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## Contents

The Band	3
Shawn Colvin	5
String Cheese Incident	7
Béla Fleck	8
John Randal Stewart	12
Jimmie Dale Gilmore	13
Wolfstone	13
Nanci Griffith	15
Rosanne Cash	16
Rick Danko	17
Johnson Mountain Boys	17
Psychograss	18
California	18
Festival Schedule	20
The Mighty Clouds of Joy	23
Peter Rowan	24
David Wilcox	25
Freewill Savages	25
String Fever	26
Junior Brown	27
Alison Krauss	28
Paco de Lucia	29
SammonJohn	32
Tony Trischka	34
Tim O'Brien	34
Loose Ties	35
Lonesome River Band	35
Bad Livers	38
Sugarbeat	38
Douglas, Barenberg & Meyer	39
Pierce Pettis	39

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# THE BAND

by Geoff Hanson

## one more waltz

When The Band takes the Fred Shellman Memorial Stage 9 p.m. Sunday evening, it will mark the first time a member of the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame has ever played the Telluride Bluegrass Festival.

The Band was inducted into the Hall of Fame in January of this year. When Eric Clapton introduced the Band at the ceremony in New York, he told the audience that The Band's 1968 album *Music from Big Pink* changed the way he thought about music, and that he actually went to Woodstock in the '60s (where the members of The Band lived at the time with Bob Dylan) in hopes of becoming a member of that seminal outfit.

The Hall of Fame ceremony was not the first time Clapton had come to honor his friends — guitarist and vocalist Rick Danko, keyboardist Garth Hudson, drummer Levon Helm, keyboardist and vocalist Richard Manuel and guitar player and principal songwriter Robbie Robertson, known collectively as The Band.

In 1976, Clapton, along with Bob Dylan, Muddy Waters, Neil Young, Van Morrison, the Staples Singers, Joni Mitchell, Ringo Starr, Neil Diamond, Emmylou Harris, Paul Butterfield and Ron Wood, came together to pay tribute to The Band. That concert at

Winterland in San Francisco was called The Last Waltz.

The event was documented by Martin Scorsese in a film by the same name that film critic Pauline Kael calls "the best film ever made about..."

### THE SEEDS OF THE BAND

The road to the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame began in Turkey Scratch, Ark., in 1957, when Arkansas rocker Ronnie Hawkins drove his Model A Ford into town to recruit Levon Helm, who was 17 at the time, to play drums in his band the Hawks.

Hawkins was an enigmatic character known for his wild, rockabilly performances. Hawkins had developed a strong following in Canada, and he brought Helm to Toronto to anchor a band to back him up.

Robbie Robertson, a Toronto native, was only 15 years old when he began hanging around the Hawks — loading gear, running for coffee or replacing broken guitar strings.

Hawkins discovered that Robertson could play guitar and write songs as well, but he held out on letting the eager Robertson join the band because of his age. When Hawkins' regular guitar player got homesick for the States and headed home, Robertson was tapped for the job.

Bass player Rick Danko was the next original member of The Band to join The Hawks, and keyboardist Richard Manuel soon followed in 1961.

Hawkins had first tried to persuade keyboard player Garth Hudson, who was from London, Ontario, to join The Hawks in 1959. Hudson declined, fearing his left hand was not strong enough to supply the pound-

ing that Hawkins' music required. But in 1961, he, too, gave in to the infectious sound of the Hawks, and signed as the second piano player in the outfit.

As Robbie Robertson tells the story in *The Last Waltz*, Hudson, who was trained as a classical pianist (note his inflections of Bach in the introduction to the song "Chest Fever"), did not want his parents to know he was playing rock 'n' roll music in bars. He instead told his parents that he was giving lessons to talented but unlearned players.

Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks became the rage of the Toronto music scene. Though Hawkins ruled the band with an iron hand, held rigorous practice sessions, and played late-night hours, in the end Hawkins walked away with most of the cash.

On weeknights, the Hawks played gigs without their bandleader, who was at home with his family, and the Hawks found they did just fine without Hawkins. And when Hawkins insisted that the Hawks continue exploring rockabilly music, while the rest of the outfit was more interested in rhythm and blues, the inevitable split occurred.

Without the Hawk himself, the Hawks were left without a moniker. The outfit began playing gigs in Canada and the Southern and Eastern parts of the U.S. under various names that included the Canadian Squires and the Levon Helm Sextet.

In August of 1965, Bob Dylan, who was just beginning to go electric, contacted Helm and asked him and the rest of the former Hawks to join him on tour.

After finishing touring in 1966, the Band moved to Woodstock, N.Y. with Dylan where they lived together in the legendary "Big Pink." Helm speaks fondly of his time with Dylan saying, "Bob is one of the best music makers of our time. He kicked the record company door open for us. He pulled us through a lot of hard times. One of the main things he did for us was show us every

continued on page 4



## WILLIAM MATTHEWS

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## THE BAND

continued from page 3  
day how to write songs and put music together."

By now the Band had recording aspirations of their own and it was time to choose a name. Some early suggestions included "The Chocolate Subway," "The Marshmallow Overcoat," "The Honkies," and "The Crackers." Indeed, Capitol Records signed the Crackers to a record deal in February 1968.

But nobody was really happy with the Crackers, and according to Robertson the idea for the name The Band came from their time with Dylan.

"Everybody just called us 'The band,'" he said. "People would say, 'maybe you and the band need to do some rehearsing' or 'what room is the band in?' We kept hearing this over and over again until it finally stuck. At that time, names were really going over the top. They were really getting goofy. So to go the opposite way, The Band seemed to be the simplest and most unpretentious name that we could think of."

"It was like a non-name. That's actually what we tried to do in the beginning. We said, 'well, we don't want a name. Our records will come out and there will be no names on them.' The record company went crazy. They said, 'no, no, that's never going to work.' So we said, 'okay then, we're just going to call ourselves 'The Band.' We had them over the barrel."

The Band made their recording debut with their album *Music from Big Pink* in 1968, the same year the Beatles recorded *Sargent Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. While the rest of the rock 'n' roll world was following the lead of the Beatles and experimenting with psychedelia, The Band released an album whose honesty and simplicity confirmed that the most important element of all music is the song.

Music from the *Big Pink* included classics as "The Weight" and a chilling version of Dylan's "I Shall be Released."

From the "primitive" Dylan painting that graces the cover of the album to the simple photos, in which the bandmembers look more like rabbis than rock 'n' roll players, to the eclectic instrumentation that The Band interweaved in their music (the members can play over 25 instruments among them), to the harmonies of Manuel, Helm and Danko's voices, *Music From Big Pink* sent a calling card to the rest of the world that The Band was for real.

The Band followed a year later with a

self-titled album that introduced the world to classic cover band fodder such as "Up on Cripple Creek" and enduring anthems like "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down."

The Band's subsequent recordings *Stage Fright*, *Cahoots*, *Rock of Ages*, *Moondog Matinee* and *Northern Lights* — *Southern Cross* left an indelible stamp on rock 'n' roll music.

But by 1976, life on the road had gotten the best of the Band and they decided to call it quits and danced their last waltz.

The Last Waltz turned out to be more of an intermission than an encore, as the Band, minus Robbie Robertson, began playing gigs together again in 1983. Keyboard player Richard Manuel tragically took his own life in 1986, leaving Danko, Hudson and Helm as the only original members of The Band.

New members of The Band include Jim Weider on guitar, Richard Bell on keyboards (he was Janis Joplin's keyboard player) and Randy Ciarlante on drums.

— LEVON HELM

This year, The Band recorded *Jericho* — their first

album in sixteen years. Highlights include the song "Remedy" and a rip-roaring reprise of Bruce Springsteen's ode to the down and out, "Atlantic City," that Springsteen recorded on his 1985 album *Nebraska* (Springsteen liked The Band's arrangement of his song so much that he now performs it the same way).

The biggest surprise on the album is the cut "Country Boy" which features the unmistakably soulful vocals of the late Richard Manuel. Special guests on *Jericho* include Champion Jack Dupree and Vassar Clements.

The members of the Band are busy with their own projects as well. Helm, who during his hiatus away from the Band appeared in films such as *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *The Right Stuff*, recently published an autobiography called *This Wheel's On Fire*.

Rick Danko recently saw the American release of an album he cut in Norway with Jonas Fjeld and Eric Andersen called *Danko, Fjeld and Andersen*.

Levon Helm did not show up to the Band's induction into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame earlier this year. Word is that he feels Robertson took credit for having written many songs that the group wrote together (indeed, Robertson is listed as the songwriter on most of the Band's songs).

