

## THANK HEAVENS FOR FRANK SOLIVAN SR.

### 'KIDS ON BLUEGRASS' CREATOR LEAVES INTERNATIONAL MUSIC LEGACY

By The Bluegrass Breakdown

Frank Solivan Sr., beloved father, musician, and music educator, died on August 24 at age 78. Along with uncountable relationships and fond memories, he leaves a legacy that will grow and refresh our bluegrass music community around the world for generations to come.

Frank Sr.'s biggest contribution to California bluegrass – and the global bluegrass community – is the children's education program known as "Kids on Bluegrass." Over the nearly quarter century since its conception, the program has been a cornerstone of CBA's annual Father's Day Festival; helped shape the Grey Fox kid's academy launched in 1999; was adopted by the International Bluegrass Music Association in 2003; and served as the model for both the 22-year-old Al Ras Bluegrass and Old-Time Festival "Bluegrass Kids" program in Barcelona and the "Kids on Bluegrass Europe" program at the La Roche

Bluegrass Festival in La Roche, France. KOB alums "Bearfoot" went on to create the Rockygrass Kids Academy in Lyons, Colo.

Thanks to Frank Sr.'s vision and leadership, the future of bluegrass around the world is bright. The CBA program alone has already served as a platform for many national performing artists and instructors, among them bandleaders Molly Tuttle and AJ Lee; current KOB director Helen Garrett; East Tennessee State University professors Angela Branum and Josh Gooding; and frequent camp fiddle instructors, performers and recording artists, Annie Staninec and Brittany Haas. And more young people driven by an enthusiasm for bluegrass show up ready to develop their talent and professionalism every year.

"We as humans all want to belong, and

*cont'd on page 8 →*



Frank Sr. and KOB at IBMA's World of Bluegrass 2017. Photo courtesy of Frank Solivan.

## FALL CAMPOUT IN LODI, CBA ANNUAL MEETING

By Deb Livermore, CBA Campout Coordinator

### "Celebrating Life and Each Other: The Year of the Best We!"

That was my call out for our celebration of life at Spring Campout. And, did we celebrate! Music, family, comradery. It was amazing. And now, here it is, October, and it's time to do it again.

Let's get together and celebrate in Lodi for the Fall Campout! October 9-15 is the date, and the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds is the place.

Here are the details:

The gate opens at noon on Monday, Oct. 9. Playing music will be on the agenda for days. It is free to the public to come out for the day and walk around, listen to the music, bring your instruments and join in, even if you're a beginner!

On Saturday, Oct. 14, the annual CBA Board of Directors elections ends at noon. At 6 p.m. later that day, the annual CBA membership meeting will be held. The

*cont'd on page 3 →*



Campsite jams at the Fall Campout in Lodi. Photo by Robin Frenette.



### A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVE MUSIC – FOR FANS AND BANDS

By Pete Ludé, CBA Chairman

Most bluegrass and old-time fans I know spend a good deal of their time playing music with friends, or woodshedding to improve their own instrumental skills. But they will also be found heading out to their local watering hole or concert hall to hear their favorite bands perform live. Watching live music is a powerful form of both entertainment and inspiration.

Not so long ago, the pandemic put a stop to live music almost everywhere. Remember those days? A recent study found that revenues from live music events dropped by nearly 75 percent amid the pandemic in 2020. But after the months of isolation and lockdown there was a pent-up demand for more live music. Across all artists

*cont'd on page 2 →*

and genres, live music revenue in the U.S. is expected to finally recover to pre-pandemic levels this year, generating a whopping \$24 billion in ticket sales! Now, I'm pretty sure that bluegrass concert tickets are a rather small part of that overall cash flow. But anecdotally, the events I've attended lately have been packed with enthusiastic bluegrass fans. There's nothing like being enraptured by stunning instrumental breaks, vocal harmonies that give you the chills, and that all-around stage banter that provides a fun break from the day-to-day. Behavioral scientists have found that hearing your favorite songs performed live can bring back memories of specific times in your life and create a deeper connection to the music.

That's why we are dedicating this month's Bluegrass Breakdown to music venues in California. Live performances are not only fun for us, but increasingly important to the bands we love. Gone are the days when a talented group of musicians could make a living selling records or CD's. Instead, streaming companies "rent" their music out to the public and pay the artists a pittance for the use of it. To fill the financial gap, our favorite bands rely on tours and merch sales to pay the bills. This means that buying tickets to live shows is a very important way to support the band's livelihood and keep bluegrass and old-time music alive and healthy. The venues, as well, need our support.

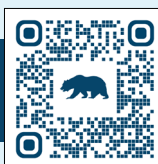
The listings in this issue are not exhaustive, nor do they intend to be. You can be part of rebuilding the live bluegrass community by sharing something about your favorite venue at our

lively online "Message Board" – follow the QR code below and tell us about it!

Speaking of live music, I hope I see you at one of our upcoming CBA events. CBA's Fall Campout starts October 10 in Lodi, where, on Saturday October 14, we'll also have a fantastic concert and the CBA Annual Member meeting. A few weeks later, from November 2-5, you can jam at the amazing South State 48 in Carlsbad. CBA is sponsoring the next Otter Opry show featuring the California Bluegrass Reunion in Monterey on November 14, and the Great 48 returns to Bakersfield starting Jan. 4, 2024. You can learn about all of these activities at [californiabluegrass.org](http://californiabluegrass.org).

The sad news this month is the unexpected passing of Frank Solivan Sr, the highly influential and inspiring founder of the CBA Kids of Bluegrass program, and a friend of us all. Frank was a powerful advocate for young children, giving them the opportunity to learn about working together toward an entertaining performance on stage. His pioneering influence made waves worldwide throughout the bluegrass community. Overcoming the skeptics, Frank proved that inspiring our next generation is fundamental to the future of bluegrass music. We've put together a remembrance of Frank in this issue, including some first-hand reflections from many of the young people whose lives he affected so positively.

Join the CA Venue conversation on our Message Board!



## BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

October 2023 • Venues

The Bluegrass Breakdown is the monthly publication of the California Bluegrass Association, keeping CBA members and the world of bluegrass up-to-date with coverage of CBA events, musicians, promotions, and volunteer opportunities since April 1975. 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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Printed in California by  
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A subscription to the Bluegrass Breakdown  
is a benefit of CBA membership.  
Visit us online at [californiabluegrass.org](http://californiabluegrass.org).

## LOW ROOM ALERT FOR GREAT 48!



We're planning great bluegrass jams, workshops, concerts, and classes for the Bakersfield Great 48 but what makes it GREAT is YOU, kicking the New Year off making music with old and new friends. It looks like Great 48, 2024 will be well-attended and the Marriott at the Convention Center IS RUNNING LOW ON ROOMS!!! If you haven't reserved your room for Great 48, 2024, we urge you to do it now! Look for updates and registration information on the CBA Events web page. We'll look forward to seeing you in Bakersfield, January 4th-7th at the GREAT 48.

See our website for detailed information and registration.



### NEW THIS YEAR: WERNICK METHOD JAM CLASS

Get a jump start on bluegrass jamming with this multi-day class taught by Mike and Gail Thomas.

Separate registration required. See website for details.







Fish in a Bag will perform on Saturday night.



Salty Sally is another youth band performing Saturday.

## LODI FUN AND CBA BIZ

*cont'd from front page*

newly-elected Board members will be introduced and open to questions.

Also, we will announce the winners of the instrument sweepstakes! If you haven't purchased your sweepstakes tickets yet, you can still do that at the Campout or on the CBA website.

As well, there will be a silent auction on Saturday. Please bring any CBA memorabilia, arts and crafts, musical items, and the like. Submit them to Deb Livermore by 2 p.m. on Saturday. All proceeds will go to the CBA Youth Programs!

Speaking of which, we will present two youth bands at our Saturday night concert: "Fish in a Bag" and "Salty Sally." Concert tickets will be \$15 at the door. Please come out to see how the CBA supports our youth and enjoy these young up-and-coming artists.



