



FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL ARTIST PREVIEWS



**DIRECTOR'S
WELCOME**

FESTIVAL SEASON FINALLY ARRIVES

By Pete Ludé, CBA Executive Director

For many of us, our favorite time of the year is now here—the start of bluegrass festival season. In fact, in one of the articles this month I chuckled at this quote from an avid festival-goer: “I consider time away from the festival as a 51-week supply run.” That seems to sum up the passion of many CBA members about our Father’s Day Festival in June in Grass Valley.

We’re excited to announce a few upgrades and additions to this year’s festival, coming up June 13 through 16 at the Nevada County Fairgrounds. This is the 49th anniversary of the first CBA Festival, and we have a stellar line-up of national touring acts, California favorites, and regional bands, some debuting at their first major festival. You’ll enjoy over 30 bands on three stages. As usual, we’ll have dozens of free workshops, square-dancing, youth activities, and lots of jamming. New for 2024: We are adding Midnight Special shows—actually starting at 11:30 p.m. These

CBA'S 'TALENT ACQUISITION GROUP' DOES IT AGAIN!

By Danny "Hootenanny" Clark

Do you ever wonder how all the great bands are selected for the Main Stage at Father’s Day Festival? It’s by the TAG team! [G-run]. TAG, an acronym for Talent Acquisition Group, is a small consortium of acoustic music aficionados who book many of the bands that grace the Father’s Day Festival Main Stage. Throughout the year this team gets together in zoom meetings, at jams, in email threads and text messages and discusses at length the style, type, and genre of bands that should perform at FDF. We work quietly behind the scenes, researching multiple variables to balance our lineup while keeping an eye on who’s playing at similar events. We strive to book bands that are hot and trending, many with deep connections to California, and several that are hiding under the radar—and about to become your new favorite band. We hope that you’ll find all these superlative qualities in the 2024 lineup. Here are just a few of the bands that we are especially excited about:

Alison Brown

Alison Brown was raised on bluegrass music in Southern California and—fun fact—spent many of her formative years playing with

another fellow SoCal musical prodigy, Stuart Duncan. In 1987, Alison Bown joined Alison Krauss & Union Station and, in 1991, she was named IBMA’s banjo player of the year. In the mid-90s, Alison Brown and Gary West founded the seminal recording label Compass Records. Alison has been blurring musical boundaries throughout the duration of her career and we look forward to her upcoming performance at FDF ‘24. Be sure to check out her newest single “Bluegrass Radio” with fellow banjoist Steve Martin.

Rick Faris Band

Looking for straight-up bluegrass? We’ve got just the band for you! Like many bluegrass musicians, Rick Faris grew up playing bluegrass in a family band. Rick is a familiar face to CBA, as he toured for many years with the award-winning band Special Consensus. Rick recently moved to Owensboro, Kentucky—“The Bluegrass Music Capital of the World”—and when not on the road he can be found working in his luthier shop building acoustic guitars. Rick recently hired a duo of young hotshots on banjo and mandolin, and we look forward to their appearance at FDF.

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Alison Brown. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Rick Faris. Photo by Molly Harmon.

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★ AN AWFUL LOT OF GREATNESS ★

50 YEARS AGO AT THE GOLDEN STATE COUNTRY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL



Vassar Clements. Photo by Ben Haller.

By Jon Hartley Fox for The Bluegrass Breakdown

People on the West Coast had never seen anything like it. The Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival, which took place 50 years ago this month in Marin County, was the first bluegrass festival in the Bay Area and the biggest bluegrass festival ever held in California. It was the first time many California fans experienced the joys of live bluegrass in a festival setting.

The Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival was held

April 26–28, 1974, at the Marin Veterans’ Memorial Building and Grounds in San Rafael, about 15 miles north of San Francisco.

The event was produced by Jewell Productions, which was Judy and Paul Lammers, a married couple from Portola Valley. Tickets for the festival cost \$8.50 per day, or \$22 for all three days. A camping pass was included with a three-day ticket. A souvenir program was available for one dollar.

cont'd on page 10 →



Country Gongbang. Photo courtesy of the artist.

ARTIST PREVIEWS

cont'd from front page

Country Gongbang

From Rosine, Kentucky, to South Korea and back, bluegrass music has truly spread across the globe. Country Gongbang is no stranger to CBA; in 2021, they performed for the CBA Jam-a-Thon web stream in which over 200 artists from 12 countries came together to raise funds for the CBA's Youth Program. This band recently performed in Raleigh, North Carolina, at the IBMA World of Bluegrass. Formed in 2018, Country Gongbang plays a form of contemporary bluegrass, writing and singing in both English and Korean. Country Gongbang does not perform often in the United States, so be sure to witness their tasty tunes while at FDF. 🐻



Robin Frenette

APPLY FOR CBA'S NEW PRODUCTION LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM AT FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL

By The Bluegrass Breakdown

If you're looking for valuable experience in event production and love building community through bluegrass music, CBA has a great opportunity for you at the 2024 Father's Day Festival!

Festivals like our shindig in Grass Valley, and others across the country, play a pivotal role in the music industry, building a fan base and contributing an important part of a touring band's income. And they are remarkably complex; presenting 30 bands on three stages over four days, workshops, youth programs, a luthier's pavilion, vendors, and many family-oriented activities takes hundreds of people coordinating venue preparation, ticket prices, customer experience, sound systems, food and beverage service, staging, safety, operations, talent management, transportation, and much more. We want to do our part to launch the next generation of professional event producers to help ensure a bright future for live bluegrass.

With a great team like ours, festival production is almost always fun, but it's not always easy. This is an outdoor festival held at a venue spanning over 20 acres. It can be hot; it can be cold. Some roles require a lot of walking, moving boxes or equipment weighing up to 50 pounds, or staying in one place for several hours at a time.



John Woodworth

Starting on June 10, you'll work alongside our expert production team for eight hours a day, over seven days, creating a high-quality festival experience for attendees and learning to solve the inevitable challenges of a live event in real-time. You'll get the benefit of our series of short production workshops led by experts, curated for you to meet the key team leaders across festival operations and learn how to be successful in those roles. We'll provide space for you to camp and meals while you're with us. And when you are not helping run the festival, you'll have free access to all the action, including stage performances, music workshops, square-dances and all-night jamming!

If this sounds like your kind of fun, and you enjoy being a team player who is open to feedback and collaborative creation, then don't hesitate to follow the qr code for more information, and be sure to apply to be one of our 12 participants by April 15.

Learn more and apply for the Production Leadership Training Program here →



Robin Frenette

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

April 2024 - Festival Issue

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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WELCOME MESSAGE

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are separately-ticketed, intimate, indoor, club-type shows for night owls who want a break from jamming. Friday night will feature Laurie Lewis and friends in a tribute to women in bluegrass, and Saturday night features Frank Solivan & Friends. As another first, we'll celebrate Father's Day with a Sunday Bluegrass Brunch at Vern's Stage from noon to 1:30 p.m. There's also a new Preschool Family Jam program this year for the 5-and-younger crowd. And we'll have a great line-up of food vendors, craft vendors, luthiers, and much more.

You'll find more information about all of this in this edition of the *Bluegrass Breakdown*. We've also collected a thorough listing of all the other festivals in the Western states you might want to attend. Have you ever marveled at the sense of family and community that draws us together at these festivals? Well, so have sociology professors! You'll learn more about the "portable community" that emerges from our festival culture in an article by Dr. Robert Owen Gardner, who recently wrote a book on the topic. This month is also the 50th

anniversary of a major California event: the Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival in Marin County. We asked Jon Hartley Fox to dig into the story behind this pivotal event, and he found a fascinating tale.

Tickets to the Father's Day Festival are selling fast—so visit FathersDayFestival.com to get yours before they're gone. We also have volunteer slots available; just check out the website or contact volunteers@CaliforniaBluegrass.net for more information. Also new for 2024 is a Music Production Leadership Training program for folks 18-to-28 years old who are interested in getting hands-on experience running a large music festival—behind the scenes. You can read about this elsewhere in this edition, and information is also on the website. But don't delay; applications close on April 15.