But never fear, the entire Band Songbook is included in the Band's current repertoire. And if you're lucky you just might hear one of your favorite songs by one of the world's greatest musical outfits — The Band.

Times-Journal photo/Rob A. Huber

# SHAWN COLVIN

by Ellen Sammon

*mature  
journals set  
to music*

Never mind MTV with its surreal videos and Generation X bands.

Back-porch reality is what appeals to country and bluegrass fans. That's probably why the music of folk singer Shawn Colvin has such widespread appeal. The 36-year-old singer writes songs about true-to-life subjects in a muscular voice with a distinct bite of cynicism.

Despite her fame, Colvin maintains an edge of coolness, an air of self-effacing humility uncommon to artists of her caliber.

In an interview from Los Angeles, I asked if the limelight is the antithesis to her rural South Dakota upbringing. Colvin said, "It wasn't like I was plucked from my rural town and catapulted to fame like Elvis. That might be a real shock."

Success for Colvin came gradually, over a period of 17 years, which included time spent performing in bars in San Francisco and New

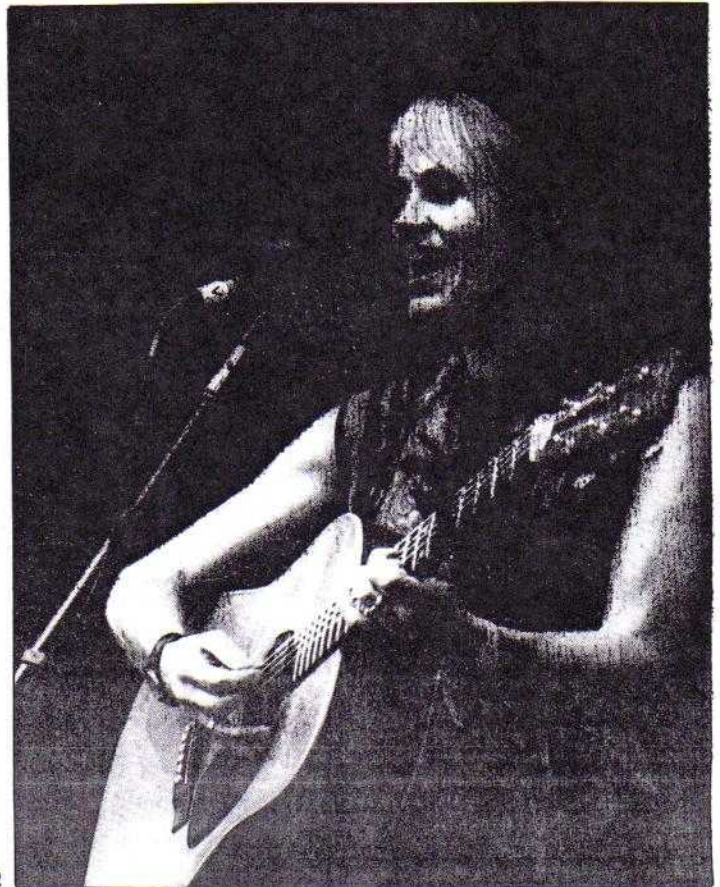
York City. Her breakthrough occurred in N.Y.C. in the mid-'80s. With her name a fixture on the folk and country circuit, Colvin's performances were eagerly requested by posh clubs in New York and Greenwich. A little bit further north in Boston, Colvin's name became a household commodity thanks to college radio stations playing her demo tapes.

While Colvin's 12-string guitar is as much a part of her person as her chunky biker boots, Colvin took two brief hiatuses from the industry. At age 22, Colvin left and formed her own band, The Shawn Colvin Band, but put down the mike shortly after damaging her vocal chords.

"It's not like we were doing heavy metal. It's more like we were in smoky bars, drinking and crap," said Colvin. Colvin also took time off from the music industry to attend fashion design school, but dropped out after one semester.

When asked why she persevered, Colvin said, "It sounds like a cliché, but I didn't want to look back and say 'I didn't try.' It wasn't fame I was going for. I wasn't 20 anymore and didn't carry around any of those fantasy notions. It's more like I wanted to realize a dream. If you're in my line of work, you want a product of what you do.

continued on page 12



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# BLUEGRASS FEST'S future uncertain

by Geoff Hanson

Bluegrass has always been associated with "that high lonesome sound." Telluride provides the ideal setting for hearing the sweet sounds of the banjo, fiddle, bass, dobro and mandolin as they bounce around the box canyon.

Bluegrass and Telluride have forged a powerful union that has lasted over 20 years. But will the bluegrass festival see 30?

That is not a simple question to answer.

As Telluride continues to grow and the few remaining open spaces that house our weekend visitors begin to be developed, questions arise about the sustainability of the bluegrass festival.

Where will people park? Where will they camp? These are the big questions that currently face promoter Craig Ferguson. Indeed, this year there were questions as to whether the owners of the valley floor, the San Miguel Valley Corporation, would allow the Bluegrass Festival to use its land for camping.

Currently, that space out by the Texaco station accommodates over 2000 cars and up to 1500 people. But for now, Ferguson is not phased about the future of this Telluride

institution. He's just ready for this year's celebration.

As has become their tradition, Planet Bluegrass has assembled one of the strongest line-ups on any bill in the country this year.

The Band and Roseanne Cash are clearly the biggest-name new acts in the 1994 line-up. But Ferguson says there are many bands making their Telluride debuts who he is confident will leave lasting impressions.

"We have a whole new fleet of musical studs this year," Ferguson said. "Paco De Lucia, Junior Brown, Wolfstone, Free Will Savages, Bad Livers, the Mighty Clouds of Joy and Crucial Country are simply going to blow people away. If you haven't heard of somebody, go see them. We're confident you won't be disappointed."

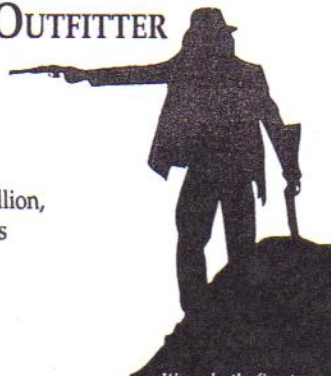
Of course, there will be old favorites such as Sam Bush, John Cowan, Béla Fleck and the Flecktones, Peter Rowan and Shawn Colvin. This year, Mary-Chapin Carpenter will miss her first Telluride Bluegrass Festival in several years, but festival regulars will welcome back Nanci Griffith and David Wilcox after a short hiatus away from Telluride.

Jonell Mosser and her band Enough Rope, featuring Victor Wooten on bass, are sure to be a hit, and Béla Fleck and Tony Trischka uniting their banjo talents will be a set for the ages.

continued on page 16

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# STRING CHEESE

## with a local flavor

Music builds bridges, not walls.

The common bond between Telluride and Crested Butte is not the competitive mountain resort town status, it is the String Cheese Incident, which kicks off this year's festival at 10 a.m. Thursday.

"I came to Telluride two weeks before the 1981 bluegrass festival," says String Cheese Incident acoustic guitarist Billy Nershi. "I really got off on the whole scene and one of the main reasons I stayed in town was the fest. This was the hot spot.

"Last winter, I moved to Crested Butte to ski some new terrain."

Mandolinist/violinist Mike Kang and bassist Keith Moseley were habitating Crested Butte when Paul Lee recruited them to form the Whiskey Crate Warriors in 1992.

"Basically that's where we learned to play bluegrass," says Moseley.

Lee, commonly known in these parts of Colorado as the bluegrass Nazi, properly schooled Kang and Moseley in the art of traditional bluegrass. Lee has gone on to form Ryestraw, a traditional bluegrass outfit, gleaming its name from the leftover chaff

from making whiskey.

Meeting up with the skiing Nershi in December of 1993, Kang and Moseley took their lessons one step beyond tradition with the String Cheese Incident.

"I was recruited by Paul as a guitar player for his bluegrass band, but I knew nothing of it. After a couple of months, I saw the light," says Moseley with a strange glimmer in his eye. "I've grown to appreciate and understand the stylistic nuances of bluegrass music. But now that I'm playing bass, I want to play jazz and funk. I'm into the groove thing and the swing."

Musically speaking, the String Cheese Incident represents all four directions united by bluegrass. "People think that we are a bluegrass band, but we're not," Nershi reasons.

As Kang says, "Our instrumentation makes us a bluegrass band, the acoustic guitar, mandolin, bass and fiddle. As professional musicians, we have played in bluegrass bands more than any other type of band and as we say, there's literally hundreds of dollars to make as bluegrass musicians. Financially, we have to make people dance."