Beautiful weather for a campout! Photo by Robin Frenette.

Camping is available at \$40 for RVs, with electric and water hookups; and \$10 for dry tent, car, or van camping. Please make reservations by emailing [debilvermore@gmail.com](mailto:debilvermore@gmail.com). We can accept cash, check, or credit for payment on your arrival. Please do not arrive before noon, Monday, Oct. 9, unless you are volunteering to help set up. Thanks in advance.

Volunteers are always needed at Campouts. It takes a team to provide what you love. Please consider helping out the CBA; you can contact Deb Livermore or Phoebe Suelflow at [volunteers@californiabluegrass.net](mailto:volunteers@californiabluegrass.net) to volunteer. We need help at the entrance gate and during Saturday's activities, including the silent auction, as well as with beer, wine and merchandise sales. There are benefits to volunteering – ask Deb!

We hope to have a couple of food vendors for your enjoyment as well!

So don't forget – "Celebrating Life and Each Other – The Year of the Best We." I look forward to hearing all of those new licks, songs, tunes, and eating new recipes!

See you soon!

More details about the Fall Campout





# FALL CAMPOUT

## OCTOBER 9-15, 2023

LODI GRAPE FESTIVAL GROUNDS

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### FEATURING

SATURDAY NIGHT CONCERT

FOOD VENDORS

ALL-MEMBER ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14

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RV CAMPING \$40/NIGHT  
ELECTRIC & WATER HOOKUPS

TENT/CAR CAMPING \$10/NIGHT  
DRY CAMPING

FOR CAMPING RESERVATIONS, EMAIL  
[DEBLIVERMORE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:DEBLIVERMORE@GMAIL.COM)



Saturday night concert. Photo by Robin Frenette.

## CORRECTIONS

### DAVID BRAGGER - OLD TIME TIKI PARLOUR

Our August profile of old-time fiddler, instructor, and artistic director of the Santa Barbara Old-Time Fiddlers' Festival, David Bragger, dug into the beginnings of his "Old-Time Tiki Parlour." That article, based on an interview writer Adam Tanner conducted at Mars Hill College earlier in the year, indicated Bragger's mentor Tom Sauber was influenced by banjo player Charlie Lowe. Technically, that may be true. Charlie was a contemporary of North Carolina Round Peak fiddler Ben Jarrell, father of the renowned musician Tommy Jarrell. But it was Charlie's nephew Eddie Lowe who later moved to L.A. from N.C., bringing the music with him and then sharing it with Tom. Thanks to Steve Goldfield for first bringing this to our attention.

We also wrote that "In 2009, David produced a recording session with master musician Dan Gellert and, soon after, a session with fiddlers Rafe and Clelia Stefanini – and The Tiki Parlour was born." In fact, David recorded Dan soon after what was an impromptu soft-opening of sorts with friends Rafe and Clelia that was, of course, good enough for release.

Finally, this is the correct spelling of SLO County Stumbler's Casy Meikle's name.

A corrected version of the David Bragger article is available on our website.

Read the updated David Bragger article



### IBMA NOMINEE ROB ICKES

A note from perhaps Rob Ickes' biggest fan, CBA member #1234, alerted us that his name was not included in our September nod to California's 2023 IBMA nominees – yet Rob was nominated for his 16th Resophonic Guitar Player of the Year award this year. She noted that "Rob was born in California, raised in California, attended schools in California, including U.C. Davis, before moving to the Nashville area. Rob, and his brother, attended CBA festivals for many years, including the times when it was twice a year." Thanks to the CBA member who brought this to our attention – who happens also to be Elida Ickes, Rob's mom. We're grateful for the Ickes Family and their longtime participation in California bluegrass as a force driving the CBA community.



# BAY AREA BLUEGRASS VENUES

By The Bluegrass Breakdown



Pickers enjoy the Sunday jam at The Lucky Horseshoe. Photo by Ted Kuster.



Pre-pride Pickin' Party at Salesforce Park. Photo by Michael Pegram.

San Francisco has a long history of people who enjoy listening and playing bluegrass, old-time and roots music and thankfully it has also enjoyed a long history of different types of venues to help bring our community together to enjoy the music we love.

At the larger end of the scale, you may be familiar with big names like **Hardly Strictly Bluegrass** in Golden Gate Park, or **The Frost Amphitheater** on the Stanford campus. These are big, beautiful venues where you can enjoy great music with acts like Sierra Hull, The Travelin' McCourys, Mighty Poplar, Steve Earle, and Billy Strings, all of whom will appear at one or more of those places this fall.

Want to jam on a stage, to a live mic, with some of the Bay Area's

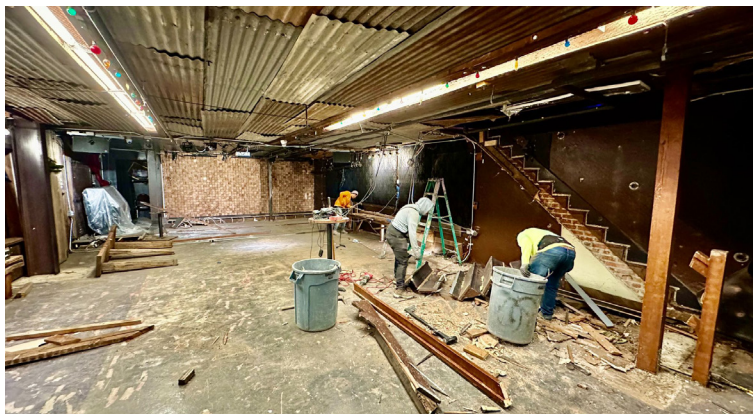
long-time bluegrass jammers? If so, then every Sunday afternoon from 4-7 p.m. at the **Lucky Horseshoe** in Bernal Heights is where you should be. This jam always has a good core group of players and the music is free to all to come listen and enjoy. The Shoe hosts a lot of different kinds of music and almost all of it is locally sourced. They also host an open jazz jam on the third Wednesday of the month that is a lot of fun.

**Amado's**, on the Valencia St. foodie strip in the Mission district, has hosted a few bluegrass events over the years but has emerged as one the Bay Area's regular spots for great bluegrass music in the last few months. Starting in early 2023, Amado's began hosting bluegrass every Wednesday night starting at

7 p.m. with an open bluegrass jam followed by a local, regional or national bluegrass, old-time or roots act. This weekly event is free and has had some really good jamming along with very talented acts including recent sets from, *Crying Uncle*, *The Cody Sisters*, *Edgar Loudermilk Band* and many of the best of the local bluegrass bands from all over the Bay Area. On the first Wednesday of the month local bluegrass hero, *Yoseff Tucker*, brings together some big talent in this intimate space which is not to be missed. These weekly events are always fun, free, and held in the bar. Amado's also has one of the best small listening rooms in the Bay Area, with a capacity between 100-120, located in the basement below the main bar. The Amado's downstairs venue

recently suffered a catastrophic flood. The damage is extensive and has taken the downstairs venue off-line, to help and learn more about the venue check out [www.gofundme.com/f/save-live-music-in-san-francisco](http://www.gofundme.com/f/save-live-music-in-san-francisco). The bluegrass continues to roll on Wednesdays upstairs while repairs continue downstairs, and when the venue re-opens, the plan is to host even more and more bluegrass, old-time and roots music there.

**The Page**, on Divisadero St., where posh Hayes Valley meets funky Haight-Ashbury, is a long-standing local spot for San Francisco's best folk, old-time and roots music, as well as jazz and swing. Every Tuesday from 5-7 p.m. you can catch some great local artists at the "Kennel Club" event hosted by



Work underway to restore the downstairs at Amado's after a flood hit the venue in June. Photo courtesy of Amado's.

## CALIFORNIA BANDS - APPLY TO SHOWCASE AT FATHER'S DAY FEST!

Is it on your band's bucket list to play on a major festival stage?