I look forward to seeing you in just a few months in Grass Valley, and likely at other events around the state throughout the summer. 2024 is looking to be an outstanding year for music.



We have some excellent artwork for this year's Summer Music Camp created by Kendl Winter, and will have limited edition prints and shirts available for sale at camp!

SPRING CAMPOUT, AND MEMORIES OF CAMPOUTS PAST

By Deb Livermore, CBA Campouts Coordinator

It's only a couple of weeks until the Spring Campout at the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds, April 16-21, in Lodi! I'm really looking forward to it. It's a fantastic place to make lasting memories—and I'd like to share one here.

I've been busy putting on the campouts for many years, and in the past I didn't really have much of a camp and so didn't spend much time there. But three years ago, I had a couple of friends that wanted to camp by me. We created a lovely camp with two EZ-ups, lots of picking chairs, and a fire-pit for the chilly nights—everything that would bring jammers to our camp.

And, boy howdy did it! Our camp has become the place of almost continuous picking! And so when I have a chance, I can go back to my camp to enjoy the music! It's wonderful.

Now our camp is noted for its twin-fiddle jams, and occasionally, triple fiddles! How can you beat that? Thank you, camp buddies; you know who you are. And if you want to know who they are, come by, bring your instrument and your voice. Harmonies are desired at all times!

This year, Bruce Champion will bring The Truck Mobile Recording Unit to the campout to capture impromptu jam sessions. He'll mix and master recordings for each group and burn every member a CD. Talk about making memories!

Don't forget the California Old Time Fiddle Association's 56th Open Fiddle and Picking Championship is happening on April 19-20 at the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds, as well. Check out www.csotfa.org for more info concerning that event. I can assure you that memories will be made there, too!

Contact me for camping reservations or any other info at Deblivermore@gmail.com.

Thanks, and I look forward to you making memories while you "Soar in 24!"



Contest fiddling during the Campout. Photo by Alan Bond.



Recording in progress! Photo by Robin Frenette.



APRIL 16-21, 2024

LODI GRAPE FESTIVAL GROUNDS

RV CAMPING \$40/NIGHT

ELECTRIC & WATER HOOKUPS

TENT/CAR CAMPING \$10/NIGHT

DRY CAMPING

FOR CAMPING RESERVATIONS, EMAIL

DEBLIVERMORE@CALIFORNIABUEGRASS.NET

Check out the action from the 2023 Spring Campout in the CBA Photo Archive! →



FATHER'S DAY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

MAIN STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 13

10:00 am Trouble Town
 11:00 am Danny Paisley & The Southern Grass
 12:00 pm Country Gong Bang
 2:55 pm Music Camp All-Stars
 3:55 pm Tray Wellington Band
 4:55 pm The Horsenecks
 7:45 pm Tray Wellington Band
 8:45 pm Country Gong Bang
 9:45 pm Danny Paisley & The Southern Grass

FRIDAY, JUNE 14

10:00 am Salty Sally
 11:00 am Rick Faris Band
 12:00 pm Sister Sadie
 2:55 pm One Button Suit
 3:55 pm Danny Paisley & The Southern Grass
 4:55 pm Kids on Bluegrass
 7:45 pm Country Gong Bang
 8:45 pm Rick Faris Band
 9:45 pm Sister Sadie

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

10:00 am Caltucky
 11:00 am Rick Faris Band
 12:00 pm Lonesome River Band
 2:55 pm Frank Solivan and Dirty Kitchen
 3:55 pm Paul Brown and Terri McMurray
 4:45 pm Lifetime Membership Awards
 4:55 pm Kids on Bluegrass
 7:00 pm Frank Solivan "A Tribute to Frank"
 8:00 pm Lonesome River Band
 9:00 pm Sister Sadie
 10:00 pm Alison Brown Band

SUNDAY, JUNE 16

10:00 am Solid Gold Stranger
 11:00 am Lonesome River Band
 12:00 pm Alison Brown Band
 2:00 pm Frank Solivan and Dirty Kitchen
 3:00 pm Paul Brown and Terri McMurray
 4:00 pm Alison Brown Band

PIONEER STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 13

12:55 pm One Button Suit

FRIDAY, JUNE 14

12:55 pm The Horsenecks
 1:55 pm Tray Wellington Band
 5:50 pm Trouble Town

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

11:55 pm Salty Sally
 3:00 pm Youth Academy Show
 5:50 pm Solid Gold Strangers

SUNDAY, JUNE 16

12:35 pm Sycamore Band
 1:20 pm Caltucky

VERN'S STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 13

12:50 pm Lonesome Still
 1:35 pm Hay Blackbird
 2:20 pm Savage Bond
 6:10 pm The Crooked Holler String Band
 6:55 pm Lucas Lawson & The Unturned Stone

FRIDAY, JUNE 14

12:50 pm Mission Blue Duet
 1:35 pm Mostly Marys
 2:20 pm Welcome West
 6:00 pm The Town Howlers
 6:45 pm John Barleycorn

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

12:50 pm Harlin and Feeny
 1:35 pm B*Craft
 2:20 pm Clinton Davis String Band
 5:45 pm Hydra-Matic Drive Bluegrass Band
 6:30 pm Bean Creek

SUNDAY, JUNE 16

12:00 pm Father's Day Bluegrass Brunch
 1:25 pm Bluegrass Holiday



MAIN STAGE



PIONEER STAGE



VERN'S STAGE



SQUARE DANCE!

WHITNEY PAVILLION (Near Vern's Stage)
 7:00 pm - All dances taught

Friday: The Horsenecks
 Saturday: Paul Brown & Terri McMurray



By Jim Duber, Vern's Stage Entertainment Coordinator

On behalf of the Vern's Stage entertainment committee, it's a pleasure to announce the outstanding slate of bands selected to perform on Vern's Stage at the upcoming Father's Day Bluegrass Festival. Thanks to all the bands that submitted audition videos. Even though we can't select all the bands that enter, we appreciate the time and effort that goes into the process, and hope that they'll consider submitting again next year.

To determine the bands that are invited to perform, our team of expert judges commit their time, expertise, and attention to detail to all the excellent submissions. I appreciate the work they put in to ensure that we have, as always, an

excellent lineup of music for everyone at the festival to enjoy.

We have a number of returning favorites: The Town Howlers (2019, 2016), Hydra-Matic Drive Bluegrass Band (2018), Bean Creek (2019, 2015, 2012, 2009), and Sycamore Bend (2014). We also will welcome many bands who are new to our stage. There's something for all tastes, from traditional bluegrass to more newgrass-inspired bands, as well as some old time. We always hope to offer as wide a selection of musical styles as possible. As usual, this lineup leans towards bluegrass, and we hope this will encourage California's many excellent old-time bands to submit their auditions next year.

Strung Nugget Gang at FDF 2023. Photo by Robin Frenette.

Check out the full lineup for Vern's Stage at Father's Day Festival in the schedule on page 4.

If you'd like to know more about the bands on Vern's Stage while counting down the days until the festival, just follow the QR code below. 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 2024 bands to help you make sure you don't miss your favorite Vern's Stage acts.

Check out the 2024 Vern's Stage lineup, and all the bands back to 2009! →



NEW FOR 2024 FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL MIDNIGHT SPECIAL CONCERTS

Laurie Lewis and Friends
Celebrating Women in Bluegrass
Friday, June 14 • 11:30 p.m.
Ponderosa Hall • \$25

Frank Solivan and Friends
The Grass Valley Spirit
Saturday, June 15 • 11:30 p.m.
Ponderosa Hall • \$25

The big show on the Main Stage ends by 11, but the music won't stop then! This year we are taking over Ponderosa Hall, adjacent to the Main Stage, for intimate showcase performances in a club-like setting. Doors open at 11 p.m. and the shows start at 11:30 p.m. Adult beverages will be available. Tickets for these special events are \$25, and are on sale now at FathersDayFestival.com. These events are only open to festival attendees holding a one-day festival pass or four-day full-festival pass.



Laurie Lewis.