The addition of a drummer to a bluegrass unit is like adding dandelion to a yard of Kentucky bluegrass. Sometimes there is beauty in the pesky yellow flower.

"It was a freak of an accident that we got Travis," remembers Moseley. "We were

playing a gig with a friend and he didn't show. Travis was there with his drum and it worked. He took us in a new further direction, he added beats. We would be a bluegrass band if it weren't him."

Latin, calypso, jazz and swing influences came with Travis.

"The input into the band is fully open and we try all ideas openly." But as Nershi reminds us, "Bluegrass is our roots."

Nershi began playing bluegrass in his teens in upstate New York. His fascination with this archetypal American music form was rekindled in Telluride by Rusty String Band mandolinist Jack Rajca. With hours upon hours of playing on main street and at home, Nershi has become the fastest picker on the Western Slope.

This dedication to the art of musicianship is a recurring theme throughout the band.

"If I keep on playing my violin and mandolin, I can get really good," says Kang. "I want those two instruments as my niche, then I'll be able to play any instrument."

Growing up in Korea, Kang was trained in the art of classical violin. He picked up the mandolin just three years ago. Watching Kang scorch his instruments today leaves mind-boggling ideas of advancement.

"Bluegrass is technically demanding music," says Nershi.

"It's so fast and so clean. It's such a pure art and as a musician, as a player, you just have to love it."

Moseley believes, "Bluegrass is a true American cult phenomenon. You can go to a campground picking and find three generations singing these songs and sharing in the

musical experience."

The Telluride Bluegrass Festival provides the String Cheese Incident with grand opportunities.

"It's so much fun to be a part of a festival," says Nershi. "After all the festivals I've been to as a spectator, watching the players on stage and wishing I was there doing it. Now I don't have to hide and lurk backstage and they can't kick me out."

"The quickest way to learn is to watch the best," says Kang. "They are here in Telluride and meeting all these tremendous musicians will be great."

In the world of acoustic music, it is the utmost honor to be invited to perform at the Telluride festival.

Nershi attended eleven of the festivals before slipping onto the stage three years ago with his immensely popular duo, Billy and Liza.

Nershi will never forget his main stage debut. "Liza and I played before 10,000 people. Our act was scheduled between Peter Rowan and the Indigo Girls. I was hurried onstage and began fiddling with my equipment in the rush of the quick set-up. Then I paused and I looked up. There was a sea of people," said Nershi, dropping to his knees, bowing like a Muslim facing Mecca.

This year the String Cheese Incident will open the festival on Thursday at 10 a.m. This festival performance is part of their first concentrated tour of Colorado and Utah, performing twenty dates in twenty-eight days.

"The Depot [a Telluride bar/restaurant] has been our home base all winter and we want to thank the Telluride community for showing us great support," Nershi interjected.



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# BÉLA FLECK

*constantly changing*

by Geoff Hanson

Béla Fleck will be making his 13th consecutive appearance at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival this year at 9 p.m. Friday. But he says last year's performance was his most nerve-racking yet.

"I was really worried about how people would take to the new line-up," Fleck said of the last fest, when he was minus former harp player Howard Levy. "This audience has seen me in every stage of my career, and it's kind of like a barometer for me.

"But thankfully, everyone was real supportive and I think people really got into it."

**'W**hether as a member of New Grass or with the Flecktones, I've always come back to Telluride, so it's a very special place for me.'

— BÉLA FLECK

Throughout his career, Bela Fleck has changed the way people think about the banjo. He combines jazz, bluegrass, funk and elements as disparate as Celtic and Latin rhythms into the music of his back-up band, the Flecktones.

Just as Fleck is redefining the banjo, all of the Flecktones bring a unique approach to their instruments. Roy "Future Man" Wooten has invented an electronic percussion instrument with a guitar body and synth drum pads that he calls the "Synthax Drumitar."

Victor Wooten, the Flecktone's secret weapon, slaps and taps a melody while walking a baseline, and then spins his bass around his shoulders without missing a beat. His playing is nothing short of acrobatic.

Since Levy's departure, each member of the band has stretched themselves to become more adventurous, more eclectic, more unpredictable and ultimately more thrilling.

Fleck has been playing a MIDI banjo which allows him to play keyboards underneath his banjo licks. Victor has also been using MIDI technology in addition to working with a



*Times-Journal photo/Flab A. Huber*

new bass that has a higher range than most basses, and he has been working on playing several basses simultaneously. "Future Man" has floor pedals and a new sampling system to access new sounds.

Since last year's festival, the Flecktones released their first album in their post-Levy phase — *Three Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The Flecktones were joined on the album by guests Bruce Hornsby and Branford Marsalis. The album continues in the Flecktone tradition of offering complex rhythms and time signatures, tympanic tickling melodies, and a wide variety of musical styles.

Last year, the Flecktones received several prestigious awards. Wooten was named "best overall bassist" in *Bass Player* magazine. Fleck grabbed the "best instrumentalist" in the "miscellaneous" category by readers of *Jazziz*, and the Flecktones came in third behind the Rippingtons and the Pat

Metheny Group for Best Live Performance in the same poll.

In addition to their performances with the Flecktones this weekend, Victor Wooten will perform as a member of Jonell Mosser's band *Enough Rope*, and Fleck will team up with his former banjo teacher Tony Trischka for a very special set on Sunday morning. And you can bet that Bela will take the stage with Sam Bush and John Cowan Saturday night. After all, Telluride has always allowed Bela to display the full range of his talents, and for that reason, the Telluride Bluegrass Festival is particularly meaningful to him.

"When you keep coming back to certain places and you build friendships, and you build an audience, you tend to take those places more seriously as the years go by," he said. "I've been to Telluride for over 10 years, and it's one of the few things that has been constant. Whether as a member of New Grass or with the Flecktones, I've always come back to Telluride, so it's a very special place for me."





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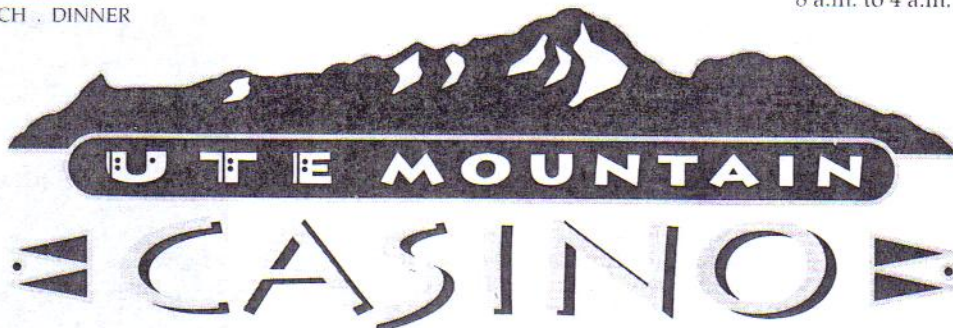
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Welcome to Blue Planet Records, the new record label of Planet Bluegrass, producers of great acoustic music festivals including the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, RockyGrass and the Rocky Mountain Folks Festival. Blue Planet Records will illuminate the frontiers of the acoustic music galaxy, featuring a collection of trend setting artists who combine the influences of folk, new acoustic bluegrass, and world music to create a kind of planetary music not yet heard.... until now.

## PLANET BLUEGRASS

This double-CD contains the magical moments and unique collaborations of 1992's sold-out show, and includes 25 songs performed by 22 Telluride artists. Join Mary-Chapin Carpenter, Shawn Colvin, Emmylou Harris, Béla Fleck, Ralph Stanley, David Wilcox, Jonell Mosser, Poi Dog Pondering, Peter Rowan, Sam Bush, John Cowan, Hot Rize, Red Knuckles and the Trailblazers, Dougie MacLean and others on an unforgettable musical journey. Comes complete with booklet, color artwork and photos, and exquisitely designed CD labels.

\*Planet Bluegrass is for the thousands that were there and the millions that wanted to be. My only complaint is that it's not a CD box set. - KBCO-FM, Boulder, Colorado

\*If you listen to Planet Bluegrass from start to finish you know what your dream radio station would sound like. - Jerry Mills, KYGO-FM, Denver, Colorado

## SUGARBEAT

On the day before the Telluride Bluegrass Festival Band Contest in 1992, four dynamic musicians got together for their first ever face to face rehearsal. Calling themselves "Sugarbeat," they went on stage and belted out tunes in a style uniquely their own, won the contest, and the rest as they say, is history.