The **California Showcase** is an opportunity for California-based, non-fulltime, and non-professional bluegrass, old-time, and gospel bands to play on the Pioneer and Main Stages at the CBA Father's Day Festival.



Learn more and apply



local old-time champions Skillet Licorice, who bring their talents and special musical guests each week. Happy hour for dogs and people every Tuesday – you can't beat it.

If bluegrass jamming is your thing, then consider the weekly open bluegrass jam where all are welcome at the **Hotel Utah** in San Francisco's South of Market district. The jam is free to join or to listen to and starts every Tuesday evening at about 7 pm and usually goes until 10 or so; it's all jamming all the time.

The venerable **Plough & Stars**, in San Francisco's extra-foggy Richmond district, is primarily a space for Irish *céilís* and songsters but makes room for frequent bluegrass nights. It was the scene of a long-running open jam led by Jeanie Poling and her husband Chuck, who's perhaps better known as the main stage

MC at the Father's Day Festival. Longtime acoustic music promoter Shelby Ash is famous for giving local bluegrass acts a running start at their careers by booking them into the Plough & Stars before anyone has ever heard of them.

Downtown SF has taken a beating in the national press, but if you know where to look, you can find **Salesforce Park**, a gem of an outdoor venue high atop a large commuter transit center. This beautiful public park hosts some of the best local and regional bluegrass and old time each Saturday from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. "Mid-Day Music" is held in the central lawn, near the children's playground. The transit center recently added a Barebottle Brew Tap on its fourth floor of the Transit Center, just a few yards away from the music.



San Francisco's Hotel Utah. Photo courtesy of The Hotel Utah.



Ramblin' Jack Elliott at The Freight and Salvage. Photo by Hail McGrath.

## BAY AREA

Berkeley, Oakland, and the East Bay are historic breeding grounds for California bluegrass. Carl Pagter and a few cronies founded the CBA after meeting in 1975 in Fairfield, on the far eastern fringe of the Bay Area.

**The Freight & Salvage** in Berkeley is probably the largest venue in the Bay Area regularly hosting top-level bluegrass, old-time roots artists. The Freight has always been an anchor for the Northern California bluegrass scene and based on its recent calendar, does not appear letting up any time soon. This not-for-profit organization hosts multiple bluegrass and old-time festivals and shows throughout the year including the **Berkeley Bluegrass Festival**,

usually in the spring, and the **Berkeley Old-Time Music Convention**, in September. The Freight supports all sorts of world-class music, ensuring you will always catch a good show at this legendary venue. The Freight also runs programs where you can learn to play different kinds of music. All of these larger venues are great for seeing the biggest, high-quality shows, and we recommend keeping an eye on their websites for upcoming shows.

**Buck Wild Brewery**, in Oakland's hip Jack London Square district, is a great example of the small breweries that have stepped up to take over for pizza parlors as bluegrass incubators across California. It features bluegrass or adjacent acts every Sunday afternoon.

**Ashkenaz**, in the heart of Berkeley, is a dance hall

that caters to a wondrously diverse set of audiences, with old-time, Balkan and zydeco dance nights, Grateful Dead preservation acts, and frequent bluegrass shows.

Not far from Ashkenaz is the **Starry Plough**, a venue that's mainly for Irish music but has featured a lot of old-time and bluegrass over the years. It hosts two separate old-time jams: a "Shred Session" on second Sundays for hotshot players and those who love to listen to them, and a wide-open "Old Time Pickin' Party" for everyone who wants to join in on 4th Sundays. And there's a Saturday bluegrass jam led by dedicated organizer Cheney Munson.

**Baja Taqueria** on Piedmont has hosted the Taco Jam on Saturdays since 1992. An online app created by software developer and

multi-instrumentalist Tom Lucas helps put together five-person lineups of proficient pickers every Saturday, and pickers get a free taco dinner. (The app is now widely used in invitational "taco jams" across the Bay Area.)

Meanwhile, that eastern fringe of the Bay Area, between Oakland and Sacramento, is still an active bluegrass zone. **Ruhstaller's Farm Yard** supports bluegrass, old-time and roots music and has live music most Thursdays through Sundays. This venue is a brewery at a working hops farm and has great local, regional, and national acts in a huge open-aired, family-friendly space with really good sound, beer and food. It is just off I-80 near Davis, and a great place to stop for good music and community. Not far away

*cont'd on next page →*



## BAY AREA VENUES

cont'd from page 5

in Lodi, **High Water Brewing** regularly features bluegrass bands such as Red Dog Ash, DeltaGrass, and West 45, bands that clearly don't mind being stuck in Lodi again.

Any tour of bluegrass in the North Bay would have to start with the **Willowbrook Ale House**, which is in its 26th year of hosting bluegrass on Thursday nights. Ed Neff kicked off the run with a band called True Blue in March of 1996, and not a Thursday has passed without bluegrass at the venerable Petaluma watering hole since, barring the pandemic. "The Willowbrook's been the champion of bluegrass music in Sonoma since before anyone can remember," said Brijet Neff, Ed's wife and manager. "They were booking bluegrass bands before it was popular."

**Sweetwater Music Hall** is a storied venue in downtown Mill Valley, about a half hour from San Francisco. Sweetwater's commitment to bluegrass and acoustic music starts from the ground up, says General Manager Maria Hoppe. "The intimacy, the quality of our space – those matter for any genre, but the instrumentation in bluegrass sounds especially great in this room." Veteran sound technician Paul Knight, a favorite with bluegrass fans from his years of service at the Father's Day Bluegrass Festival, has worked the room regularly, along with production manager Michael Wilson and other elite mixing talent. AJ Lee and Blue Summit and Molly Tuttle and Golden Highway both had sold-out shows there this year.

The audiences are the best



Hairy Garrison opens for a night of square dancing at Ashkenaz. Photo courtesy of Skillet Licorice.

thing about hosting bluegrass, said Hoppe. "Of course in this business you want audience members to interact with each other and be social," Hoppe said. "but bluegrass fans are really there to listen and engage with the music. They're super-attentive and informed about the music. They're really committed, happy to be here, and having a great time."

The **Mantra Wines** tasting room in downtown Novato is emerging as a leading room for close listening in multiple genres, bluegrass prominent among them. Proprietor Mike Kuimelis started featuring the music because its importance seemed to go beyond just how much foot traffic it brought in the door. "When people come to hear bluegrass, they're there to hear bluegrass," Kuimelis said. "They're not so interested in background music. They listen and they pay attention."

Bluegrass performers and fans at Mantra span the age range from teens (Crying Uncle Bluegrass Band will be back for its second Mantra appearance this fall) to people in their 80s and 90s. Bruce Sadownick's Marin Bluegrass

Sessions open jam holds down Sunday afternoons once a month, and Kuimelis actively seeks out newer bands, such as Bluegrass Holiday, an all-women bluegrass band that launched this year.

A number of other North Bay joints stand out, such as the Sausalito pizzeria **Taste of Rome**, **Aqus Cafe** in Petaluma's artsy warehouse district, mixes bluegrass in with folk, singer-songwriter, jazz, and spoken word artists. Just down the street from Aquas is the **Out West Roadhouse**, a repurposed section of a working auto shop with a small stage that's hosted numerous local and touring bluegrass acts. And **Redwood Cafe**, in downtown Cotati, has a down-home vibe and a fine stage where it hosts local bluegrass bands and other acoustic music. There's also an old-time jam and an Irish céilí.

**HopMonk Tavern** in Novato regularly hosts the likes of AJ Lee and Blue Summit, Hot Buttered Rum String Band, and The Travelin' McCourys. It also puts on a weekly open mic hosted by Josh Brough, of the bluegrass-adjacent local

favorites Poor Man's Whiskey. HopMonk has a second location in Sebastopol that's good for more intimate experiences, where trad veterans such as Mission Blue and the Crooked Holler String Band appear often.