Laurie Lewis: Celebrating Women in Bluegrass

Within CBA, we know how important women have been to bluegrass. With Alice Gerard's 90th birthday happening on July 8, this is the perfect opportunity to celebrate the often-overlooked roles of female bluegrass musicians, singers and songwriters. For this show, Laurie Lewis and an all-star group of friends assembled especially for the occasion lead our celebration of the contributions of women in bluegrass music. It promises to be a special evening.

Frank Solivan: The Grass Valley Spirit

Frank Solivan has been making his annual pilgrimage to the Father's Day Bluegrass Festival since he was a young lad. We're proud that he's back this year with his band, multi-Grammy nominees Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen, on our Main Stage this year. But while back in California, Frank wanted a chance to join up with some of his old pickin' buddies and play some favorite tunes that he doesn't usually get to fit into his regular show. And we want to be there to listen! Join us for Frank Solivan and his special guests to see the sparks fly in a one-time event you won't want to miss.



Frank Solivan.



Ponderosa Hall. Photo by April DePiazza.



Workshop under the trees at FDF 2023. Photo by Patrick Campbell.

WORKSHOPS AT 2024 FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL

Alongside some of the best acts in national and California bluegrass today, the Father's Day Festival is known for its great workshops—here's just a taste of what our Steve Hogle, our workshop coordinator extraordinaire, has got cooking for this year. Times and locations will be determined as we get closer to Father's Day, so stay tuned!



Christine Wilhoyte



Joe Weed



Austin Clark

- Autoharp with Tina Louise Barr
- Banjo with David Guarente
- Banjo with Dave Magram
- Mandolin with Marty Varner
- Fiddle with Michelle Vu
- Fiddle with Jill Cruey
- "Mindfulness and Simple Movements to Improve Your Musicianship" with Christine Wilhoyte
- Home Studio Recording with Joe Weed
- "Juggling, Bluegrass Style" with Jeremiah Johnston
- "Vocals: Let Your Voice Be Heard" with Sheridan Malone
- "Double Stops for Leads, Licks, and Fills on Guitar" with Sheridan Malone
- "Banjo Set-up and More" with Greg Deering
- "Instrument Repair Q&A" with Austin Clark, mandolin builder
- Bass with Lisa Burns



Lisa Burns

FDF YOUTH ACTIVITIES

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, three-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 Academy

Wednesday - Saturday

Four-day music camp for 8- to 16-year-olds directed by three-time national fiddle champion Kimber Ludiker, founder of Grammy-nominated Della Mae and IBMA's 2022 mentor of the year. Pre-registration required, limited to 50 people. Scholarships available. Located in Sugar Pine Lodge.

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.



New in 2024!

PRE-SCHOOL FAMILY JAM

Thursday & Friday

Explore rhythms and melodies designed to stimulate little brains! Led by Hope Savage, a pre-school and baby music teacher in the Bay Area—also performing on Vern's Stage during this year's festival with band Savage Bond. We'll provide instruments, parachutes, stretchy bands, and other fun stuff for children 5 and younger, and their adults; you provide the adorable kids, a blanket to sit on, and enthusiastic participation as we sing, dance, play, and make beautiful music together! Free.

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. Arrange a pickup by contacting instruments@californiabluegrass.net

Kids Performances

Kids on Bluegrass 4:55 p.m. Friday - Main Stage

Youth Academy Performance 3:00 p.m. Saturday - Pioneer Stage

Kids on Bluegrass 4:55 p.m. Saturday - Main Stage



Kids on Bluegrass performance. Photo by Bob Calkins.

MEET THE CAMPERS!

JULIAN FAMILY FIDDLE CAMP EDITION

By Adam Roszkiewicz, CBA Music Camps Director

The Julian Family Fiddle Camp is fast approaching in May—have you registered yet? We've shared a lot in our recent issues about the incredible instructors who will be joining us, but one of the things that makes the camp so special is the community of pickers who come as participants from near and far. Here is an introduction to just two of the wonderful folks you may meet at this year's camp.

Dwight Worden is a retired environmental lawyer from Del Mar where he is currently an elected member of the city council and has served twice as mayor.

Tell us a little about yourself and your musical journey. Where are you from? When did you start playing music?

I grew up in the Santa Monica area during the folk music boom of the 1960's. I started guitar at age 12 playing Dylan; Peter, Paul and Mary; and the like. I was bitten by the bluegrass bug when I heard Doc Watson in the mid 1960's (whom I saw in person many times, including with Merle). I took up the fiddle in the early 1970s and have been all over bluegrass since. I now play mandolin and bass too—well enough to be in some bands and to have fun but not at the top level. I play upright bass in my current band Prairie Sky and we will be performing in a benefit concert for the camp on March 30 in Julian.

What instrument or instruments do you play?

Guitar, fiddle, mandolin, and upright bass.

What's your favorite genre or genres?

Bluegrass is my tops, and I like both the traditional hard-core stuff (Danny Paisley, et al) and the newer stuff from Billy Strings and Molly Tuttle to Trampled by Turtles. I also listen to classical, blues, and jazz. Also, I love finger-style guitar, which is how I started in music.

Is there one musical teacher or mentor that comes to mind who has contributed to your love and understanding of music?

That would be Sarah Watkins, who taught me fiddle when she was 15. I heard her play and knew I wanted to play like that! I had to go to her house for lessons because she couldn't drive. I loved her playing and learned from, and was inspired by, her—still am. Also, Laurie Lewis from whom I took lots of fiddle. Stuart Duncan has also influenced me heavily, wishing I could play like him!

How did you hear about the JFFC and how long have you been attending?

Avery Ellisman, camp founder, plays in Prairie Sky with me, so I have been involved in the camp since the beginning. I attended the first year, and almost every year since, missing just a few.

What's a standout moment you've had at camp, musical or otherwise?

Every year, it's feeling the weight lift as I enter the mountains—leaving work, politics, and daily chores behind for a few days of just music and friends. In that frame of mind, I love it all: from the opening welcome jam, to the classes and evening concerts, to the nature hikes. I have taken the fiddle classes, mandolin, guitar, and bass classes and enjoyed and learned from all of them. Everyone who loves music should consider a camp experience. The Julian Family Fiddle Camp is way more than classrooms and instruction. It's meeting new people and having a great time.

Do you or have you attended other music camps and if so, which one(s)?

In the past I attended Bluegrass at The Beach for many years, run by Laurie Lewis on the beach in Oregon. I have also attended camps at Summergrass, Wintergrass, and helped my partner Betty Wheeler and Rob Ickes put on the ResoSummit camp in Nashville for 13 years. I also attended Mark O'Connor's camp when it was here in San Diego. I served on the IBMA board for 12 years and participated in its activities, and I have been active on the San Diego Bluegrass Society board of directors since the 1990s.

Marianne Dreisbach is a fourth generation Bay Area resident, guitarist, and attended the JFFC for the first time in 2023.

Tell us a little about yourself and your musical journey. Where are you from? When did you start playing music?

I began noodling around on the guitar when I was about 40. I had played simple strumming in college, but not much. After my family was somewhat raised, I decided to focus on learning to play. I had some dips and valleys in that journey, but took off in earnest about 10 years ago.

What instrument or instruments do you play?

The guitar is the only instrument I play. I have a 1956 OM-18 which I have had since the 60s and I have the prototype for the Santa Cruz Guitar Company's OM-12.



What's your favorite genre or genres?

I am passionate about and primarily play Piedmont blues. I try to focus on that style in most of my playing. I also love and play a bit of bluegrass.

Is there one musical teacher or mentor that comes to mind who has contributed to your love and understanding of music?

Steve Palazzo of Santa Cruz has been my guitar teacher and guide for 30 years. He is known locally for his bluegrass chops, but he is the best fingerpicking teacher I have seen. His breadth of knowledge of all music continues to inform me! He can seamlessly guide you stylistically from the Delmore Brothers, to Rev. Gary Davis, to Merle Travis, and never miss a beat.

How did you hear about the JFFC and how long have you been attending?

I heard about JFFC from my girlfriend, Ki, who plays the fiddle and wanted me to accompany her to the camp. I only attended last year.

What's a standout moment you've had at camp, musical or otherwise?