In 1992 and 1993, Sugarbeat hit the road, playing throughout the US and Canada and recording their first album in San Francisco. With their first Planet Bluegrass release, the band has created a style of music we call Planetary Bluegrass, an infectious mix of new acoustic, folk, and pop.

## TANGLED ROOTS - LOOSE TIES

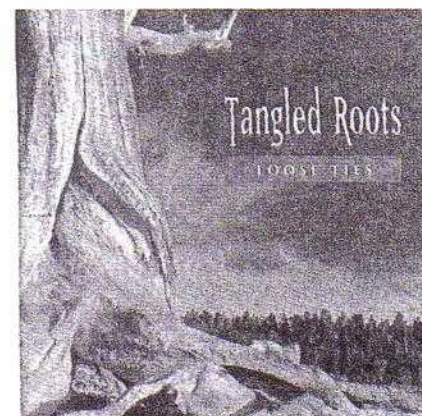
Their First Blue Planet release, Tangle Roots, was produced by Tim O'Brien. It contains solid harmonies and adventurous instrumentations with arrangements freshly drawing from many diverse influences (newgrass, jazz, blues) and creating the signature bluegrass sound of Loose Ties.

## SOUNDS OF THE VOID

At the 19th Annual Telluride Bluegrass Festival, the presence and performance of the Drepung Monks reverberated through the Telluride canyon as well as in the hearts of the festival audience. This CD is a splendidly recorded condensed version of their spellbinding appearance. Hear the monks perform the "awesome voice", a special technique allowing each singer to produce three simultaneous notes, accompanied by canyon-vibrating horns and spectacular crashing cymbals.

## 1992 Telluride Bluegrass Festival - Video

A legendary year in the history of The Telluride Bluegrass Festival, 1990 saw the inaugural festival performances of Mary-Chapin Carpenter, Béla Fleck & The Flecktones, Shawn Colvin, David Wilcox and James Taylor. You'll break a knowing smile when you see these artists realize that they just connected with the greatest audience on earth. And we've picked the very best performances by Sam Bush, Jerry Douglas, Mark O'Connor, Edgar Meyer, Peter Rowan, Tim O'Brien, The Subdudes and many more. Nominated for an ACE award. 84 minutes.



4th Annual  
Rocky Mountain

# Folk Festival

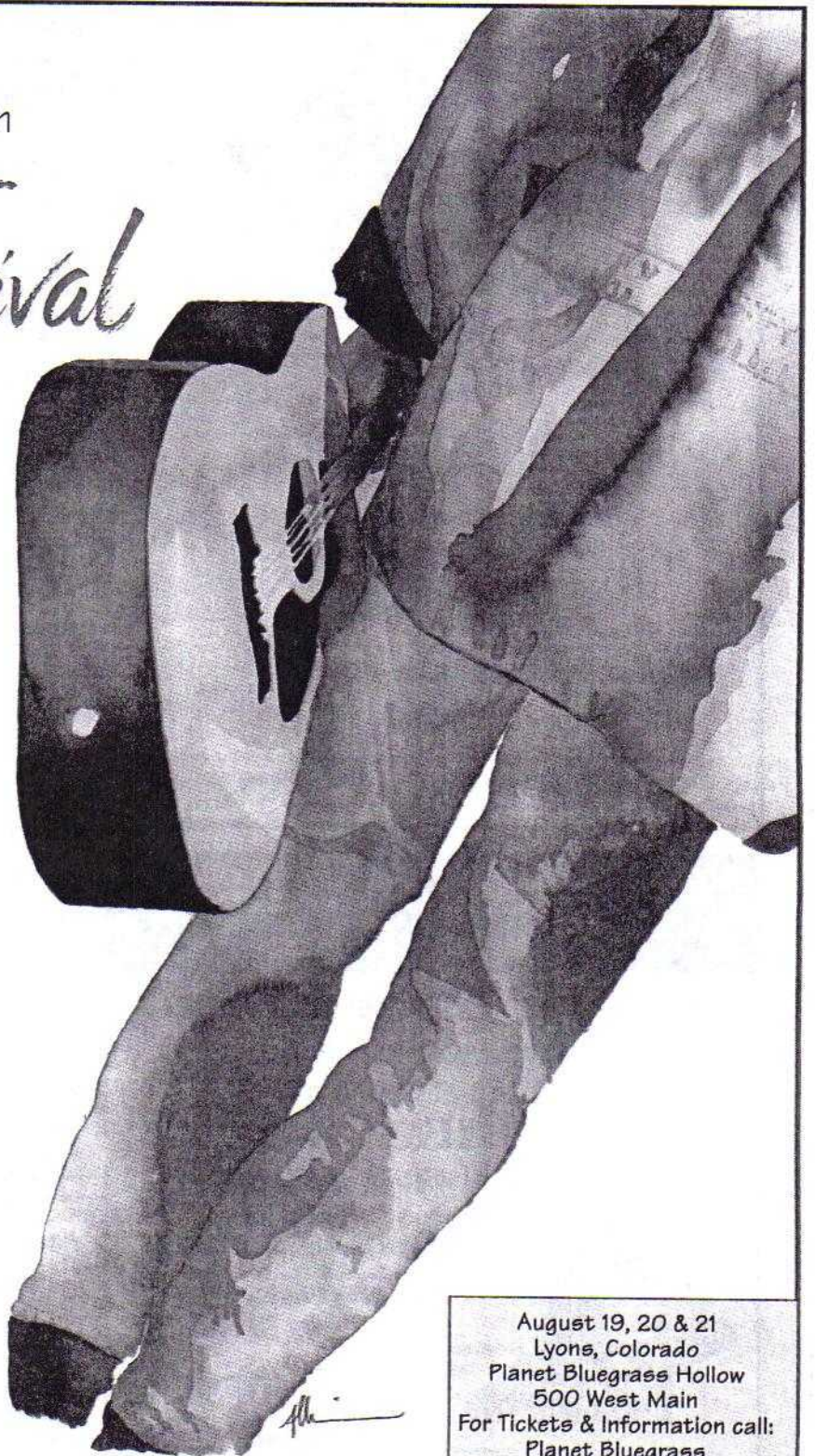
Shawn Colvin  
 David Wilcox  
 The Story  
 Janis Ian  
 Michelle Shocked  
 Lowen & Navarro  
 Patty Larkin  
 John Gorka  
 Sugarbeat  
 Ani DiFranco  
 Harvey Reid  
 Tom Prasada-Rao  
 Robert Earl Keen, Jr.  
 Stephen Allen Davis  
 Norman & Nancy Blake  
 The Nudes  
 Bananafish

Singer/Songwriter Showcase  
Friday August 19 4-6pm

### The Song School

The Song School is a two day intensive seminar exploring both creative and business aspects of the songwriting profession. Join Janis Ian, David Wilcox, Peter Rowan, Stephen Allen Davis and Tom Prasada-Rao for an in depth look at the ever-changing relationship of the songwriter as artist and businessperson. There's also evening campfire songsharing with Peter Rowan, panel discussions and demo tape critiquing time. If the song is part of your life, we hope you'll join us.

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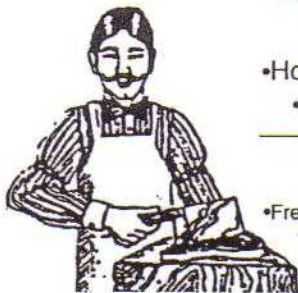
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## JOHN RANDAL STEWART

*waiting to pop*

by Geoff Hanson

The Telluride Bluegrass Festival is recognized as one of the places that discovered Shawn Colvin and Mary-Chapin Carpenter. There is a new face that keeps popping up at the festival who is surely on his way to the big time. That face belongs to John Randal Stewart.

Stewart will be playing guitar this weekend for Sam Bush and John Cowan, a job that Stewart held last year as well. Stewart and Bush have played together as part of the Nash Ramblers, Emmylou Harris's backup band for the last few years.

The 25 year-old guitar player is one of the hottest young talents in Nashville, not to

mention in Telluride, where he has showcased his adept rhythm guitar playing and striking vocals for the last few years.

Stewart moved to Nashville when he was 18 years old. He worked for an advertising agency while he tried to make inroads into the music business. He played on his first record a year later, backing up Holy Dunn. The word spread quickly through Nashville of this young phenom with the sweet-sounding voice. Sam Bush played with Stewart's father years ago, so when Emmylou Harris asked Bush to assemble an acoustic outfit to back her up, Bush tapped Stewart for the job.

Bush has been one of Stewart's biggest supporters. He and Garth Fundis recently produced Stewart's first solo recording which is due out on RCA Records shortly.