When you think about the North Bay, wine comes to mind. And wineries are some of the most significant venues in Sonoma and Napa counties for bluegrass music, as well as old-time, swing and jazz. Wherever you stop in for a wine tasting or to pick up your subscriber case you're likely to hear a bluegrass band livening up the proceedings. Some of the notable bluegrass-friendly wineries in Sonoma include **Freeman Vineyard** in Sebastopol and Bella Vineyards and **Limerick Lane Cellars** in Healdsburg. In Napa county we've got **Chateau Potelle** in St. Helena and **Gargiulo** in Napa town, among many others. If you're looking for more, Sonoma Magazine ([sonomamag.com](https://sonomamag.com)) regularly features guides to winery live music offerings.

Thanks to Ted Kuster for his contributions to this article.



AJ Lee and Blue Summit at Sweetwater Music Hall in Mill Valley. Photo by Bob Free.

We're just starting the conversation about venues for bluegrass music in California. Join in at the link here:





**Amado's**

998 Valencia St, San Francisco  
Open bluegrass jam  
every Wed at 7 p.m. and a  
bluegrass act at 8:30 p.m.

**Ashkenaz Community Center**

1317 San Pablo Ave, Berkeley  
A dance hall with old-time,  
Balkan and zydeco dance nights,  
Grateful Dead preservation acts,  
and frequent bluegrass shows.

**The Back Room**

1984 Bonita Ave, Berkeley  
An excellent, small listening space  
with great acoustics and  
comfortable seating.

**Baja Taqueria**

4070 Piedmont Ave, Oakland  
Taco Jam every Saturday: online  
app builds bands from proficient  
pickers who get free tacos.

**Brewster's Beer Garden**

229 Water St, Petaluma  
Barbeque, brews, and bluegrass  
and a great outdoor space.

**The Freight & Salvage**

2020 Addison Street, Berkeley  
Renowned venue for world-  
class bluegrass and folk music.

**Guild Theater**

949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park  
AAA venue with bluegrass in the  
rotation.

**High Water Brewing**

927 Industrial Way, Lodi  
Regularly features bluegrass  
bands such as Red Dog Ash,  
DeltaGrass, and West 45.

**HopMonk Tavern Sebastopol**

230 Petaluma Ave, Sebastopol  
A more intimate relative of its  
Novato predecessor.

**Hotel Utah**

504 4th St, San Francisco  
Open bluegrass jam Tuesdays,  
7 p.m., frequent live music.

**Kensington Circus Pub**

389 Colusa Ave, Kensington  
Recently featuring Chad  
Manning with guests like David  
Grisman and Peter Rowan.

**Los Gatos Coffee Roasting Co**

101 W Main St, Los Gatos  
Bluegrass Java Jam from  
7-9 p.m. on Thursdays, live  
music Friday and Saturday.

**The Lucky Horseshoe**

453 Cortland Ave, San Francisco  
Staged, mic'd bluegrass jam  
Sundays 4-7 p.m. and frequent  
concerts.

**Mantra Wines Tasting Room**

881 Grant Ave, Novato  
Monthly open jams, weekly open  
mics featuring CBA members,  
and bluegrass bands in the  
weekend music lineups.

**Milfred Owen Concert Hall**

1220 Linda Mar Blvd, Pacifica  
Concert hall featuring top-name  
world folk and bluegrass acts.

**The Page**

298 Divisadero St, San Francisco  
Where posh Hayes Valley meets  
funky Haight-Ashbury, local  
spot for old-time and roots  
music. Kennel Club old time  
variety show Tuesdays 5-7p.m.

**The Plough and Stars**

116 Clement St, San Francisco  
Longtime home of bluegrass jam  
led by Chuck Poling (currently  
on hold) and bluegrass shows  
presented by Shelby Ash.

**Ruhstaller Farm**

6686 Sievers Rd, Dixon  
Working hops farm and brewery  
with live music and good food  
between Sacramento  
and Vacaville.

**Sam's BBQ**

1110 S Bascom, San Jose  
Longstanding family restaurant  
with local string bands on  
Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

**The Starry Plough**

3101 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley  
Old-time jams: 2nd Sundays,  
"advanced shred session,"  
4th Sundays, all levels

**The Sweetwater Music Hall**

19 Corte Madera Ave, Mill Valley  
This venerable music hall has a  
history of "once-in-a-lifetime"  
shows regularly featuring both  
national and up-and-coming  
bluegrass acts.

**Willowbrook Ale House**

3600 Petaluma Blvd N, Petaluma  
Home to Thursday night  
bluegrass shows, with long-  
running residencies by  
Ed Neff & Friends, and the  
Bloomfield Bluegrass Band.

# A GRAND GOLDEN OLD TIME CAMPOUT



Photos by Alan Bond



"It's unanimous! Everyone who came to this year's Golden Old-Time Campout loved the new location at Camp Russian River in Guerneville. And our hosts loved us, and want us back next year ... and we will take over the entire venue! Stay tuned for dates in August 2024!" - Karen Celia Heil, CBA Old-Time Director



# Thank Heavens for Frank Solivan Sr.

*cont'd from front page*

Kids On Bluegrass gives kids a place to be part of something positive – a place where all that matters is how you treat one another and how to work together to be a band. It's a place that gives the kids a sense of accomplishment, pride in themselves, and ultimately raises their self-esteem through the roof. It's a beautiful thing to see the hundreds of kids that have been through the KOB program," Frank told us earlier this year. He also described KOB as less of a music camp, "but more like a 'bluegrass music encouragement program,' where kids find community with their peers.

According to his son, Frank Sr. was the ninth of 10 music-loving and -playing siblings. His mother Bonnie and her sisters were acrobats and vaudeville musicians; Bonnie mainly played mandolin

and fiddle, but also could play guitar and bass. "She instilled her deep love and respect for music in all of her children," Frank wrote in the May Bluegrass Breakdown.

Beyond his devotion to the Kids on Bluegrass program, Frank Sr. was a well-known banjo player and emcee in Northern California. He was also the long-time host of the famous CBA hospitality suite at IBMA.

Last, but certainly not least, Frank Sr. was the proud father of bandleader and Grammy nominee Frank Solivan. More than a successful performer with his band Dirty Kitchen – IBMA's Instrumental Group of the Year, twice – the younger Solivan is also an award winning songwriter, master cook,

outdoorsman, leather craftsman, and entrepreneur.

Michael Hall, IBMA Board member and past president of the Northern California Bluegrass Society, noted that "when he took time off from bluegrass, Frank Sr. loved to fish most of the month of August in Alaskan waters. He was often joined by his fish-loving son."

We will be forever grateful for sharing so much of his time and passion with us at CBA, and his contributions to the global bluegrass community.

More details about  
Kids on Bluegrass



## The Founder of Kids on Bluegrass



"When I was about 13 years old, I got my picking buddies together in Grass Valley to go play some tunes near the stage, in hopes of getting invited to play. Of course, my dad had instigated and encouraged the situation. The great Vern Williams walked up and a conversation between us ensued, ending with him saying, 'You need to be on the stage ... let me see what I can do.' I believe he went to talk with the stage manager and such to see what could actually get done.

"The backstage area seemed so unapproachable to me at the time! But with some encouragement and help from my dad, we ended up getting invited to play some songs towards the end of one of the dinner breaks. I had gotten a taste of the stage and my dad had something to connect him to kids – with his kid playing on the big stage.

"Dad planted the seed for everyone involved that day – including the

audience. Next came talking with the festival staff to see about the possibilities of making this kind of thing a viable situation for 'the kids' to take part in the stage show the next go around. Seems it paid off.

"Dad really didn't have an outline at first, but I remember the next time I was together with my picking pals at the festival we were going to play some tunes on stage. My dad's guidance included: getting a set list together, rehearsing the material to see what could work (stage banter or jokes were suggested), working the mic (smile), etcetera, etcetera. The basic structure for what would become 'Kids On Bluegrass' was getting laid out in those first couple of years. It has been developing and going strong since that fateful day in 1989."