I think one of the most enjoyable moments of the camp was the nightly performances by many of the teachers and some students. They were awesome.

Do you or have you attended other music camps and if so, which one(s)?

I attended the Maine Fiddle Camp the previous year, 2022. In the mid-90s I attended the Port Townsend Blues Workshop associated with their blues festival. During that particular year I was blessed to be able to sit and listen to and learn from Etta Baker and John Jackson—two of the most renowned Piedmont blues guitarists. Etta Baker has inspired me throughout my life. Last year I was able to visit Morganton, North Carolina, to see her memorial.

There's still time to join us for Julian Family Fiddle Camp! Learn more and register →



Prairie Sky perform at JFFC 2023. L-R: Avery Ellisman, Ramona Ault, Lenny Bole and Dwight Worden. Photo by Robin Frenette.



A young fiddler at JFFC. Photo by Robin Frenette.



A colorful line of campsites at Strawberry Music Festival. Photo by Robin Frenette.

BLUEGRASS FESTIVALS CREATING A “PORTABLE COMMUNITY”

By Robert Owen Gardner, Linfield University Sociology Professor, for *The Bluegrass Breakdown*

Bluegrass festivals are a truly special social environment. As bluegrass fans across the country are gearing up for summer festival season, it’s a good time to step back and reflect: What in the world makes us pick up from the comfort of our homes, pack our mountains of gear and instruments into the back of a truck, drive hundreds of miles into the rural hinterland, and gather with a rag-tag group of familiar strangers? What compels us to sleep on the ground in tents in the middle of an open field, listen to our neighbors snore all night, pick and drink too much and sleep too little, and expose ourselves to whatever Mother Nature has up her sleeve? Of course bluegrass music is the initial draw, but beyond the music, what is the underlying appeal of festival season?

We gravitate to festivals because of the incredible opportunity to listen to and play music non-stop for three or four straight days, but we return year-after-year and become full-fledged “festivarians” because of the intimate sense of community that is built and sustained there. Anyone who has immersed themselves in bluegrass festival life knows the special kind of close-knit, family-like relationships and

long-standing friendships that are cultivated on tarps and under canopies in the festival grounds.

As a sociologist at Linfield University in McMinnville, Oregon, my academic research has examined the vibrant forms of “portable community” that emerge, flourish, and disband over long weekends in festival campgrounds across the American West and beyond. My recent book, *The Portable Community: Place and Displacement in Bluegrass Festival Life*, takes a scholarly look at the enduring appeal of bluegrass and festival life.

When I started my research, my goal was to understand the social forces and processes that gave rise to bluegrass music and festival culture. I was especially interested in examining what sustained its vitality and energy into the present day. I wanted to know what keeps contemporary audiences seeking out that “high lonesome sound,” especially in areas like the West Coast and Rocky Mountain region—far away from the hills of Appalachia. I realized that the story of bluegrass music and festival culture is a story about community and the people who long to cultivate it.

The Portable Community

Portable communities like the ones found in bluegrass festival campgrounds usually emerge over a long weekend and, in short order, become a beehive of social interaction. Upon arrival during “land rush,” campers converge on otherwise empty fields and begin staking their claim to what will become their home territory throughout the event. Campers circle their tents, canopies, and RVs to maximize opportunities for socializing and to provide a common focal point for sharing food, drink, and of course all-day—and all-night—jamming. Over the span of a few days, these campsites coalesce into a vibrant, freeform “tent city” in which festival campers can meander camp-to-camp to visit, explore, or seek out the next hot jam.

Despite their temporary status, the recurring nature of these RV and tent villages provide an inclusive place of relational intimacy where memories are made from one year to the next. At long standing festivals like Rockygrass and Telluride Bluegrass Festival in Colorado, the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, and CBA’s Father’s Day Festival in Grass Valley, veteran attendees set up elaborate tent and

RV compounds and camp with the same core group of friends year in and year out.

Often these camps develop a distinct name and identity like Father’s Day Festival’s “Camp Spam,” “Camp Sympathy,” and “Turtle Camp,” which can become anchors of social interaction in an otherwise transitory setting. Newcomers to these festivals may start with small camps on the periphery of these larger, more established camps, but they are usually integrated into the larger group fairly quickly as deep friendships and musical bonds are created.

By talking with thousands of bluegrass musicians, fans, and festival promoters over the last 25 years, I discovered that many experience the festival world as distinctly different from their daily lives defined by work schedules, deadlines, office cubicles, and laptop computers. The ability to unplug, step off the grid, pick up an acoustic instrument, and sing harmony with familiar strangers for a long weekend can be a radical and welcome departure from our day-to-day existence.

In an era defined by intractable wars, political divisions, social media distractions, COVID-distancing



Late night hot dogs at Father’s Day Festival. Photo by Robin Frenette.



Sunday Brunch at Robin’s camp. Photo by Robin Frenette.

protocols, and rampant individualism, bluegrass festivals provide a communal antidote. Festival goers explained to me how the festival and campground scene provides a welcome opportunity to connect, interact with, and live closely amongst other people in an inclusive and intimate setting that they simply can't find anywhere else. Many explained that they do not interact regularly with or know their neighbors at home, but welcome the relaxed social boundaries they encounter at the festival that allows their long-time campmates and new arrivals to become enduring festival friends. Over time, festival family becomes extended kin.

There is also a special kind of closeness that emerges between main-stage musicians and fans at bluegrass festivals. Many of the bands featured as daytime acts can be found sleeping in campsites and RVs alongside their devoted fans. Unlike rock and roll and pop music events that have enormous, elevated arena stages and layers of security that separate musicians from their fans, bluegrass provides a unique opportunity to meet with, learn from, and even pick with main-stage musicians in the campgrounds.

During the last night of Rockygrass several years ago, I was walking through the campground and heard two mandolin players working through a tune. As other folks were tearing down their camps, they were sitting on plastic coolers at the edge of the pathway and nobody was paying them much mind. It turns out that it was Chris Thile providing an impromptu lesson to an aspiring teenage musician. Over the years, I have had similar opportunities to jam with Tim O'Brien; sing gospel tunes with Peter Rowan while standing barefoot in Colorado's St. Vrain River; take bluegrass guitar workshops with icons like Bryan Sutton, Chris Eldridge, and David Grier; learn



Darby Brandli and Lynn Quinones at Camp Spam at 2007 FDF. CBA file photo.

how to jam with "Dr. Banjo," aka Pete Wernick; and learn to sing vocal harmony with Ronnie and Del McCoury. Where else could you find such an opportunity to learn from and play with your musical heroes? The bluegrass festival is a truly special place.

A wise festival-goer once told me that she refers to the time she spends away from the festival as the "51-week supply run." As dedicated festival goers, we spend a great deal of our off-season reminiscing about the previous year while thinking about, planning, and preparing for the next festival event. It is no wonder why. Bluegrass festivals provide us with a portable form of community that we can take with us on the road and unpack when we need it most.

The Portable Community: Place and Displacement in Bluegrass Festival Life (2020, Routledge Press) is available in hardcover, paperback, and e-book versions through this link and through most major online retailers. Ask your local university library to order a copy!



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Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival poster by Rick Shubb.

“Given the short period of time they had for planning ... it was a suicide mission to try to pull off a festival like that. To Judy Lammers’ credit, she did it.”

Skunk Cabbage’s manager Judy Lammers introduced herself to Vassar and, after chatting for a while, invited Vassar to sit in with the band at their gig the following night at a local biker bar. To everyone’s disbelief, he accepted the invitation.

He had a great time and asked Skunk Cabbage to be his backup band on the West Coast, where he loved performing and had a huge following. Their many gigs together included a sold-out twin bill at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, pairing Vassar and Skunk Cabbage with Country Gazette featuring Byron Berline.

At some point along the way, Skunk Cabbage and the Lammers decided to put on a bluegrass festival, despite a complete lack of experience in event production. To this day, Paul Lammers insists that “the whole damn thing was Tom Rigney’s idea.” Because they all were massive Vassar Clements fans, they made the somewhat

unusual decision to build the festival around Vassar, selecting acts with whom he could perform. The festival’s souvenir program declared that the GSCBF was officially dedicated to the fiddler.

