It is not uncommon for a jam or two to continue until the sun rises.

If you're familiar with this aspect of the festival and you're bringing someone up for their first time, make sure you let them know about this, because an all-night bluegrass jam might not be their jam. There's an old trope that goes, "The jamming was really good right up until the point when I quit and decided to go to sleep. Then it totally sucked and kept me up all night."

#earplugs

I hope at least some of this information helps you get the most out of your time at the festival. It's the largest gathering of bluegrass devotees in the state every year, and it brings together people from all across California, from other states, and more than a few friends from overseas.

What makes the Father's Day Festival truly special is the spirit of joy that prevails during the four-day gathering. It's more than an event, it's a communal musical experience that's as much about friendship and sharing as it is about the bluegrass, old time, and gospel music we all love.



Father's Day Festival campground. CBA File Photo.



Keeping it cool. Photo by Robin Frenette

COMMUNITY, CONNECTION, AND BLUEGRASS: CBA MUSIC CAMP

by Adam Roszkiewicz



Music Camp performance. Photo by John Woodworth.

When I was a teenager, Music Camp changed my life. More specifically, it showed me that there were other folks out there who were as obsessed as I was with music, and it gave me the invaluable opportunity to sit next to my musical heroes while they played and talked about the thing I loved the most. It also gave me the opportunity to hang out with professional musicians in a more casual environment, especially at mealtimes and between classes. But almost equally as important was what happened after all the classes and workshops: the jams. Having the opportunity to play new songs, try out new ideas, and take risks with your peers is such an important ingredient to gain more fluency and confidence in music. The late night jams, the friendships made, and the community are what truly set the CBA summer Music Camp, and others like it, apart.

This summer's Dobro instructor, Mike Witcher agrees. "The opportunity to be surrounded by people who share the same passion for music is pretty special. To spend every waking hour learning, making, and enjoying music in a beautiful outdoor setting without the distractions of our normal routine is a real treat. For me, it's a chance to recharge and fill up on inspiration."

Dave Zimmerman and Dave Walker, who both met at the very first CBA summer Music Camp, started by Darby Brandli in 2001, went on to form the great San Francisco bluegrass band Homespun Rowdy. "We both just happened to be

in a phase of being burnt out by tech jobs and looking for some connection," Zimmerman said. "We found each other pretty quick at the camp and spent the days endlessly trading breaks for backup and the nights trying to crack each other up."

Maureen "Mo" Blumenthal, who has been attending the CBA's summer Music Camp since 2009 – first as a student and then as a teaching assistant – put it a little differently: "Only in a camp or a group-class situation can you get the guidance and encouragement from the experts and your peers that you can't get sitting at home playing by yourself."

Mo also points to the generosity of camp's instructors and volunteers, and their dedication to passing on the music to the younger generation through CBA's youth programs.

John Reischman, who has taught at almost every CBA camp, said, "I always enjoy the student concerts. Seeing folks perform after seeing them around camp for several days is always fun. I especially like seeing the younger musicians progress over the years: folks like Scott Gates, Frankie Nagle, Molly Tuttle, and many others."

Several instructors and staff have been there from the beginning, like Jack Tuttle, John Reischman, and Paul Knight. They'll all be returning this summer, as well, joined by Jake Blount, Caleb Klauder, Reeb Willims, Tatiana Hargreaves, Allison de Groot, Stash Wyslouch, Yoseff Tucker,



Cary Black teaches bluegrass bass at CBA Music Camp. Photo by Alan Bond.



Music Camp Squaredance. Photo by Alan Bond.



Trying out new tunes. Photo by John Woodworth

Eli West, Brandon Godman, and the band Mile Twelve.

So, you've looked at this summer's stellar lineup and decided to sign up for camp, now what? A good place to start, especially if this is your first time attending camp, is to check out the camp songbook, which is posted on the website. Having a few familiar go-to's can really help when it's your turn to pick a song.

Also, finding a "slow jam" in your neighborhood – or even starting one of your own – can be fun, and help get some tunes under your belt. "I was a very shy, insecure banjo player and singer when I started going to the bluegrass jam at the Fifth String in Berkeley," Mo Blumenthal said. "It was intimidating. Then Ran Bush started a 'Slow Jam' there. He had the local pros come in at times to teach specific skills - harmony, dynamics, whatever. Not only did I learn a lot, but I met other older newbies who I am still playing with today."

Yoseff Tucker, this year's bluegrass band instructor, recommends setting a couple goals for the week. "Set an experience

goal – set an intention to have a good time, be open to making new friends, and playing at the student concert. Also, set some learning goals – work on a tune or song, look at the electives and pick which ones you're going to attend, think about how you're going to take notes and make recordings of your classes, and practice with a metronome (shout-out to strum machine!)"