*Frank Solivan, The Bluegrass Breakdown. May, 2023.*



# Former KOB Remember Frank Sr.

Collected by Helen Ludé for the Bluegrass Breakdown



"When Kevin wanted to propose, he knew that there were two men in my life he had to ask for blessing from: my Dad and Frank. From that first handshake when I was 11 years-old,

Frank stepped into my life as a kind and supporting mentor, never missing an opportunity to build me up or set me straight, becoming like family. Frank helped me to come out of my shell, learn to step into responsibility, stand up for myself, and "sing from my gut." No one has told me more times in my life that I am special and made me really believe it. I credit so much of who I am today and what I have accomplished to Frank's teaching, and I know I am far from the only one.

"Frank was one-of-a-kind. If a life's significance can be measured by the positive impact left on others, then seeing the breadth of love people have for Frank is a great indication of his legacy. He was an encourager, a goofball, a teacher, an optimist, a patient fisherman, a great shot, a wonderfully proud father ... and a lover of good people, food, and music."

- Helen Garrett, Newlywed and KOB Director



"Frank Sr. was always a safe space. Every time I saw him it was like everything was right with the world. He made everyone around him feel so valued and worthy. There is no one who was kinder, more generous, or welcoming than he was."

- Mei Lin Heirendt



"Frank Solivan Sr.'s program changed many people's lives for the better and fostered a sense of community and support at an important time in our lives. I've gone on to play bluegrass fiddle professionally, and KOB was my first experience performing on stage. It was incredibly inspiring to meet and get to play with older talented kids, and Frank made that possible year after year. I only saw him a couple times a year, but he was always ready with a huge smile on his face and a big hug. He truly loved what he did, and I hope to keep his spirit alive by continuing to encourage and mentor young pickers."

- Annie Staninec



"Frank Sr. was an integral part of the California bluegrass community. He was a warm and welcoming presence at the CBA festivals and a beloved mentor to children, many of whom ended up becoming professional musicians like myself. He will be dearly missed in our community and at musical gatherings all across the country."

- Molly Tuttle



"I remember being so excited to get to play with Kids on Bluegrass when I first auditioned. Frank Sr. was super supportive of all of us, and he kept that same energy outside of KOB even as we grew into adults. It was always a joy to get to talk to Frank wherever I saw him."

- Andrew Osborne



"Frank Sr. was a mentor, inspiration, and friend to many. How lucky us California kids were to participate in his Kids on Bluegrass program. He had the unique ability to make every rising musician feel special. Frank Sr. taught us confidence, stage presence, and arranging songs with others. I remember the early mornings, and they always paid off! He will be missed by all; may we keep his legacy alive for many generations to come!"

- Helen Ludé



"Frank was one of the most influential people in my life. I wouldn't be playing music like I am today if it wasn't for his love and encouragement. I remember I was 5 years old when he told me to make sure to look into the eyes of the person I'm talking to. He gave me the confidence to be who I needed to be."

- A.J. Lee



"Frank Sr. was one of the most important people for my passion and my career. He taught me how to perform and play with others, and was so good at inspiring the next generation of musicians. So many California bluegrass musicians owe their start to Frank and KOB, me being one of them. I'm so grateful for all that he's done!"

- Kyle Ledson



"Frank Sr. taught many young musicians the invaluable and highly coveted skill of creating a 45 minute set whether you had 3 band members or 20. He instilled a professionalism not expected or required of children, but instilling this professionalism created an army of young California musicians making a name for themselves today."

- Marty Varner



Frank and the KOB at IBMA (L-R) Josh Gooding, John Gooding, Helen Ludé, Frank Solivan Sr., Daisy Kerr, Helen Garrett, and Jacob Gooding.



# BLUEGRASS VENUES OF SOUTHERN CA

By The Bluegrass Breakdown



Hillary Klug at Shutts Fabricators.  
Photo by Robin Frenette.



McCabe's in Santa Monica has been hosting bluegrass greats since 1968. Image courtesy McCabe's Guitar Shop.

## LOS ANGELES

Bluegrass music found its first footholds in the Golden State at venues around Los Angeles. Bill Monroe played at the **Santa Anita Park** and **Hollywood Park** racetracks, Hollywood's **Palomino Club**, and the **Ventura County Fairgrounds** to audiences made up of blue-collar workers in the booming aerospace and oil industries of the mid-'50s, according to Santa Barbara-based bluegrass historian Peter Feldmann.

Dance halls from the '40s already dotted the Southland. According to writer Elisabeth Greenbaum Kasson, the **Riverside Rancho** in Glendale "was once the West's premier dance hall," and there must have been at least a dozen more. **The Frontier Club** in Pomona and the Riverside Rancho hosted a band of youngsters called The Country Kids, and then The Country Boys, could count on gigs a couple of nights a week to keep their licks sharp before most of them would move on to become the Kentucky Colonels.

Coffee shops enjoyed a boom in the '50s and offered places for emerging talent to gain performance experience in front of supportive crowds. In '58, a furniture warehouse converted into a 250-seat auditorium opened its doors as the **Ash Grove** at 8162 Melrose Ave. The venue would go on to host national marquee bluegrass acts including Doc Watson, Flatt & Scruggs, The Kentucky Colonels, The Dillards, and many more, before closing its doors in 1973.

About that time the **Sweetwater Café** opened in Redondo Beach, and in February of '79, the **Banjo Cafe** opened its doors in Santa Monica, quickly becoming the place to hang for bluegrass musicians and fans. At the time, it was also the hub of the existing Southern California Bluegrass Association and even hosted a dedication ceremony featuring Bill Monroe in 1983. Sadly, it never bounced back from the fire that gutted it in the mid '80s, but there are YouTube videos that share

the feel of this special time and place for bluegrass in L.A.

**McCabe's Guitar Shop** first opened in Santa Monica in 1958, and started hosting folk concerts in a 150-room venue in 1968. Everyone who was anyone in big names, including Bill Monroe and Ralph Stanley crossed the stage at McCabe's in its early days. Recently we've seen Jake Blount, Zach Sokolow, Missy Raines and Allegheny, Big Richard, and many others. McCabe's is still hosting great bluegrass acts today in Santa Monica.

Yet another beloved mainstay of Los Angeles bluegrass was the **Blue Ridge Pickin' Parlor**, a true bluegrass community locus for the San Fernando Valley and beyond. The store opened in 1976 because Ken Tennensen, the owner, had gotten tired of fighting the traffic heading to McCabe's when he needed a new set of strings. The BPP sold everything musicians needed, hosted concerts and jams, oversaw all kinds of lessons, and even sponsored a bluegrass festival during the years it operated. Byron Berline visited frequently, as



Bill Evans at Boulevard Music. Photo courtesy of Boulevard Music.



Bluegrass concert at the Crazy J Ranch in Topanga. Photo by Robin Frenette.



did Dennis and Gabe Witcher, Dan Crary, Herb Pedersen, Phil Salazar, Alan Munde, and David Grisman. It closed in 2010.

Since 1998, **Boulevard Music** in Culver City, owned by Gary Mandell, has not only sold stringed instruments and been a home for music teachers of all sorts, but has sponsored weekly concerts, open mics, and for a time, curated an outside summer-time music series for the city. Past shows have featured Laurie Lewis, Russell Moore and IIIrd Tyme Out, Sideline, Special Consensus, Rob Ickes, the Waybacks, David Grier, Frank Sullivan, and other nationally-known bands from California and beyond.

There are still many great venues, old and new, around Los Angeles including house concert venues like **Crazy J's**. Back in 2022, Jeff Fleck came home and told his wife, "I just bought a ranch in Topanga!" She responded with, "You bought a ranch? What are you, crazy?" The name stuck. It's hard to find a more beautiful spot to hear acoustic music. Crazy J's is located in the rolling hills of Topanga, and is so rustic and laid-back that it's hard to believe that sprawling, congested Los Angeles is just over the hills.