"I love Telluride," Stewart said in an interview conducted at last year's festival. "Usually, we're in a place one day and out the next. But in Telluride, we come for the weekend, and I get to play with lots of different people. It's an incredible place."

## COLVIN

continued from page 5

For me that's a record, something tangible. It becomes so important to reach goals."

With two albums out now, Colvin can breathe easy.

*Steady On*, Colvin's 1989 debut, received a Grammy in 1991.

Described as steadfastly beautiful, but despondent in tone, *Steady On* is full of images of broken china, women in flames and insomnia. In 1992 Colvin's second album, *Fat City*, was released. *Fat City*, a cathartic work for Colvin, conveys less of an angst-ridden account of love and life, but a lighter, poetic look at relationships. The first song "Polaroids" begins with "Please, no more therapy."

Colvin had originally thought of *Fat City* as a concept album about her life without a romantic relationship. "I thought, you know, a lot of these things are gonna be about making the best of being alone. But then I fell in love, and it changed the tone of the songs I'd written and inspired other songs, songs I didn't know were gonna be written. So the joke was on me, I'm happy to say," she said.

While many artists produce their best work during dark spells of depression, Colvin said she is inspired to work through happy and sad times. The heart-rending material comes from her memory reserve.

"I'm married and very happy now. But I can always call on memories. It takes a little more effort, but it's a necessary stage to go through unless you want to stay perpetually miserable," she said.

While most bluegrass songwriters draw heavily from early life experiences, Colvin said that her lyrics are inspired by adult journal entries.

"Growing up was weird. I was a sensitive kid. I didn't make friends real easily. I always had two or three good friends, but I was still kind of an outcast. It wasn't like I was Carrie [Stephen King's character] or anything; I just kept to myself."

Then she added, "I write in my journal a lot. I really like words."

Born in Vermillion, S.D., Colvin learned how to play the guitar early on. Like the Partridge Family, most members of her family were musically talented — notably her mother, who played the guitar, and her father, who played the guitar and banjo around the hearth, in the backyard and on the family porch.

While her homespun upbringing may conjure Norman Rockwell images of white picket fences and gingham tablecloths, Colvin dispels that notion.

"My upbringing wasn't that perfect. I came from a WASPy family. We went to church every Sunday, but there are always skeletons in the closet," Colvin said.

Still, Colvin believes she inherited some of her parents' musical genes.

Colvin's penchant for the art of words and the simplistic ways she manipulates them is what separates her from other contemporary singers lost in exponential stratospheres.

According to Colvin, more so than any other musician, the free verse lyrics of Joni Mitchell left an indelible impression on her nascent mind.

"At the time, any woman musician I listened to didn't write their own stuff, and she did. I was really fascinated and impressed."

*Crowded House*, a British pop band, is one of Colvin's favorite contemporary groups.

Like her fans who are excited to see her, Colvin said she loves performing in Telluride and, "I enjoy the setting very much. The sound and backstage people are great, and I like some of the hikes, like the one near the waterfall."

Last year Colvin and her good friend Mary-Chapin Carpenter conducted a workshop in Elk's Park that was considered, by many, to be the highlight of the festival. Colvin does not think that the workshop will be a reality this year, but she does not know for sure.

"I proposed one with Roseanne [Cash] and Alison [Krauss]," said Colvin, "but that's not going to work out because one of them has a flight out. Maybe at some last minute they will organize one."

Colvin takes the stage during Bluegrass '94 on Saturday at 5:45 p.m.

# JIMMIE DALE GILMORE

## *weird and wonderful*

by David Owen

Despite having won *Rolling Stone* magazine's Critics Poll as Country Artist of the Year three years running, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, who plays 2 p.m. Friday, does not necessarily think of himself as a country singer.

"My attachment to different forms of music doesn't have anything to do with the genre," Gilmore says. "It's particular, individual songs that get to me — the emotional content, or the cleverness of the lyrics, or maybe some irrational reason. I just love the song. People hear my voice and automatically think I'm a country singer, but I don't necessarily perceive myself that way."

Long labeled, in his own words, "too weird for country people," Gilmore believes that while the rigid walls of the country establishment have relaxed in recent years, his niche lies outside Opryland.

"My Grammy nomination is in Contemporary Folk [Best Contemporary Folk Recording for 1993] and I believe that is accurate," Gilmore said in a telephone interview earlier this year. "In a sense, I've always been more related to Jackson Browne than to Buck Owens or any of the current crop of country stars."

Raised in a country-western household in Lubbock, Texas, (his father was a guitarist in a country band) he was also a product of the music unrest of the '60s, listening to the Beatles and Little Richard as easily as Hank Williams or Woody Guthrie.

"I think I have a base of fans in the country world who share the same love of country music that I do," he explained. "But folk and blues and rock 'n' roll are also an actual, legitimate part of what I do, not just an afterthought I tacked on... When I rode around with my friends we played rock 'n' roll on the radio, and I loved it. But when I rode around by myself, I played country — that's when I could listen to those stations and not be made fun of."

In addition to this musical awakening, Gilmore found himself drawn into other pursuits that have broadened his life experiences and enriched the themes of his music.

"I've always been a book person. I'd read a lot of science fiction, Oriental philosophy, British writers like Aldous Huxley, Somerset Maugham. I was a fan of Kerouac and Ginsberg, the beat writers. By the time I decided to devote a lot of time to acquiring more than 'book-learning' in the mystical studies, it wasn't a brand new thing to me."

Gilmore withdrew from professional playing in the '70s, while he turned much of his attention to the further development of his philosophical and spiritual learnings.

"The Oriental philosophies and the teachings of the East have given me the best feeling of real answers to the questions I have

had," Gilmore said. "They deal with one of my favorite subjects, the way in which humans communicate, how they interact and respond to one another. In a way, country music has always dealt with these themes, just in a primitive way. It is very easy to listen to Hank Williams or Woody Guthrie and see them addressing these questions."

It was in the liberal confines of Austin, Texas, that Gilmore resumed his professional career and began to attract a strong following from his gigs at the Alamo Hotel.

His style of melding folk sensibilities with the mournful, earthy sound of his voice enabled Gilmore to draw a wide range of audiences.

"Because of how my mind works and what I've been exposed to, I simultaneously go for the street world, musically and otherwise, along with having an appreciation for sophisticated music and literature. That's part of my thing, blending the two," he explained. "To me it seems so silly that some people will say 'I identify with one music and I will not listen to anything else.' To me, they are really just depriving themselves of a lot of pleasure."

For Gilmore, music has always been about pleasure first.

"My ambition has always been the music, that has always been my love. For me it was never about getting on the charts or making a lot of money. I am taking a more professional attitude about it these days, but my native temperament was always that I loved the music."

Gilmore adds that it is the nature of musicians to be in touch with many types of music outside their own particular realm. He points to the support of his career from the likes of Natalie Merchant as evidence of the



interest that musicians take in each other.

"In reality, the strict definitions of different types of music is an artificial concept," he said. "The actual music happens in a very different way than what is perceived by the public. Musicians don't buy into the categories the way the public or the marketers do... I don't believe there is any kind of industry conspiracy to keep different kinds of music down, I think its more of an accidental, big inertia system."

Of his recent success, after so many years

and so many different roads travelled, Gilmore seems very pleased, and yet typically low-key.

"I am old enough and been around long enough to have seen so much," he says. "Nothing these days really stuns me, but I can still be surprised." And at age 48, Gilmore is also proud to show the world that you don't have to be 20-something with "a look" to succeed in today's music world.

"Many of the great performers are as old or older than I am. It just goes to show you that musical ability does not dwindle with age."

## WOLFSTONE

### *thistle up the kilt of Celtic music*

Picture a cool, low-cloud day and somewhere in this small town there's the strains of a mandolin, a guitar and bass. Picture those sounds coming from a gathering of many people all out to party, to let their hair down, to hold a *ceilidh* in the traditional sense but through very "now" means.

Wolfstone, a Scottish traditional folk/rock band from the Highland region of Scotland will be bringing just such a *ceilidh* (pronounced kay-lee) to the Telluride Bluegrass Festival 11 p.m. Friday and they hope that their music is as well received here as it has been in the band's first few stops this spring in the U.S.

"It's been going amazingly well," says Duncan Chisholm, the band's fiddle player. "We've been in California and people took to the band right away."

"I'm not sure if people have been waiting

for a band like us, but we're going to find out."

Just what Wolfstone is is hard to finger, but they basically combine two styles of music.