The GSCBF’s eye-popping roster of artists started with a solid core of nationally known traditional bluegrass bands, including Jim & Jesse and The Virginia Boys, Ralph Stanley & the Clinch Mountain Boys, Mac Wiseman, Jimmy Martin & the Sunny Mountain Boys, a Greenbriar Boys reunion including Frank Wakefield, and a reunion of the recently disbanded Old & in the Way.

California bluegrass was represented by a slew of Bay Area bands, including Skunk Cabbage, High Country, the Hired Hands, Phantoms of the Opry, Western Union, and the Homestead Act—and Southern California’s only representative, Corn Bred.

The festival also presented Doc and Merle Watson, Buck White & the Down Home Folks, Doug

AN AWFUL LOT OF GREATNESS

50 Years Ago at the Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival

cont’d from front page

The story of the GSCBF begins with Vassar Clements, the fiery bluegrass and jazz fiddler. The “Kissimmee Kid” was the hottest fiddler in the world in 1974, thanks to his featured role on *Will the Circle be Unbroken* (the landmark three-record set by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band) and touring and recording with two popular and influential bands: John Hartford’s Aereo-Plain and the Earl Scruggs Revue.

Vassar was in the Bay Area to play the final gig of Old & in the Way, the bluegrass side project of the Grateful Dead’s Jerry Garcia. The morning after the gig, Vassar walked into a club in San Francisco that hosted a weekly live bluegrass radio broadcast. The band Skunk Cabbage was on stage when he arrived, and the band’s fiddler, Tom Rigney, remembers seeing Vassar and his fiddle case and wanting to hide.



Greenbriar Boys and Friends (L-R Top: Jerry Garcia, Rob Stoner, John Herald Bottom: Vassar Clements, Frank Wakefield). Photo by Ben Haller.

Dillard and Donna Washburn, John Hartford's Aereo-Plain band, and Tut Taylor and Norman Blake.

Folk, country-rock, and pop acts included Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Maria Muldaur, Emmylou Harris playing one of her first solo gigs, and the Great American String Band (Richard Greene, Jerry Garcia, David Grisman, David Nichtern, and Taj Mahal). The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band closed the festival Sunday night with a nod to its *Circle* album, with special guests Doc and Merle Watson, Vassar Clements, Jimmy Martin, and Norman Blake.

Legendary country guitarist Merle Travis was scheduled to perform but had to cancel due to illness. The MC for the GSCBF was an unknown banjo-playing comedian from Los Angeles named Steve Martin.

Bill Griffin, a young musician from Santa Barbara who played mandolin with the Cache Valley Drifters, had been to bluegrass festivals before, but he saw a difference in the GSCBF. "It was more of a music festival," he said, "than just a straight bluegrass festival. Emmylou Harris was a big draw for me, as I was already a fan of hers. But the bluegrass stuff—that collection of people all in one spot was really incredible. It's a fond memory. I'm glad I was there.

"I'd seen Bill Monroe before, but here were all these great older guys I never expected to get the chance to see—Mac Wiseman, and Jim & Jesse, and Jimmy Martin. Getting to meet Curly Ray Cline was pretty cool. But my strongest memory of the festival is Jimmy Martin. It was the full Jimmy Martin experience and it made a huge impression on me. I loved it. I had heard some of his music before, but to see him live was pretty impressive. He was truly great and about as far from 'California bluegrass' as you could get."

Prior to the festival, Jewell Productions had predicted daily crowds of 10,000 people and 30,000 for the whole weekend, but the actual numbers were much lower. The weather was a big reason for that. It had been cold and rainy most of the week leading up to the festival, and while the rain had mostly stopped by Friday night, it was cold and muddy. Saturday was

cold, windy, and foggy, and while Sunday was nice, the damage had been done. Post-show estimates of crowd size seemed to settle in the 2,000–3,000 range each day, with maybe 10,000 people for the whole weekend.

Contemporary press accounts of the festival mention another factor contributing to the lower-than-expected attendance figures: the high price of the tickets. While those tickets—\$8.50 per day; \$22 for all three days—seem almost laughably cheap today, that wasn't the case back then. In terms of purchasing power, one of those daily tickets would cost \$56 now, while a weekend pass would run about \$137. Still, a pretty good deal.

The GSCBF was a pivotal event in the formation of the California Bluegrass Association. Among the attendees that weekend was a Bay Area clawhammer banjo player with a vision of an organization to support the music he loved. He was canvassing the grounds looking for like-minded folks when he met Keith Little, who would go on to a distinguished, and ongoing, career in bluegrass playing with Vern Williams, Ricky Skaggs, the Country Gentlemen, Peter Rowan, and more.

"I was 18 years old and jamming with my pals," remembered Little. "A friendly fellow with a flop-leather hat introduced himself: Carl Pagter. He asked if we would like to become charter members of this new organization he was putting together, to which we said 'yes,' signed the papers, and then went back to jamming. It was that easy."

Pagter's efforts were successful, and the CBA was chartered later in 1974 with Pagter as member number one. Within two years, the CBA was producing its own annual Father's Day Bluegrass Festival, now in its 49th year and one of the premier annual events in bluegrass—a worthy successor to the Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival.

After the festival ended, Paul Lammers was quoted in the press saying it would be 30 days before they knew how much money they'd lost. They lost a lot. There would be no second annual GSCBF.

"It was set after set of not just brilliant music," recalls Tom Rigney, "but some never-before-heard

combinations of players, like Mac Wiseman backed up by Vassar, Norman Blake, and Tut Taylor, for just one example. In terms of the music and the production and the flow of things and the sound and even the audience, it certainly seemed to be successful.

"It was a huge artistic and musical success, but the festival was just too ambitious. The Bay Area loved bluegrass, but it wasn't ready for a festival of that size, that scale, and that cost. They just didn't sell enough tickets to cover the costs of the talent, the transportation, the sound, and everything else."

Joe Jupille has done extensive research into the Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival for his in-the-works book, *Fate Music: Jerry Garcia's Musical Life Beyond the Grateful Dead*, and he feels the festival was a monumental event.

"Given the short period of time they had for planning (five months or so)," he says, "it was a suicide mission to try to pull off a festival like that. To Judy Lammers' credit, she did it. She put her heart and soul into it. And talk about talent. The talent they brought together in that space, wow...As an artistic achievement, I think the festival was a masterpiece. There was an awful lot of greatness there."

Travel back in time and enjoy almost four full hours of music from the Golden State Country Bluegrass Festival here:



"Among the attendees that weekend was a Bay Area clawhammer banjo player with a vision of an organization to support the music he loved ... Carl Pagter"



Jimmy Martin performs at the festival. Photo by Ben Haller.

2024 WESTERN BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL DIRECTORY

From the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific shore, this year's festival season is packed with great events, from urban concerts to rustic campouts. With lineups featuring favorite marquee national acts and hometown favorites, find your new favorites with our directory to every festival we could find in the West in 2024!