Crazy J Ranch has hosted jams and some top-name entertainers on its outdoor stage, including Laurie Lewis and the Right Hands, John Reischman and the Jaybirds, and the John Jorgenson Bluegrass Band.

The Crazy J was looking forward to Danny Paisley and the Southern Grass in August, but tropical storm Hilary intervened and the show had to be canceled.

Another remarkable venue in the region is **Shutts Fabricators**, a machine shop relocated to Huntington Beach after years in West Long Beach. In its early days, the owner, Mark Shutts, and his family, would move all the machine tools out of the way and provide coffee and cookies for folks there to enjoy bluegrass acts from around the country. It was a down-home and welcomingly grungy place for a show.

At its Huntington Beach location, Shutts often sets up shows outside. Southern California bluegrass maven and CBA regional director Donna Hargis noted in the April Bluegrass Breakdown that the venue is nestled among concrete buildings that form a right angle, providing an industrial amphitheater of sorts.

Donna also noted that Maria Nadauld, manager for the band Special Consensus gave Shutts some serious props, "Mark Shutts has been booking my bands since December 2016. When I call, Mark answers. He hosts them. He feeds them. He houses them. He books them on a week night so they can go make the 'big bucks' at those fancy venues. He does everything he can to help traveling bluegrass bands – and not just

mine. Always, of course, with the help of Judy Shutts, the woman behind the man."

L.A. is also a part of the never-ending evolution of breweries pumping out amazing microbrews. And, much like pizza parlors showed us in the 1960s, nothing goes better with a slice and a cold beer than good, live, down-home music.

Today, **Project Barley's** brewery and pizzeria in Lomita has elevated this model to an art form. The music might be traditional or newgrass – they

love it all. Their devotion to bluegrass runs deeper than just offering bluegrass bands of all stripes a place to play; they offer bands a guaranteed \$150, "more than any other venue near L.A. that I know of," said Kenny Feinstein, of L.A.-based Water Tower bluegrass band. Project Barley also hosts a monthly bluegrass jam, and a monthly event called "Hillbilly Hype House" – an open jam followed by a show with 20-minute sets from six bands. They even brew a Water Tower beer.



"Hillbilly Hype House" at Project Barley. Photo by Robin Frenette.

## SAN DIEGO

**The Blue Guitar** was a music store and venue that served as the focal point for San Diego bluegrass in the '60s, with the Scottsville Squirrel Barkers – Kenny Wertz on guitar, Gary Carr on banjo, Larry Murray on Dobro, and 16-year-old Chris Hillman on mandolin – serving as the house band.

Bluegrass's rising popularity in the area led the **San Diego Wild Animal Park** to offer bluegrass gigs an opportunity to define bluegrass in San Diego, and regularly featured '70s favorites Pacifically Bluegrass.

Pizzerias were keen to have bluegrass in the area, as in many other parts of the state, and **Straw Hat Pizza** on Fletcher Parkway was an

early gathering place for San Diego pickers. A San Diego's **Shakey's** was among the first venues for Alison Brown and Stuart Duncan to develop their repertoire, and Nickel Creek's first gigs around the area were also frequently held at pizza parlors.

Today, bluegrass is making a comeback in the region after the pandemic shutdowns from 2020 to 2022. Regular jams are happening on Monday nights at **Duck Foot Brewing** in Miramar, and **Round Table Pizza** hosts the North County Bluegrass & Folk Club's music nights at 7 p.m. on first Tuesdays. The opener is often a local upcoming band, and then the group features

*cont'd on next page →*



Jake Eddy performs at Shutts Fabricators. Photo by Robin Frenette.



## SOCAL VENUES

*cont'd from page 11*

a more-established band from around Southern California.

Keep an eye, too, on **Verbatim Books**, as they are regularly often hosting a concert series called Southern Pacific Sessions produced by Clinton Davis. The series features performers from across the country, and has included acts Joseph Decosimo, Vivian & Riley, and Larry & Joe.

Another great venue for a side of food and drink with your bluegrass is **Nate's Garden Grill** at City Farmers Nursery. A visitor from Australia shoots straight

on TripAdvisor: "Excellent bluegrass music, nice beer and homemade lemonade. Food was fantastic, vegan burgers and salads and meat burgers too. Dogs allowed outside where the music is and plenty of parking."

Nate's hosts live music, much of it bluegrass, Wednesdays to Sundays; the Drought Tolerant Bluegrass Band is a frequent performer at this unusual venue.

*Thanks to Susan Bartholomew, Danny "Hootenany" Clark, Clinton Davis, Kenny Feinstein and Donna Hargis for contributing to this story.*



*Carrying on the bluegrass tradition at Round Table Pizza in Escondido.  
Photo by Geraldine Shelton Frisbie.*

## VENUES IN SOCAL

### Bigfoot Lodge

3172 Los Feliz Blvd, Los Angeles  
Atwater Village. Bluegrass show every Tuesday. Decorated like an old cabin in Yellowstone or Lake Tahoe.

### Bigfoot West

10939 Venice Blvd, Los Angeles  
Regular bluegrass and upscale, old-West-vibes.

### Boulevard Music

4316 Sepulveda Blvd, Culver City  
Music shop and quarter-century cornerstone of top-notch bluegrass performance venues.

### Collage

731 S Pacific Ave, San Pedro  
A listening venue for bluegrass and old time, not far from the water.

### Crazy J Ranch

20501 Callon Dr, Topanga  
Rustic venue with great sound and better bluegrass

### Duck Foot Brewing

8920 Kenamar Dr #210, San Diego  
San Diego Bluegrass Society jam each Sunday, 1-3 p.m.

### The Fret House Underground

309 N Citrus Ave, Covina  
Eclectic live music offerings, frequently bluegrass, staged under a storied guitar shop.

### Mau Sugar Mill

18389 Ventura Blvd, Tarzana  
Local watering hole in the valley that dedicates a lot of its shows to country and bluegrass music.

### McCabes Guitar Shop

3101 Pico Blvd, Santa Monica  
A landmark venue of the folk, old-time, and bluegrass scene since the 1960s.

### Nate's Garden Grill

3120 Euclid Ave, San Diego  
Iconic restaurant venue featuring local bluegrass acts, tucked into a garden shop.

### The Oracle Tavern

1640 N Spring St, LA  
Second Thurs. bluegrass/old-time beer garden jam; regional and touring acts.

### Project Barley

2308 Pacific Coast Hwy, Lomita  
Monthly bluegrass jam and a monthly bluegrass event called "hillbilly hype house:" an open jam and 20-minute sets from six bands.

### Round Table Pizza

1161 E Washington Ave, Escondido  
Live, free, bluegrass and folk music 7 p.m. on first Tuesdays. Sets from both up-and-coming and established regional artists.

### Shutts Fabricators

15481 Electronic Ln, Huntington Beach  
Grassroots venue for great local and touring bluegrass acts.

### Silverlake Lounge

2906 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles  
A premier nightlife venue since 1938 that launched the careers of many rock bands, also a mainstay for country and bluegrass.

### Verbatim Books

3793 30th St, San Diego  
Frequent host of Southern Pacific Sessions, regularly featuring touring old-time and country artists.

## PERFORM AT FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL!



### VERN'S STAGE NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Vern's Stage presents opportunities for California-based bluegrass and old-time bands to perform at the CBA's Father's Day Festival.

The Vern's Stage Committee is pleased to announce an open call for bands for the 2024 CBA Father's Day Bluegrass Festival in Grass Valley. There are a limited number of slots available from Thursday, June 13 through Sunday, June 16. We expect to fill 17 slots of approximately 35-minute sets each. Please note that this is a juried competition. As such, all submissions will be evaluated by a panel of judges who will determine our final selections.