Most importantly, though, remember that you're all there for the same reason – to enjoy making music together. Jack Tuttle said, "I think the best thing about the camp is the social aspect. Frequently students are working on bluegrass at home and many of them don't really have their own bluegrass friends, since they're new to playing bluegrass. So they come to camp and mix with other aspiring bluegrass players and make new friends, and then re-circle back around year-after-year. So, then they become the regulars who will see a new crop of students come in each year."

Dave Zimmerman echoes that. "The incredible thing about the CBA Music Camp is that pretty much everyone is

there for the same reason – and just maybe, are the "weird ones" in their day-to-day friend group who listen to bluegrass and spend hours on the couch staring at tabs. Once you arrive on the fairgrounds for the week, even if the other campers are doctors or accountants or cashiers or students or retired hydrostatic fluid engineers, you immediately know you have a ton in common with them. Conversations dive deep into this pursuit of bluegrass music that we share and that can develop into lifelong friendships. It sure did for me."

That's what it's all about, the community. Whether you're a seasoned campfire jammer, professional musician, or just getting your feet wet in the world of bluegrass and string band music, it's the connections and friendships that develop through making music together that are so special, and Music Camp is a great place to nurture those experiences.

Learn more about
summer CBA Music
Camp and register here!



Final performance, 2022 Music Camp. Photo by John Woodworth.

JERRY DOUGLAS TALKS CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS

by Dave Berry

By most any measure, 14-time Grammy winner Jerry Douglas' recent visit to the CBA Great 48 Jam in Bakersfield was a huge success. The sold-out crowd at Buck Owens' Crystal Palace witnessed a virtuosic treatment of material spanning his now 50-year career, featuring a resourceful and tight-knit band with Daniel Kimbroom on bass, Christian Sedelmyer on fiddle, and Mike Sealon on guitar.

We got Jerry and Breakdown contributing writer Dave Berry together for a chat during his time with us. We wanted to get his take on California bluegrass, so they ducked into a storage room at the Marriott after the workshop to chat.

Hey Jerry, welcome. I assume you have been to Bakersfield before.

Yeah, I've been to Bakersfield several times. Eric Hershkowitz, who is a local dentist and Dobro player, loaned me the instruments for the workshop and is a good pal. I think I first met him when they invested in a one-day festival when I was playing with the Whites.

How did this event come about?

I played here a couple of years ago with the Cranktones, who are a bunch of L.A. session players, with Carl Verheyen from Supertramp, who came up here for Christmas to raise money for Rick Kreiser and the Crystal Palace. They invited me and I came not knowing what I was doing, or where I fit, but I fell right into it. That can sometimes scare you but there is always growth in those situations. So when this CBA event and the show came up, Rick (and CBA chairman Pete Ludé) thought of me. When I found out we were sold out, I was amazed and realized it was a lot of people from the CBA who are not afraid to explore the bluegrass idiom and all of its branches. In some ways, the bluegrass world, especially out here, is in its infancy, but has a rich culture that comes from Vern and Ray, Rose Maddox who rubbed off on Laurie Lewis, and Tom Rozum. I knew them well, and Grisman, Herb Pedersen, Chris Hillman ... so I've been rubbing shoulders with them one way or the other for a long time.

Talk about the CBA

I've been aware of the CBA forever, but what brought it to the top in my opinion

was when the International Bluegrass Music Association started, and when all the associations in the country started bringing their take on the music together. I remember the CBA suite when IBMA was still back in Kentucky and that was prime time for the Bluegrass Album Band and my album "Skip Hop and Wobble." I was actually VP of IBMA for a while when Pete Wernick was the president.

What California folks have influenced you?

LeRoy McNees – who was in the Country Boys, which included Roland White – was one of the first Dobro players I ever saw. Actually, many people out here have been a major influence. Laurie Lewis, Vern and Ray, Mike Marshall, Todd Phillips, Darol Anger, and so on. Herb Peterson is the face of California Bluegrass. He took the Dillards to a new place. They came out of Topanga Canyon. Del McCoury was even out there in that crowd for a while.

I first came to know Chris Hillman of course through the Byrds. When I was young, a cousin turned me on to the music of the Byrds, Mama's and Papa's, and the Left Banke, who sang "Don't Walk Away Renée." I was like, 12, so I had never heard that. Many of the California rock bands started as bluegrass bands but they had to make some money. Chris Hillman and I did a tour for a Dan Fogelberg album called High Country Snow with Herb and Grisman, and we were what I called "the bluegrass guys," the stalwarts of the California bluegrass scene even going back to The Hillmen days. Of course, Don Parmley and Leroy were part of that too.



Jerry Douglas at Great 48 Jam. Photo by David Cupp.

What California festivals stand out to you?