All of the members of the band have strong backgrounds in playing traditional Scottish music, full of folklore and passion. That Celtic tradition is where the band had its formation back in the late 1980s, when Chisholm started playing professionally with keyboardist Struan Eaglesham and his brother Stuart on guitar. Then the band picked up guitarists Andy Murray and Ivan Drever around the turn of the decade. Finally they added grungy rhythmists Wayne Mackenzie and "Mop" Youngson on drums and Wolfstone had the elements in place.

The band soon took its rich folk style and began to add the strike of rock influence to its music as its audiences started growing in numbers.

"It's really Celtic rock," as Chisholm phrased it. "There's a lot of fiddle and pipes to a heavy rock backing. Basically we're taking traditional tunes and rocking them up like never before. Though on our new album, everything is original, which is really part of the general progression for us...not in the sense of hitting the charts, but more just

building our sound. And we're very happy with where we're at now."

How American audiences will react to this mix is what Wolfstone is hoping to find out by touring the U.S. and hitting our bluegrass festival, to which Chisholm believes their is a connection of music.

"Telluride has been on everone's mind" he says. "We enjoy it but bluegrass is really not that big in Scotland. But there a definite link there musically. You will hear small things that remind you of Scottish and Irish music in bluegrass and the same with our music. We just hope that we're not too out of the ordinary and won't upset anyone."

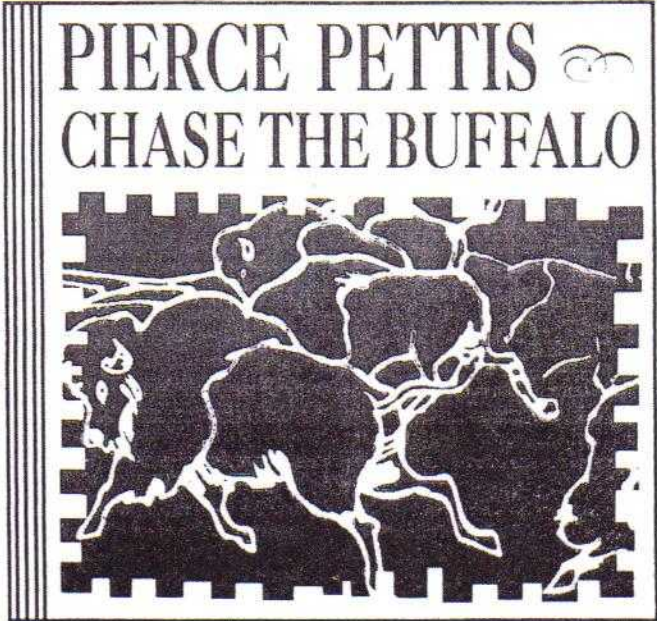
Though the band's 1992 album called *The Chase* was termed a "thistle up the kilt of Celtic music," the band's success both at home and in America is a testament to the openness of audiences and the talent that Wolfstone possesses.

So look forward to the *ceilidh*, a chance to "not give a toss about anything," as Chisholm put it, and enjoy a marriage of music that will have you dancing until you see the shores of Scotland from the confines of Telluride's Town Park.

Wolfstone appears as the 11 p.m. headliner Friday.

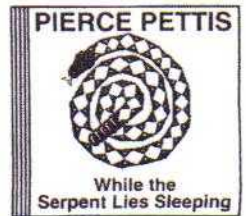
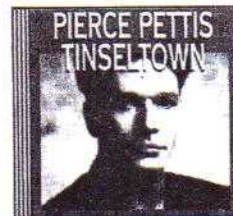


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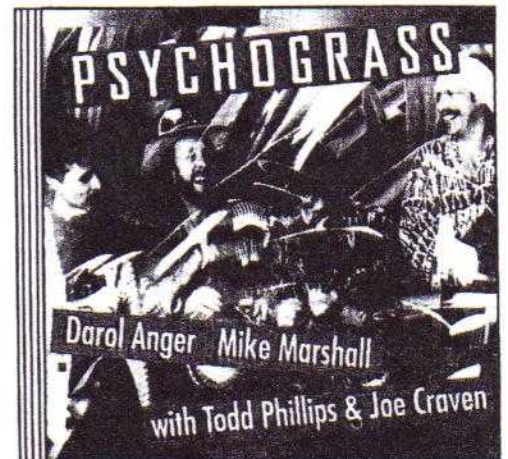
Pierce Pettis  
*Chase The Buffalo*  
*Tinseltown*  
*While The Serpent Lies Sleeping*

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# PSYCHOGRASS

Blending classical, acoustic, jazz, and bluegrass, Psychograss sprouts with a debut recording of outrageous compositions and a trailblazing sound that is entirely their own. Featuring members of the famed David Grisman Quintet, Turtle Island String Quartet, Montreux and The Modern Mandolin Quartet.



PSYCH GRASS  
 performs at 12:30  
 Friday on the main stage.

# NANCI GRIFFITH



## brings a social conscience

by Ellen Sammon

voice takes to the Fred Shellman Memorial Stage, festival goers spill from vending booths to listen to Griffith sing about rural American fixtures: country fair grounds, John Deere tractors, whiskey, Woolworths and vanilla sodas.

Her nasally, girlish voice, developed in her home-town of Austin, Texas, and has become Griffith's beauty mark.

Griffith, who has been performing since the age of 14, is used to bright lights and the masses. A compelling raconteur, Griffith introduces most of her songs with a funny or meaningful anecdote.

For instance, one of her songs is devoted to her great-uncle and her aunt Nettie who, despite the dust and Great Depression of 1930, persevered and kept their faltering midwestern farm alive. Songs like these are testimony to the fact that Griffith's ballads are not empty shells. Although they are

pretty to listen to, they are heartfelt and thought-provoking.

A folk and bluegrass disciple, Griffith fights to bring the genre to the forefront, finding fault with the media for dispelling merits of traditional bluegrass and folk music.

"It's always made me incredibly angry that the music industry turned its back on folk music and said it's not commercially viable. We all know that's not true. The Weavers sold a lot of records. Bob Dylan sold a lot of records," said Griffith in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* *Calendar*.

She added, "Folk and rap music are the only two American forms of music that have any social conscience whatsoever. So I think it deserves to be on the radio, to be heard."

Griffith says her early influences included luminaries like Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt and Jerry Jeff Walker. Griffith also identified with the music performed by Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, the Weavers, the Carter Family and Odetta. According to a Planet Bluegrass press release, Griffith heard these musicians through "her parents and their beatnik friends, and from the open air waves of Texas radio."

"Carolyn Hester's voice through my transistor radio gave me wings to fly and a place to be," said Griffith.

Griffith graduated from the University of Texas, where she earned a degree in education, and then taught kindergarten and first grade in Austin.

The artist, however, gave up teaching to pursue music. She recorded her first album,

*There's A Light Beyond These Woods* (1978). She followed four years later with *Poet In My Window* (1982). Griffith received critical acclaim for her next two albums. *Once In A Very Blue Moon* (1984) and *The Last Of The True Believers* (1986). The latter earned Griffith her first Grammy nomination for Best Folk Album.

In 1986, Griffith signed with MCA Records/Nashville. There she released two albums, *Lone Star State Of Mind* (1986) and *Little Love Affairs* (1988), both produced by MCA's Tony Brown. *Lone Star State Of Mind* catapulted Griffith to superstar status in Ireland and England, earning her a platinum record within a few months of its release.

Griffith has been the recipient of several prestigious European awards, including the IRMA and the Edison Award. Griffith considers Ireland her second home, and alludes to the country in several of her songs. She spends several months a year in Ireland writing, recording and performing.

But Griffith did not stop there. In 1988 her album *One Fair Summer Evening* was released. *Storms* followed in 1990, produced by Glynn Johns (*the Rolling Stones, the Who, the Eagles*). *Late Night Grande Hotel*, produced by Rod Argent and Peter Van-Hooke, followed in 1991. Next was her debut for Elektra Records, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, in which Griffith and Emmylou Harris collaborate and sing the late Kate Wolf's "Across The Great Divide."

Without a doubt, Griffith is one of the most compelling acoustic acts to grace the stage. She will take to the Bluegrass stage at 8 p.m. Thursday.

**B**roken hearts, pickup trucks and Budweiser. The unaffected subjects of country music hit home.

So do the ballads of Nanci Griffith, a prolific folk singer who needs no introduction in Telluride, where she is a veteran performer.

When the small brunette with the twangy

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# ROSANNE CASH

by Matthew Lewis

*weaving  
melodies out of  
soul-searching*

Perhaps the most successful female country musician of all time, Rosanne Cash will take the stage 7:30 p.m. Friday.