The submission process is scheduled to be open from September 1 until midnight, November 1, 2023. Bands are invited to submit by following the link below.



Learn more and apply for Vern's Stage

*Matt Michienzie Band on Vern's Stage 2023. Photo by John G. Woodworth.*





# SOUTH STATE 48

## DON'T MISS THIS GREAT FREE EVENT!

By Donna Hargis, CBA SoCal Regional Director. Photos by Robin Frenette.

South State 48, CBA's hotel jamming event the first weekend in November at the Carlsbad-by-the-Sea Hotel in Carlsbad is a bluegrass dream: jamming all night in rooms or the open-air courtyard, free concerts in the Windmill Foodhall, workshops, beer on tap from Project Barley, and more.

People of all ages join in the fun thanks to the CBA Youth Program and a grant from the Mockingbird Foundation, a non-profit founded by Phish fans to support children's music education. Two youth bands open each night's concerts. Fair Black Rose is a band of very talented teens and Jam Pak youth-music program members from Arizona. This fantastic, diverse band is playing at IBMA this year – we are very lucky to have them!

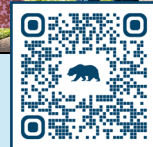
Wild Blue Yonder, our second youth band, has appeared at Father's Day Festival and Great 48. These kids will humble many of us; their skill and mastery exceeds their years. They can't even drive. Unless it's bluegrass.

Fair Black Rose opens for the Honey Buckets Friday. Saturday night, Wild Blue Yonder will open for the Rose Valley Thorns. The Thorns' Josh and Jared Bergman are reuniting in their hometown of Carlsbad for this show, and getting them back together is a rare treat!

South State 48 also serves the CBA's mission to educate the public about our beloved genre. Bluegrass Holiday, from the Bay Area, will give a concert/talk called "Bluegrass 101," and address the question: "What makes it bluegrass?"

There's much more: a "Jamming 101" class, an instrument petting zoo, crafts for kids, and of course our very popular open jam tent, where all are welcome and encouraged to join in the music.

Hotel rooms are sold out, but you don't have to stay at the hotel (or sleep) to join in on any of these free activities – including the jamming! So come out for the day (or night) if you are local, or book a room nearby if you're not. You won't be sorry!



**November 2-5 in Carlsbad, CA**

**24-hour jamming event - free concerts, workshops, and kids activities!**

## MEMBERSHIP RATES INCREASE NEXT YEAR

CBA Membership dues haven't seen a hike in 17 years, and the Board has decided that rates will need to increase starting in January. We'll have more about this later – but here's your chance to **RENEW NOW** at the current rates: \$25 for individuals or \$30 for families. You can even lock in this rate for up to five years, at a discount!

**RENEW NOW!**

## CBA MEMBERSHIP RATES

INDIVIDUAL	FAMILY
ANNUAL • \$25	ANNUAL • \$30
3-YEAR • \$65	3-YEAR • \$80
5-YEAR • \$110	5-YEAR • \$130

[CALIFORNIABLUEGRASS.ORG/CBA-MEMBERSHIP](http://CALIFORNIABLUEGRASS.ORG/CBA-MEMBERSHIP)

For more info and to join CBA, scan QR code or visit:  
[californiablugrass.org/cba-membership](http://californiablugrass.org/cba-membership)



## MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PERKS!

- ★ Ticket discounts and members-only room pricing for CBA events
- ★ Eligible to run for CBA Board of Directors
- ★ Kid's Instrument Lending Library access
- ★ Print edition of the Bluegrass Breakdown
- ★ Discounts on Clarion instrument insurance
- ★ Discounted subscription rates to Acoustic Guitar and No Depression
- ★ Opportunities to produce house concerts under CBA's ASCAP and BMI licenses.

**Celebrate and preserve bluegrass, old-time and gospel music in California—join CBA today!**



# VENUES AROUND THE STATE ... AND A SLICE OF BLUEGRASS HISTORY



By The Bluegrass Breakdown

In the 1950s, bluegrass was finding its way through California in the dance halls of the Southlands and in a relatively new venue model – the coffee house. This music found its way into a more sparsely-populated demographic around the state through another new venue type that was pairing music and culinary delights: the pizza parlor.

From the '50s into the '70s, young pickers met in parking lots outside pizza parlors popping up like dandelions to trade tunes and dial in harmonies, while the musicians inside might be getting paid to be onstage for the first time – and patrons might be getting their first taste of bluegrass – as part of a lively, bright new wave in what was generally considered folk or country music.

These venues filled a niche where there had only been bars before: coffee houses tended to host a traditional folk solo or duo, so bluegrass bands

– usually a four- or five-piece act – needed bigger venues that could better accommodate larger acts. So, during the folk revival of the 60s, pizza parlors played a pivotal role in the establishment and spread of bluegrass throughout the region.

A big ally in the spread of bluegrass got its start in nearby Sacramento: **Shakey's Pizza**. Already attuned to the banjo from the chain's association with Dixieland jazz, bluegrass was an easy fit. As the chain exploded across California and beyond, bluegrass went with it. Bluegrass historian and Canadian bluegrass radio host Darcy Whiteside also notes in a recent YouTube video on California bluegrass history, Alison Brown and Stuart Duncan met at a jam and later got gigs together at a Shakey's in the San Diego area, and the The Johnson Mountain Boys were just one of many bluegrass acts across the country to cut their teeth on gigs at Shakey's.

Today, a tantalizing array of venues around the state host bluegrass and old-time. At the corner of Franklin and 4th in Sacramento's Curtis Park is **The Side Door**, a quaint room that holds between 100-150 patrons. This venue focuses its energy on quality sound and listening experience, with a utilitarian, but effective,

approach to seating (folding metal) and concessions (bottled water). This month the calendar includes Crying Uncle and the California Reunion Band.

Like California musical traditions, smaller venues supporting bluegrass and roots music also run deep. Many of the small venues can hold their own on a list of great places to enjoy local pickin', these smaller venues are where the rubber hits the road for bluegrass around Sacramento, in the Sierras, and along the Central Coast. One of the many great things about these smaller venues and jams is they are where the players in the local scenes come together to play, hangout and listen to great music. A few in particular have emerged from the pandemic as the hottest places to see local and national bluegrass acts and if you have not yet checked them out, they should be on your list of places to check out when you are in the area looking for a real good time.

In the foothills between Cedar Ridge and Peardale is **Uncle Sonny's**, a classic roadhouse with a bluegrass jam from 6 to 8 p.m. every Wednesday night, hosted by Howard Goetz.

Nevada County also features a state-of-the art performance center in its appropriately

named **Center for the Arts**. Its 150 performances each year include many outstanding bluegrass acts, and in October features AJ Lee and Blue Summit with the Broken Compass Bluegrass Band opening.

## REST OF THE STATE

### Alibi Ale Works

10069 Bridge St, Truckee  
Bluegrass jam every  
Sunday at 6 p.m.

### Center for the Arts

314 W Main St, Grass Valley  
Hub for Nevada County arts  
performances. Frequently hosts  
bluegrass artists.

### Davenport Roadhouse

1 Davenport Ave, Davenport  
Coastal Gem north of Santa  
Cruz. Bluegrass 1-4 p.m.  
second Sundays with the  
Courthouse Ramblers

### Secret Trail Brewing Co

132 Meyers St. Ste 120, Chico  
Live music 3-5 p.m. Sundays and  
6-8 p.m. Thursdays evenings.  
Rotating food trucks or BYO  
snacks. Family and dog friendly.

### Tap & Vine

130 Maple St, Auburn  
Great spot for classy cocktails,  
good food, great service,  
upscale casual atmosphere.  
And bluegrass.

### The Side Door

2900 Franklin Blvd, Sacramento  
A small Curtis Park venue with  
great acts and nearby victuals.

### The Wild Eye Pub

535 Mill Street, Grass Valley  
Local & organic, scratch-made  
menu, regional drinks, and  
nightly events.

### Uncle Sonny's Bar

13475 Hwy 174, Grass Valley  
Local bar with pool tables, shuffle  
board, darts, sports on screens,  
and bluegrass  
jamming.