There are so many. I've played Hardly Strictly many times – once with Alison Brown's All-Star lineup for a tribute to the Founders, and also a show with Omar Hakim & Viktor Krauss, where I just played the lap steel. Hardly Strictly is a great place to stretch, and sorta take your cuffs off – they're gonna expect something different. I remember at the old Grass Valley setup where Pete Rowan and I played a duet and the mayor gave us a special present. The Earls of Leicester played at Strawberry Music Festival once on my birthday.

Talk about Todd Phillips, who doesn't get as much attention as he should.

Man, he fits in anywhere. When I met him, he was the second mandolin player for Grisman. I watched them rehearse before they even recorded. One day I was sitting there and Tony hadn't been there very long, I think we were out there to play Paul's Saloon for J.D. Crowe on our way to Japan. Tony was leaving Crowe, and Ricky and I were leaving to start our band which we had always wanted to do. They were just flushing out the tune "Thailand," which they later recorded but what I heard was much cooler than what went on the record.



Jerry Douglas Band plays sold out concert at Buck Owens Crystal Palace. Photo by David Cupp.

Todd had a Plymouth Valiant with a push-button transmission and he took the back seat out of it so he could put his bass in there. I had to ride behind him. Once he had an encounter with either the Richmond or Golden Gate Bridge and it broke the bass and he just put it right back together. He can do most anything, he made his mandolin. His father had a flooring company and to pay for his first record at Arch Street in Berkeley; he redid the floors there. Todd and I were inseparable. We really hit it off because we were the young guys, and were totally bowled over by anything David or Tony did.

Barry Bales from Alison Krauss and Union Station says Todd is the best bass player that ever lived, and it shows up in his phrasing, note choices, and how he sees the chord pattern go. Barry took a lot of stuff from Todd because he's a bass player who just does not get in the way, and isn't just a boom-boom-boom-boom guy. He makes it more interesting, but still commands the pulse. He doesn't play hard but just has this sound and you just go with it, it's so fluid.

You talked a lot during the workshop about going into the studio with Molly Tuttle when you get back home this week. What kind of room do you prefer for recording your projects?

I did the John Hiatt record in RCA B on Music Row, which was Chet Adkins's toy box and the first dedicated recording studio built in Nashville. I like the sound of a big soundstage like Ocean Way in L.A., which was the first big one that I was in. People like Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, the Wrecking Crew, Nelson Riddle, and all those big soundstage recordings were done there.

Jerry Douglas will be back in California for a special one-day festival: Siesta Valley Strings & Things, July 23, at the beautiful Bruns Amphitheater in Orinda (near Berkeley). Also featuring Laurie Lewis, Broken Compass, and many other CBA favorites.



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by Bert Daniel

February's trivia question recognized the legacy of Black musicians: **one blazed a trail for Charlie Pride, the other for Merle Travis. Who were they?**

DeFord Bailey was the first Black musician to see success in country music, and was the only Black performer to play at the Grand Ole Opry before Charlie Pride, from 1927 to 1941. Bailey and Monroe toured the South together in the early 1940s, both before and after DeFord was unceremoniously fired by the Opry in 1941. In 2022, the Opry formally apologized for "at times be[ing] part of a problem



DeFord Bailey and his harmonica. Photo by David C. Morton; Wikimedia Foundation, source. CC BY-SA 4.0

within country music suppressing the contributions of our diverse community" including Bailey's dismissal, saying "we are sorry for hurt those decisions caused then and now, and we vow to be a leader in creating a welcoming and inclusive future for country music."

Arnold Shultz is credited with developing the style of guitar-playing that would become known as "Travis picking," after Merle Travis, who became known for using the technique in his recordings. In his teenage years, Monroe played guitar backing up Shultz's fiddle for dances, unless Monroe's Uncle Pen was playing. Those nights, Pen would often hire Shultz for guitar duties.



Newspaper photograph featuring Shultz with Bill Monroe's Uncle Pen. Photo courtesy IBMA Foundation.

Members **Jim Lappin**, **Laurie Lewis**, **Bob Palasek**, and **Peter Thompson** all responded with the right answer. Their names were shared with ChatGPT, which responded with something about how it couldn't wait for Grass Valley.

So we asked our art director Gina Dilg to pick a number between 1 and 4. She picked number 1, and **Jim Lappin is our lucky winner of a Paige guitar or banjo capo.**

APRIL TRIVIA CHALLENGE

He turned 85 last month, so he could be thinking about the title of the classic recording by Bill Monroe that he played guitar on. (I'm not sure if he liked the seagulls).

Send answers to:
trivia@californiabluegrass.net
 no later than March 31.

This month's prize is a Paige guitar or banjo capo. Only CBA members are eligible to win; If there is more than one correct response, the prize winner will be selected by random drawing. The winner will be announced in the June 2023 Bluegrass Breakdown.