APRIL

WinterWonderGrass Tahoe

April 5-7 | Palisades Tahoe, CA
Sierra Ferrell, The Devil Makes Three, The Infamous Stringdusters, Mighty Poplar
winterwondergrass.com/tahoe

Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association Spring Festival

April 13 | Victor, MT
93 North, Sirens, Mike and Tari with Tim
mtbluegrass.com

Las Vegas Bluegrass Festival

April 13 | Las Vegas, NV
Rhonda Vincent, The Kody Norris Show, Damn Tall Buildings
lasvegasnevada.gov

Durango Bluegrass Meltdown

April 19-21 | Durango, CO
Missy Raines & Allegheny, Seth Mulder & Mindnight Run, Damn Tall Buildings, SLO County Stumblers
durangomeltdown.com

Berkeley Bluegrass Festival

April 26-28 | Berkeley, CA
Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick, Kody Norris Show, Appalachian Road Show, Danny Paisley
thefreight.org/bluegrass

MAY

Parkfield Bluegrass Festival

May 9-12 | Parkfield, CA
Bands, jams, workshops, and dances. Mr Sun, Edgar Loudermilk Band, Clements Brothers, Never Come Down
parkfieldbluegrass.org

Tico Time Bluegrass Festival

May 17-19 | Aztec, NM
Including: Railroad Earth, Elephant Revival, Kitchen Dwellers
ticotimebluegrass.com

Topanga Banjo-Fiddle Contest and Folk Festival

May 19 | Agoura Hills, CA
AJ Lee & Blue Summit, The Way Down Wanderers, The Crooked Jades
topangabanjofiddle.org

Strawberry Music Festival

May 22-27 | Grass Valley, CA
Aoife O'Donovan & Hawktail, AJ Lee & Blue Summit, Big Richard, Tim O'Brien Band
strawberrymusic.com

MeadowGrass Music Festival

May 24-26 | Colorado Springs, CO
The Steel Wheels, Blitzen Trapper, John Craigie & Friends
rockymountainhighway.org

Bluegrass on the Arkansas

May 25-26 | Salida, CO
Floodgate Operators, Rapid Grass, Blue River Grass
bluegrassonthearkansas.org

SpringFree Bluegrass Festival

May 24-26 | Vail Village, CO
Bluegrass Generals, Sierra Hull, Jon Stickley Trio, Jeremy Garrett & River Wild
springfreebluegrassfest.com

Pickin' in the Rockies

May 26 | Loma, CO
Carson Peters and Iron Mountain, Keaton Brown, Caroline Owens
pickinintherockies.com

Ogden Music Festival

May 31-June 2
Fort Buenaventura, UT
Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway, Sarah Jarosz, Celisse, Hayes Carl
ofoam.org

JUNE

Sacajawea Bluegrass Festival

June 6-9 | Pasco, WA
Including: The Horsenecks, Rock Ridge Bluegrass Band
rockymountainhighway.org

Weiser River Music Festival

June 13-15 | Weiser, ID
The Infamous Stringdusters, Yonder Mountain String Band, Dogs in a Pile
weiserivermusicfest.com

Father's Day Bluegrass Festival

June 13-16 | Grass Valley, CA
Alison Brown, Sister Sadie, Danny Paisley & The Southern Grass, Lonesome River Band, Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen
fathersdayfestival.com

Palisade Bluegrass & Roots Festival

June 14-16 | Palisade, CO
Railroad Earth, Rob Ickes & Trey Hensley, Mipso, Tony Trischka's EarlJam
palisademusic.com

Wenatchee River Bluegrass Festival

June 14-16 | Cashmere, WA
Appalachian Road Show, Seth Mulder & Midnight Run, Carley Arrowood
cashmerecoffeehouse.com

National Oldtime Fiddler's Contest and Festival

June 17-22 | Weiser, ID
Home of the renowned National Fiddle Championship Contest.
fiddlecontest.org

Susanville Bluegrass Festival

June 21-23 | Susanville, CA
Edgar Loudermilk Band, Hillbilly Fever Band, Yoseff Tucker and the Bow Ties, Volume 5
susanvillebluegrassfestival.com

Sawtooth Valley Gathering

June 20-23 | Stanley, ID
Railroad Earth, The California Honeydrops, Kitchen Dwellers
sawtoothvalleygathering.com

Four Peaks

June 20-23 | Bend, OR
Neal Francis, Tray Wellington, Broken Compass Bluegrass
4peaksmusic.com

Telluride Bluegrass Festival

June 20-23 | Bend, OR
Sam Bush Band, Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway, Jerry Douglas & Tommy Emmanuel, AJ Lee & Blue Summit, Mighty Poplar.
bluegrass.com

Prescott Bluegrass Festival

June 22-23 | Prescott, AZ
The Sonoran Dogs, The Cross-Eyed Possum Band, Ten Dollar Wedding Band
prescott.org

Big Ponderoo

June 29-30 | Sisters, OR
Shinyribs, Silverada, AJ Lee & Blue Summit
bigponderoo.com

JULY

High Sierra Music Festival

July 4-7 | Quincy, CA
Greensky Bluegrass, AJ Lee & Blue Summit, Sam Grisman Project
highsierramusic.com

Wheeler County Bluegrass Festival and Jam/Camp

July 4-7 | Fossil, OR
Skillethead, Tucker-Adkins Band, Rubber Wheels
wheelercountybluegrass.org

High Mountain Hay Fever

July 11-14 | Westcliffe, CO
Jim Lauderdale, Ralph Stanley II & The Clinch Mountain Boys, Laurie Lewis and the Right Hands
highmountainhayfever.org

Lost River Bluegrass Festival

July 12-14 | Merrill, OR
Nick Dumas & Branchline, The Central Valley Boys, The Western Flyers w/ Redd Volkaert
lostriverfestival.com

Bluegrass from the Forest Festival

July 12-14 | Shelton, WA
The Jacob Jolliff Band, Crying Uncle Band, Caleb and Reeb
bluegrassfromtheforest.com

Snowygrass Music Festival

July 12-14 | Estes Park, CO
Travis McNamara, Fireside Collective, Bella White
snowygrass.com

Redwood Ramble

July 18-21 | Navarro, CA
Railroad Earth, Sierra Hull, Broken Compass Bluegrass
redwoodramble.com



The historic Strater Hotel is ground zero for Durango Bluegrass Meltdown.



Parkfield Bluegrass Festival, Mother's Day weekend, offers a unique rustic setting for cool workshops and hot picking.



This year's Berkeley Old Time Music Convention includes a square dance calling workshop on Saturday, Sept. 23 with Barbara Bowman of the Slate Mountain Ramblers.



FreeFall Bluegrass Festival takes place in downtown Vail Village, CO in the height of autumn. Photo courtesy ShowLove Media.

Scott Valley Bluegrass Festival

July 19-21 | Etna, CA
Frank Ray and Cedar Hill, One Button Suit, Central Valley Boys
scottvalleybluegrass.com

TedFest

July 19-21 | Wallsburg, UT
Lineup TBA
wasatchmountainmusic.com

Back to Bluegrass

July 20-21 | McGrath, AK
Glacier Blues Band, Hope Social Club

Columbia Gorge Bluegrass Festival

July 25-28 | Etna, CA
I Draw Slow, Carley Arrowood Band, Ranger and the Re-Arrangers

Rockygrass

July 26-28 | Lyons, CO
Sarah Jarosz, Sam Bush Bluegrass Band, Dan Tyminski, Della Mae, John Reischman & Old Acoustic
bluegrass.com

Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival

July 26-28 | Hamilton, MT
Johnny Campbell Band, The Jolley Family, Matt & Mark
hardtimesbluegrass.com

AUGUST

Winlock Pickersfest

Aug 2-4 | Winlock, WA
Runaway Train, The Cowchips, Misty Mamas
winlockpickersfest.com

Keystone Bluegrass & Beer Festival

Aug 3-4 | Keystone, CO
Shadowgrass, Armchair Boogie, Jake Leg
keystonefestivals.com

Targhee Music Camp and Bluegrass Festival

Aug 5-8 | Alta, WY
Railroad Earth, Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway, Trampled By Turtles
grandtarghee.com

Good Old Fashioned Bluegrass Festival

Aug 9-11 | Tres Pinos, CA
Lineup TBA
ncbs.info

Mount St. Helens Bluegrass Festival

Aug 9-11 | Toledo, WA
Runaway Train, Oly Mountain Boys, Steelhead
washingtonbluegrassassociation.org

Blue Waters Bluegrass Festival

Aug 9-11 | Medical Lake, WA
New Dangerfield, The Jacob Joliff Band, Full Cord
washingtonbluegrassassociation.org

The Centralia Campout

Aug 10-18 | Centralia, WA
No performances, just jamming
centraliacampout.com

Bannock County Bluegrass Camping Jam

Aug 16-18 | Inkom, ID
Band scramble, open mic, jamming.
bannockcountybluegrass.com

CBA Golden Old-Time Campout

Aug 22-25 | Guerneville, CA
No performances, just jamming.
californiabluegrass.com/goc

Rainier Bluegrass Festival

Aug 22-25 | Rainier, WA
Roosevelt Road, Lewis County Pickers, Hardshell Harmony
rainierpickinparty.com