Shakey's Pizza ad circa 1971.



Weekly bluegrass jam at Alibi Ale Works in Truckee.

Keep the venue  
conversation going!





# ALL-MEMBER ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 14 IN LODI

## By The Bluegrass Breakdown

A long California Bluegrass Association tradition continues at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 14, when our All-Member Annual Meeting will take place. As it has for decades, this meeting will be held in conjunction with the CBA Fall Campout – this year at the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds. This helpful (and brief) once-a-year meeting is where you'll find out the Board election results. We'll also be drawing the prize-winners for the 2023 Instrument Sweepstakes, providing a quick update on CBA activities, and answering all your questions.

Following the official meeting, starting at 7 p.m., we'll be featuring two up-and-coming young bands on stage: Fish in a Bag, and Salty Sally. Here's your chance to enjoy these talented kids before they're famous! Tickets for the concert are \$15 at the door.



Members have gathered at the Annual Meeting for decades to learn what's going on with CBA.



CALIFORNIA  
BLUEGRASS  
ASSOCIATION

2023 FUNDRAISER

## WIN ONE OF THESE!

THREE SWEEPSTAKES

**DEERING  
BANJO COMPANY**  
Eagle II Banjo



SECOND PRIZE  
**PEGHEAD NATION**  
One year of Online Lessons

THIRD PRIZE  
**D'Addario** Strings

**SANTA CRUZ  
GUITAR COMPANY**  
OM Pre-War



SECOND PRIZE  
**Ear Trumpet Lab**  
Delphina Microphone

THIRD PRIZE  
**PEGHEAD NATION**  
One year of Online Lessons

**THE FIDDLE  
MERCANTILE**  
Fiddle Outfit



SECOND PRIZE  
**PEGHEAD NATION**  
One year of Online Lessons

THIRD PRIZE  
**D'Addario** Strings

## THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!



**DEERING**  
The Great American Banjo Company



LEARN MORE AT [CALIFORNIABLUEGRASS.ORG/2023FUNDRAISER](http://CALIFORNIABLUEGRASS.ORG/2023FUNDRAISER)

SCAN HERE FOR DETAILS AND TO ENTER:

DRAWING AT CBA ANNUAL MEETING: OCT 14, 2023  
NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN



## CBA BOARD ELECTIONS: MAIL-IN BALLOT

**VOTE  
HERE!**

All current CBA members age 16 and older are eligible to vote for this year's Board of Directors. If you have already provided your email address, you should have received an email ballot on September 1 with instructions on how to vote. If you didn't receive your ballot and would like to vote online, or have any other questions, contact the CBA Elections Director at [ballots@californiabluegrass.net](mailto:ballots@californiabluegrass.net). Balloting closes at noon on Saturday, October 14, and results will be announced at the Annual Membership meeting that evening.

If you are a current CBA member, and would rather vote by mail, you may complete this form (one form for each family member 16 years and older).

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

Member # (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Vote for up to nine candidates for one-year terms. You may also vote to Abstain, which will help us meet quorum. Candidate statements may be found online at [californiabluegrass.org/board-candidates](http://californiabluegrass.org/board-candidates)

Mail your completed ballot, postmarked by October 10, to:

**CBA Elections**  
3739 Balboa St. #5090  
San Francisco, CA 94121-2605

Candidates (choose nine)

- ☐ Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow
- ☐ Dave Gooding
- ☐ Andrea Zelones
- ☐ Karen Celia Heil
- ☐ Joel Keebler
- ☐ Pete Ludé
- ☐ Ashley Readell
- ☐ Robin Frenette
- ☐ Lani Way
- ☐ Tyler Stamets
- ☐ Write in: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Abstain





# BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

Please share questions, suggestions, or story ideas at [breakdown@californiabluegrass.net](mailto:breakdown@californiabluegrass.net)



VENUES  
ISSUE  
Oct. 2023

## INTRODUCING FRANK'S FUND

By Darby Brandli, CBA President Emerita

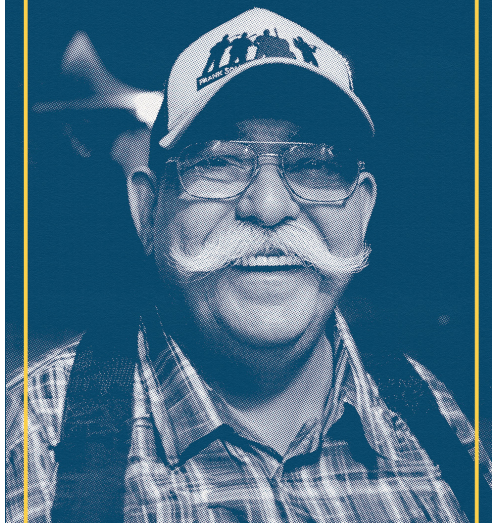
CBA Ambassador and Lifetime Member Frank Solivan Sr., with his mustache and smile, was known by thousands in the worldwide bluegrass community for his lifelong work with young musicians.

CBA has led the way in programs for youth, with Frank designing and developing the first Kids on Bluegrass program. Today, under Helen Foley Garrett the program is stronger than ever. The CBA also continues to support our young musicians who apply for and are accepted into the IBMA KOB program at the annual World of Bluegrass event in Raleigh.

Your donation to Frank's Fund will expand our youth outreach and support through programs like Kids on Bluegrass in California and beyond!

## FRANK'S FUND

SUPPORTING KIDS ON BLUEGRASS



Frank Solivan Sr. launched the CBA's "Kids on Bluegrass" program almost 35 years ago. Keep his dream alive for future generations by contributing to Frank's Fund.

**DONATE TODAY**



CALIFORNIA  
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ASSOCIATION



Infamous Stringdusters at a recent show at Sweetwater Music Hall. Photo by Alan Bond.

**BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN**  
**CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION**  
3739 BALBOA STREET, #5090  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94121-2605

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## Monthly Trivia Quiz

By Bert Daniel, Breakdown Contributor

Our August issue posed this genealogical graveler: "The old-time fiddler is the daughter of the banjo player who inspired David Bragger to start the Old-Time Tiki Parlour. Who are they?"

The answer, perhaps a bit obscured by our August article on David and the Tiki Parlour, is Rayna and Dan Gellert. Although David's sessions with father-daughter old-time power-duo Rafe and Clelia Stefanini were recorded first, David shared with us that it was the lack of available documentary recordings of Gellert, in particular, that inspired David to begin the media-production entity known today as the Old-Time Tiki Parlour.

**Steve Goldfield, Louis Kaplan and Dan Kluger** all submitted the correct answer. Per our flip of a rare three-sided coin, Mr. Goldfield wins this month's prize: a limited-edition 2023 Father's Day Festival T-shirt. Steve also acknowledged Rafe and Clelia Stefanini, and had this recollection: "One great story about Rafe and Clelia was that one year they both made the finals (top five) in the fiddle contest at the Appalachian String Band Contest in Clifftop, W.V., Rafe

backed up Clelia on guitar when it was her turn to play. Rayna placed third in that contest the first year I went to Clifftop (1998)."

## OCTOBER TRIVIA CHALLENGE

With the 2023 festival and campout season coming to a close, here is a nostalgic tip of the hat to two current western bluegrass festivals small enough that you can hear all the music from your campsite – even if you don't bring your chair to the stage (as you should). One features views of a snow-capped volcano and the other takes place in a location that somehow ended up five miles north of a town it had been five miles south of before the railroad came. Name the festivals.

Send answers to:  
[trivia@californiabluegrass.net](mailto:trivia@californiabluegrass.net)  
no later than June 30.

This month's prize is a **deluxe stoneware Deering coffee cup!** 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 December Bluegrass Breakdown.