Described as having a "streak of defiance worthy of her legendary dad, [country singer Johnny Cash]" Rosanne comes to Telluride riding on the wheels of 14 years of accomplishment as a folk and country singer/songwriter.

Her most recent release, *The Wheel*, is a paean to Cash's recent period of deep soul-searching and her consistent desire to find the

universal qualities of the most personal experiences. Helping weave the melodies on *The Wheel* are such folk icons as Bruce Cockburn, Mary-Chapin Carpenter and Marc Cohn.

"Perhaps there are many levels to these songs," Cash explains, "and I know that some people only want to know the most surface level. But others might recognize the feminine imagery and the mystical

connections and the ties to the subconscious. It's all basically about that unfolding, that constant evolution of reworking and reforming that we all go through."

Cash is no stranger to the top of the musical charts. Her first U.S. release on Columbia Records, *Right or Wrong*, made every critical top ten list for 1979, and spawned a succession of singles that kept her on the charts well into the following year.

Cash's second Columbia release, *Seven Year Ache*, flew three number one singles for 12 months on the *Billboard* magazine country chart; her fourth album, *Rhythm and Dance*, yielded the Grammy-winning single "I don't

know why you don't want me," and the album's four hit country singles cemented her position in the country music canon — the singles remained on the charts for some 14 months.

Defying the odds against continuing her string of hit records, Cash's next release, *King's Record Shop*, featured no fewer than four number-one singles, an all-time record for a woman in country music. Following its release, she was hailed by the *New York Times* as "the most compelling singer and songwriter to emerge from the progressive wing of country music."

The album's four hits spanned 15 months on the charts. Cash ran away with *Billboard*'s "Top singles artist" award for 1988, and soon after released another number-one single, her cover version of the Beatles' "I Don't Want to Spoil the Party."

Her late-1990 release *Interiors* continued her tradition of recording only top-notch tunes, as evidenced by that album's nomination for a Grammy award for Best Contemporary Folk Album.

After the release of *Interiors*, Cash then turned her attention to a landmark album and video project, bringing together Mary-Chapin Carpenter, Gloria Estefan, Emmylou Harris, Carole King, Dionne Warwick and others on *Til Their Eyes Shine* (*The*

*Lullaby Album*), a once-in-a-lifetime collection to benefit the "Voiceless Victims" project of the institute for Intercultural Understanding, a long-time concern of Cash's. The non-profit organization provides assistance and support through multicultural education programs for children and adults worldwide.

"This is an album of powerful femininity, of healing and nurturance, by some very unique and concerned women," Cash says of the project.

"The most compelling thing about all art is finding the universal in the most personal," she says. "That's really what all of this is all about."

**'P**erhaps there are many levels to these songs, and I know that some people only want to know the most surface level. But others might recognize the feminine imagery and the mystical connections and the ties to the subconscious. It's all basically about that unfolding, that constant evolution of reworking and reforming that we all go through.'

**—ROSANNE CASH**



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## FUTURE

continued from page 6

According to Ferguson, the most significant aspect of this year's festival will be the sound system provided by Meyers Sound, one of the premiere sound companies in the world.

For the first time ever, the festival is "flying the system," that is, hanging the

speakers on scaffolding and therefore angling the speakers down at the audience rather than up into the valley.

Moreover, Ferguson will be doing some "stage treatment" to deal with the acoustic challenges provided by the Fred Shellman Memorial Stage.

So kick back and know that the sound will be great and as always the music will be top notch. And savor the juices that are the Telluride Bluegrass Festival.



# A conversation with

# THE BAND'S RICK DANKO

Rick Danko is one of the three remaining original members of The Band. Danko plays bass, though in classic Band tradition he is also adept at playing several other instruments.

Danko possesses one of the great voices in rock n' roll. He hit the high notes for the Band's classic triad of voices along with Levon Helm's southern drawl and Richard Manuel's gospel sound. Listen to "It Makes No Difference" and you will fully understand the power of Danko's voice.

*Times-Journal* reporter Geoff Hanson caught up to Danko in New Orleans where the band was sharing a bill with the Allman Brothers and Buckwheat Zydeco.

**GH: How is this current tour going?**

**RD:** It's been great. Tonight we're playing on the same bill with the Allman Brothers. We go way back with those guys. We're about to head off to Japan. And then this summer, we'll be all over the place.

**GH: Have you ever been to Telluride?**

**RD:** I've never been there. But I know that there's only one way in and one way out. I've heard that in the old mining days the outlaws used to call it, "To hell you ride!" I hear it's a beautiful place. We're looking forward to it.

**GH: Robbie Robertson wrote most of the Band's songs. Since he's not with you anymore, are there certain songs that you can't play anymore?**

**RD:** No, it doesn't work that way. We play

songs that Robbie wrote, songs that others of us have written and we even play songs that we gave Robbie credit for writing. We have a very large repertoire of songs that we play. You might hear anything.

**GH: I noticed that you're playing J.J. Cale's song Crazy Mama.**

**RD:** J.J. Cale saved my life one time. I was playing on a bill before Waylon Jennings. There were 15,000 people all ready for Waylon to come out. We were running late, and there was an electrical storm. The crowd was getting a little hostile, and J.J. went out there and cooled the crowd down in away that only he could have done. I've been playing Crazy Mama ever since.

**GH: When did you get back together as the Band after *The Last Waltz*?**

**RD:** We've been playing with this configuration since 1983. We all live together in Woodstock. In fact, most of our road crew is from Woodstock as well. I've lived in lots of different places, but I've always had a house in Woodstock. That will always be my home.

**GH: What did you think of the film *The Last Waltz*?**

**RD:** I thought it was wonderful. It was a great movie. And it allowed me to enjoy an

early retirement. There was a lot of money involved. But it's more of Robbie's take on The Band. He and Marty (Scorsese) were living together at the time, so it's not really a balanced account of the history of The Band, but I thought it was great. It gave me freedom as an artist, and I'm grateful for the freedom I've been able to enjoy.

**GH: How do you keep yourself busy outside of your work with the Band?**

**RD:** In 1978, I recorded my first solo album. And I'm working on my second record. I've spent a lot of time in Norway recording with Jonas Fjeld and Eric Andersen. And I always play a lot of acoustic shows. They're a form of therapy for me. And I like to team up with old friends of mine and play live shows. Jorma Kaukonen and I have played two or three shows a year for the last fifteen years. I'm really just grateful I've been able to make a living playing music.

According to *The Washington Post*, the breakup of the Johnson Mountain Boys in 1988 was the death of bluegrass.

Luckily, the Johnson Mountain Boys have reformed and bluegrass lives.

Although not all of their music is strictly traditional, the Johnson Mountain Boys keep the traditional sound in the arrangements. But still, "traditional" best describes this well-respected unit.

To sing, the men walk away from their instrument microphones and approach a cluster of vocal mikes center stage. Naturally occurring dynamics bring out the vocals and subtly tone down the instruments.

Visually this traditional stage set-up recreates an old-time look.

The Johnson Mountain Boys are Dudley Connell on lead vocals and guitar, Dave McLaughlin on mandolin and vocals, Tom Adams on banjo and vocals, Eddie Stubbs on fiddle and guest bassist Mark Shatz.

Just returning from a successful tour of Europe, the individual members of the band keep busy with numerous other music related projects.

In addition to being one of the greatest bluegrass voices alive,

continued on page 29

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# PSYCHOGRASS

by Deborah Goldberg

## playing a groove

Whether playing together as a part of the David Grisman Quartet, the band Montreux or as solo performers, the members of Psychograss have stayed in contact musically over the past 15 years, years readily apparent in the tight feel of their music.

"The most exciting thing about this group for me," said Psychograss guitarist/mandolinist Mike Marshall, "is the sense of rhythm that these four players have. Because our backgrounds are similar and go back a long way, we immediately click as soon as we begin playing a groove. There's an instantaneous recognition and understanding."

Marshall and violinist Darol Anger helped form the musical alliance of the David Grisman Quartet that grew out of the new acoustic music scene developing at the time in northern California. New acoustic sounds combine to make an eclectic array of the musical elements of folk,



bluegrass, jazz and classical. Violinist/percussionist Joe Craven and bassist Todd Phillips, also Grisman alumni, were a part of this exploration. As multi-instrumentalists versed in string instruments, the artists pushed themselves and combined mediums in this adventure.

Recently formed, the Psychograss quartet has taken the foundation of new acoustic music and built a style that melds with international folk idioms.