Bowers Bluegras Festival

Aug 23-25 | Washoe Valley, NV
Appalachian Road Show, AJ Lee & Blue Summit
nba.org

Santa Fe Tradfest

Aug 23-25 | Santa Fe, NM
Lineup TBA
santafetradfest.org

Four Corners Folk Festival

Aug 30-Sept 1 | Pagosa Springs, CO
Lineup TBA
ksutpresents.org

North Cascades Bluegrass Festival

Aug 31- Sept 2 | Bellingham, WA
Kruger Brothers, Arkansauce, Never Come Down
ncbf.fun

Summergrass San Diego

Dates TBA | Vista, CA
Lineup TBA
summergrass.net

Plumas Homegrown Festival

Dates TBA | Quincy, CA
Lineup TBA.
plumasamericana.com

SEPTEMBER

Pickin' In The Pines

Sept 13-15 | Flagstaff, AZ
Del McCoury Band, Leftover Salmon, Yonder Mountain String Band, Becky Buller Band
pickininthepines.org

Berkeley Old Time Music Convention

Sept 18-22 | Berkeley, CA
The Onlies, Cedrick Watson & Edward Poullard, Bigfoot, Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer, Black Banjo & Fiddle Fellows
berkeleyoldtimemusic.org

Payson Fiddle & Food Truck Festival

Sept 20-22 | Payson, AZ
Arizona's State Fiddling Championship
paysonrimcountry.com

Tygh Valley Bluegrass Jamboree

Sept 20-22 | Tygh Valley, OR
Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen, more bands TBA
tyghvalleybluegrass.com

OCTOBER

Hardly Strictly Bluegrass

Oct 4-6 | San Francisco, CA
Lineup TBA
hardlystrictlybluegrass.com

Huck Finn Jubilee

Oct 4-6 | San Dimas, CA
Lineup TBA
huckfinn.com

Santa Barbara Old-Time Fiddler's Festival

Oct 5 | Goleta, CA
Lineup TBA
fiddlersfestival.org

Birdfest & Bluegrass Festival

Oct 5 | Ridgefield, WA
Lineup TBA
ridgefieldfriends.org

Frankly Bluegrass Festival

Oct 9-13 | Plymouth, CA
Special Consensus, Frank Solivan & Chris Luquette, David Adkins & Mountain Soul
plymouthfranklybg.com

FreeFall Bluegrass Festival

Oct 11-13 | Vail Village, CO
Lineup TBA
ridgefieldfriends.org

CBA Fall Campout

Oct 14-20 | Lodi, CA
Evening concert lineup TBA
californiabluegrass.org

NOVEMBER

CBA South State 48

Nov 8-11 | Carlsbad, CA
Evening concert lineup TBA
californiabluegrass.org

Wickenburg Bluegrass Festival

Dates TBA | Wickenburg, AZ
Lineup TBA
outwickenburgway.com



The Frankly Bluegrass Festival returns to Plymouth this year after a 10-year hiatus!



Even Sin City loves a bluegrass fest! Las Vegas Bluegrass Festival happens in Centennial Hills Park.



The SpringFree Bluegrass Festival in Vail, Colorado.

BRUCE CHAMPION AND 'THE TRUCK MOBILE RECORDING UNIT' AT FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL



Bruce Champion at Good Ol' Fashioned Bluegrass Festival last year. Photo by Robin Frenette.



Recording a jam session. Photo by Robin Frenette.



Bruce Champion and The Truck at Father's Day Festival. Photo by Robin Frenette.

By The Bluegrass Breakdown

Have you ever wished you could take home a recording of a great jam session? At Father's Day Festival, sound engineer Bruce Champion has been making that dream come true for campground pickers since 2018.

Bruce sets up The Truck Mobile Recording Unit right across the street from the festival's annual pop-up Hot Dog Stand, and will record anyone who wants to record, and for free.

After retiring from his sound career working with the likes of Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, and Arlo Guthrie, he hadn't had enough of recording live music. So with a chunk of family inheritance, he bought a truck to house what is now a 32-channel digital mixing console, a digital snake, a 24-channel microphone splitter, and self-powered JBL Studio Monitor speakers. "It is state of the art for home studio stuff; 50 years ago, when I was working in the studio, this much recording power would have cost several million dollars," Bruce said.

This labor of love found a home at CBA events starting with a CBA Fall Campout in 2017, some five years after Bruce built his first iteration of the mobile studio. He went to the Turlock Farmers Market and was surprised to see people camping in the fairgrounds. "I walked over to see what it was and it turned out to be a CBA campout. I felt this was a place where I could set up and record people ... I went to Lodi 2017 and the rest is history," he said.

"I do what I do for free, because I can," Bruce said. "I accept donations to cover the cost—mostly fuel for the truck, blank CDs, and cases. I do not do it for profit; I do it for the music ... and my ego."

Bruce has put out more than 500 songs from CBA and Northern California Bluegrass Society campouts. Listen here →



PLAYING IT FORWARD: 2023 SWEEPSTAKES GUITAR MAKES A MOVE



Ethan (L) and Paul (R) Lawton. Photo courtesy Paul Lawton

By The Bluegrass Breakdown

Our readers may remember that as part of CBA's 2023 Fundraising Sweepstakes, Paul Lawton of Ben Lomond won a Santa Cruz OM Pre-War model, presented to him personally by Richard Hoover, the Santa Cruz Guitar Company founder. This particular model features Indian rosewood sides and back with Sitka spruce top, and pays homage to its pre-WWII predecessors with an advanced X and scalloped top bracing.

"Wow, what a guitar," Paul shared when he contacted us recently. But, as it turns out, after spending some time with it he decided that maybe he had too much of a good thing. "After much soul searching, I decided that it was time to move it on."

Paul's collection already boasts some fine instruments, including a Goodall Jumbo Koa, a

1958 Martin OO-18, and a 1964 Martin OOO-18. "I just couldn't justify holding so much prime guitar real estate. It felt presumptuous," he confessed.

Luckily, he came up with a good solution for this rather enviable problem. The guitar is now in the hands of his nephew, none other than Seattle-based Eathon Lawton, a founding member of the acclaimed band Western Centuries, and currently performing bluegrass mandolin and guitar with Hailey Pexton in The Strix.

Ethan's response to this generous gift? "Paul, I truly love this guitar."

We're glad he does—and that the CBA Fundraising Sweepstakes can put such great instruments into musicians' hands. Stay tuned this fall for the next chance to win a fine instrument of your own!

49TH
ANNUAL

CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION
FATHER'S DAY

JUNE
13-16
2024

BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

3 Stages
OF
MUSIC!



Midnight
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ALISON BROWN - SISTER SADIE

DANNY PAISLEY & THE SOUTHERN GRASS - LONESOME RIVER BAND

RICK FARIS BAND - FRANK SOLIVAN & DIRTY KITCHEN

THE HORSENECKS - COUNTRY GONGBANG - TRAY WELLINGTON BAND - PAUL BROWN & TERRI McMURRAY

CALIFORNIA SHOWCASE BANDS

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VERN'S STAGE

**B*CRAFT - BEAN CREEK - BLUEGRASS HOLIDAY - CLINTON DAVIS STRING BAND - THE CROOKED HOLLER STRING BAND
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AUTISM, BLUEGRASS, AND THE CBA

NEW CLUB TO LAUNCH AT FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL

By John Frizzell, CBA member, film and television composer

About three years ago I was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder level 1, or ASD. It came with a great sense of relief and provided a lot of clarity to me, my family, and those who know me well. But learning this about me has, at times, come as a bit of a surprise to some when I don't meet their expectation of what it means to be an autistic adult.

Had I been diagnosed between 1994 and 2013, I would have been labeled with Asperger's syndrome. From when I was born, in 1966, until 1980 there was no diagnosis that fit me. From 1980 to 1994, I would not have met the criteria for autism at all. The long and short of it is this: The subject of autism is vast, immensely complex, and in a great state of flux. I heard someone say recently that the range of challenges for people on the spectrum is greater than the range of those not on it. But through this complexity there are a handful of things I am certain about—and one of them is the value and relevance of music as it pertains to autism.

When autism was first identified by Leo Kanner in 1943, he presented 11 case studies of children with autism and noted the musical abilities and interests in six of them, according to the group Music for Autism. Esteemed psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen says that people on the autism spectrum often exhibit profound pattern recognition abilities, becoming, as he

calls them, "hyper-systematizers." This intrinsic gravitation towards patterns can be particularly advantageous in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. It also can be very useful when learning to play a musical instrument.

Some studies have found no significant external benefit to music therapy for children with level 3 ASD. But other studies do show improvements in functional brain connectivity, social communication, and family quality of life. I have read quite a bit about music and autism and I think there is a perspective that often gets overlooked.

In the early 1990's there was a popular book called *The Mozart Effect* which led to the trendy belief that listening to classical music would improve a kid's math scores. When a math teacher proudly told me about this, I asked if studying trigonometry would improve my understanding of Mozart. My point was this: Why is there a tendency to look at music as being good for other things and not a valid end in itself? I believe that if picking bluegrass for eight hours feels great, but has no measurable positive impact beyond that, then it still makes your life better because those are eight great hours. Maybe the more great hours of living you can rack up, the better your life is? Music is an end in itself; it doesn't need to be a means to one.

My hope is to bring together people on the spectrum within the CBA to form a community within this community so we can begin to learn more about what role bluegrass plays in our lives. Through this, I'm optimistic that useful ideas will be born that could be shared with others. Perhaps we'll gain a deeper understanding of ourselves. Maybe we'll discover what personal therapeutic benefits learning to play music offers us, or how using non-verbal

communication can enhance our social experiences. And if not, we will have a great time picking. It would be great for kids on the spectrum to find a connection with bluegrass, too. Expanding and enhancing social connections is so important for all of us, and in my view playing music together is about the best way to play a part in something really valuable.

I have a hunch that if we look, we will learn that the percentage of CBA members who are autistic is greater than that of the general population. I'm fascinated to find out if this hunch is correct and equally curious to know why. Bluegrass is a wondrous paradox to me. On one hand, it is rigid and full of structural rules—but at the same time full of unbelievable freedom for creativity. I'll bet the reason is in this paradox that bluegrass attracts the hyper-systematizing autistic mind.

So with this, it's a pleasure to announce a chance for us to begin this journey of coming together at the Father's Day Festival on Saturday, June 17 at 6:00pm. Join us to celebrate our wonderful autistic minds, and find community and support in the challenges we meet. I don't know exactly where this all leads or what will come of it—but I'm looking forward to finding out.



John Frizzell.

CBA AUTISM CLUB
AT FATHER'S DAY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL
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CHECK PROGRAM FOR LOCATION

SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES ON AUTISM AND MUSIC

"Effects of Improvisational Music Therapy vs Enhanced Standard Care on Symptom Severity Among Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder," *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Aug 8, 2017.

"Music Improves Social Communication and Auditory-Motor Connectivity in Children With Autism," *Translational Psychiatry*. Oct. 23, 2018.

"A Systematic Review of Scientific Studies on the Effects of Music in People With or at Risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. April 23, 2022.

MARIN'S WALKER CREEK MUSIC CAMP BACK IN APRIL UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP

By The Bluegrass Breakdown, Photos by Patrick Campbell, courtesy Walker Creek Music Camp

Walker Creek Music Camp is back to its regular schedule in the rolling hills of Marin County each spring and fall after a three-year interruption by the pandemic, and returns this month with a new director: longtime camp jam leader, teaching assistant, and webmaster Michael Bryant. Michael takes over the reins at Walker Creek from Ingrid Noyes, who has been with the camp from its inception in 2001 as the CBA Music Camp. Ingrid tells us she'll stay involved with the camp in the near future to help ensure a smooth transition.

This year's spring camp runs from Thursday, April 11 to Sunday, April

14, and will feature its usual mix of bluegrass and old-time music along with a very popular Irish music track. This camp will feature two house bands—Canadian bluegrassers The Slocan Ramblers and the much-loved Kathy Kallick Band—and 18 instructors including fiddler Annie Staninec, guitarist Larry Chung, and Greg Blake, winner of the IBMA Male Vocalist of the Year award.

Walker Creek's new camp director Michael Bryant has deep roots in the West Marin community, having been the chef and proprietor of the well-known restaurant Barnaby's by the Bay in nearby Inverness from 1985 to 2005—in addition to several other entrepreneurial endeavors including multimedia development and technical writing for

IDG's "For Dummies" book series. Along with directing the camp, he also currently runs New Skye Hosting, a web development and hosting company. Since 2008, he has pursued his musical passions as a band leader and teacher, while booking venues in and around Sonoma County, where he has lived since 1964.

Michael was first involved with the Walker Creek Music Camp in 2013 as the catering director for Walker Creek Ranch. "After 10 years, I'm honored and excited for the opportunity to continue providing the excellent music education experience that is Walker Creek Music Camp," he said. Michael will be assisted by new program director John Treacy, and assistant director Lily Reid.

John Treacy is is retired from a career leading global software teams and has spent his post-retirement years playing and teaching bluegrass music. He formerly served in various leadership roles for the California Coast Music Camp, including director, president, on-site coordinator, sound engineer, and volunteer coordinator.

Lily Reid got involved in music camps at the age of 7, starting with fiddle classes at the original CBA Music Camp. She became a teacher's assistant at the camp soon after Ingrid Noyes took it over from CBA and changed the name to Walker Creek Music Camp in 2013.

Walker Creek Music Camp's Ingrid Noyes contributed to this story.



Square Dance at Walker Creek



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Please share questions, suggestions, or story ideas at breakdown@californiabluegrass.net

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Come be a part of Father's Day Festival! For more information on volunteering: volunteers@californiabluegrass.net



Western Festival Directory

see page 12

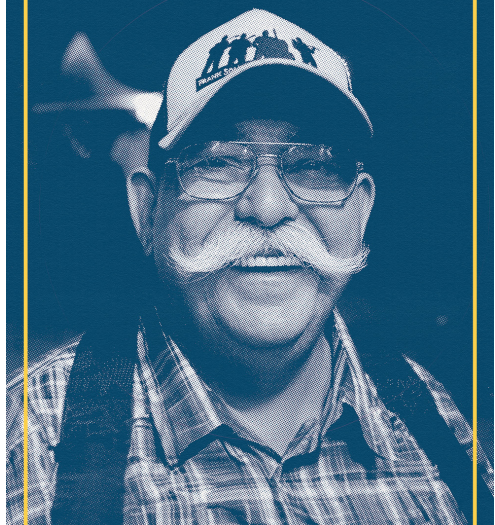
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Monthly Trivia Quiz

By Bert Daniel, Breakdown Contributor

As part of our observance of Black History Month in February, we posed this question: "Peter Rowan sang it at festivals as did Joan Baez. Norman Blake recorded it. Name this popular Black liberation anthem."

It's thought the song came into being not long after Emancipation; today it is perhaps most often associated with being sung during marches for the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. In particular, Odetta recorded it as part of the "Spiritual Trilogy" on her 1956 release *Odetta Sings Ballads and Blues*, and Joan Baez sang it as she opened the day's events of the March on Washington on Aug. 28, 1963.



Joan Baez sings at the 1963 March on Washington.

Mike Howard was the only CBA member who submitted the correct song title: "Oh, Freedom." So, we'll dispense with the regular random monthly mystical selection technique and award Mike the fresh CBA T-Shirt and hot-off-the-press sticker with illustrator and Breakdown art director Gina Dilg's latest *Trad Music Superhero* image of banjo master Earl Scruggs, in celebration of the 100th anniversary his birthday.

APRIL TRIVIA CHALLENGE

As the temperatures rise and festival season approaches, and we look forward to the big CBA annual hootenanny in Grass Valley, we want to know: "What is the oldest continually-running bluegrass festival—only about a decade older than our own Father's Day Bluegrass Festival?"

Send your answer to: trivia@californiabluegrass.net no later than April 30.

This month's prize is a beautiful CBA T-shirt to add to your collection! 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 2024 issue of the *Bluegrass Breakdown*.