The composition "Frogs on Ice," blends Celtic and Eastern European flavor, "Little Jaco" has Brazilian- and Argentine- derived rhythms

and "Pheasant on Ice" evokes a Balinese past.

Independently, Anger has shared the studio and stage with Grisman, Montreux, numerous Anger-Marshall collaborations and more recently the Turtle Island String Quartet.

In his career, Marshall has gone from state-wide fiddle and mandolin champion in his native Florida to recording the film score to *King of the Gypsies* with Grisman. He's recorded solo albums and has gained experience as a producer of folk-pop recordings.

Craven, while playing with Grisman for the past four years, has continued with a wide range of groups including Mumbo Jumbo, the

Jerry Garcia-David Grisman band and the "jungle 'n' western" happening Way Out West. As for venues, his percussion talents have graced Carnegie Hall.

Rounding out the bluegrass/jazz elements of the band is Phillips, who who has worked on over 50 recordings with musicians such as Tony Rice, Jerry Douglass and John Gorka.

With such a range of talent, Psychograss appears to be a band that looks to break a few musical rules; on stage expect a high energy, adventurous show.

Psychograss plays the Shellman stage 12:30 p.m. Friday.



# CALIFORNIA

by Deborah Goldberg

## a bluegrass force

Oklahoma-born fiddler Byron Berline was invited to play a two-week tour of Japan in 1978, including a total of three round-trip airfare tickets. The national champion fiddle player's most recent group Sundance had just broken up. Berline asked two of the band's former members, flatpicking guitarist Dan Crary and banjo player John Hickman, along for the ride.

Sixteen years later, the trio called California, joined by bass player Steve Spurgin in 1988 and guitar/mandolin player John Moore in 1990, is still a force in the bluegrass scene.

The members all have a base in traditional styles from Texas-style fiddle tunes to country guitar, and use their talents to both create original work and take traditional pieces and transform them to a California experience. Their shows are primarily improvisations, often with long instrumentals that reflect the years on stage together.

The experience of these five is readily apparent. Prior to forming the trio that eventually lead to California, Berline collaborated with Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys, The Dillards, Country Gazette and Sundance. If this were not enough, take note that this fiddler has joined in with numerous

musicians and bands: the Rolling Stones, the Doobie Brothers, Gram Parsons, James Taylor, Emmylou Harris and the list goes on.

From his work on the score for *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* in 1975 to *Star Trek and Back to the Future*, Berline has proven his talents on the screen as well as the stage.

Fellow musician Crary is not only a guitarist who has most recently worked with Michelle Shocked on *The Arkansas Traveler*, but a communications professor at Cal State-Fullerton.

From auspicious beginnings picking his banjo at age 12, John Hickman went on to play professionally with the likes of Red Allen, Frank Wakefield and the Stoney Mountain Boys before joining Sundance.

Spurgin joined the trio of Berline-Crary-Hickman when he was a drummer on the Texas club circuit. Berline invited him to become a member of the group — on the condition he play base. Adventurously agreeing to this stipulation, Spurgin shifted his career and tested his musical talents.

Newest addition to California, John Moore, is a mandolin and guitar player who lends his voice to the mix. A performer at the Grand Ole Opry, Moore has also done studio work for the movie sound tracks of *Blaze* and *El Diablo*.

California will perform 4:15 p.m. Thursday.

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## Thursday

- 10:00 Blue String Cheese Incident
- 11:15 String Fever
- Noon Pierce Pettis
- 1:15 Tony Trischka & World Turning
- 2:45 Freewill Savages
- 4:15 California
- 5:30 Dinner Break
- 6:30 The Johnson Mountain Boys
- 8:00 Nanci Griffith
- 10:00 Peter Rowan & Crucial Country



## Friday

- 10:00 Tony Trischka & Béla Fleck
- 11:00 Loose Ties
- 12:30 Psychograss
- 2:00 Jimmy Dale Gilmore
- 3:30 Douglas, Barenberg & Meyer
- 5:00 Jonell Mosser & Enough Rope
- 6:30 Contest Finals
- 7:30 Rosanne Cash
- 9:00 Béla Fleck & The Flecktones
- 11:00 Wolfstone

## Saturday

- 9:00 Band Contest Finals
- 11:00 Pete Wernick & Live Five
- 12:30 Bad Livers
- 2:00 Sugarbeat
- 3:30 Tim & Mollie O'Brien & The O'Boys
- 4:45 Dinner Break
- 5:45 Shawn Colvin
- 7:15 Junior Brown
- 9:00 Sam Bush & John Cowan



## Sunday

- 10:00 Mighty Clouds of Joy
- 11:40 Kids Showcase
- 12:15 The Lonesome River Band
- 1:45 The Rowan Brothers
- 3:15 Alison Krauss & Union Station
- 5:00 Paco de Lucia
- 6:15 Troubador Winner
- 7:15 David Wilcox
- 9:00 The Band

The Telluride Bluegrass Academy offers a week of music instruction, workshops, competitions, and family activities preceding and during the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. The Academy's goal is to provide both music education and a greater appreciation of the musical genres associated with the festival. We would like to thank all our sponsors for helping support the Academy programs.



**Workshops**

According to local legend, it was Peter Rowan who did the first "workshop" about fifteen years ago. Since then, the workshops have become a celebrated festival addition providing the opportunity for unique collaborations and some very memorable musical moments. They're held each day at the historic Sheridan Opera House (SOH) and across the street at Elks Park. Please check the Academy signboards each morning for workshop updates and changes.

<b>Thursday</b>			
11:00	<b>Open Mike</b>	It could be you!	Elks park
4:00	<b>Recording, publishing</b>	Bill VornDick	Elks park
<b>Friday</b>			
11:30	<b>Vocal</b>	Tim & Mollie O'Brien, Jonell Mosser	Elks Park
1:00	<b>Appalachain World Funk Part 1</b>	James Leva, Dave Grant, Al Tharp	Elks Park
2:30	<b>Banjo</b>	Tony Trischka, Tony Furtado	Elks Park
4:00	<b>String Improvisation</b>	Telluride Troubadour finalists	Elks Park
5:45	<b>Live Five</b>	Pete Wernick	Elks Park
<b>Saturday</b>			
10:00	<b>Guitar Maintenance</b>	Rick Turner, Steve Klein	Elks park
11:30	<b>Guitar Building</b>	Michael Hornick	Elks park
12:00	<b>Percussion</b>	Joe Craven, Kester Smith	SOH
1:00	<b>Making Your First Recording</b>	Bill VornDick, Cookie Marenko	Elks Park
2:30	<b>Songwriting</b>	Pierce Pettis, Peter Rowan	Elks Park
4:00	<b>Sam Bush Air Mandolin Contest</b>		SOH
4:30	<b>Singer-Songwriter Showcase</b>	Troubadour finalists	Elks park
6:00	<b>Appalachain World Funk Part 2</b>	Peter Rowan, Dave Grant, The Bad Livers	SOH
<b>Sunday</b>			
11:00	<b>Singer-Songwriter Showcase</b>	Troubadour finalists	SOH
2:00	<b>How to Make a Band Work</b>	Pete Wernick	Elks
6:00	<b>Duets</b>	Shawn Colvin, Alison Krauss	Elks

**Family Tent Schedule**

The Family Tent provides a variety of activities and entertainment for children and parents throughout the festival. This area is opened daily from 10:00 - 1:30 and 2:30 - 6:00, and is closed from 1:30 - 2:30 each day. The Family Tent is located to the right of the secondary gate on the soccer/ice rink oval. To participate in our craft activities tent, a special sticker is required and can be purchased at the front gate for \$5/day or \$10 for all four days. Parents must accompany their children.

<b>Thursday</b>	
10:00 - 1:30	Crafts, solar cooking, group games
2:30 - 6:00	Crafts, songwriting, storytelling, group singalongs
3:00	Katherine Dines Family Music Performance
<b>Friday</b>	
10:00 - 1:30	Crafts, petting zoo, solar cooking, group games
10:30	Nature Walk with Maureen Keilty and Dan Peha, authors of Best Hikes with Children in Colorado
12:00	Washboard Willie's Jamboree
2:30 - 6:00	Crafts, songwriting, storytelling, group singalongs, juggling school
3:00	Mysto the Magi
4:00	Songwriting with Jessica
5:30	Katherine Dines Family Music Performance
<b>Saturday</b>	
11:00 - 1:30	Crafts, petting zoo, solar cooking, group games, juggling school
10:30	Nature Walk with Maureen Keilty and Dan Peha, authors of Best Hikes with Children in Colorado
11:00	Mysto the Magi
12:00	String Fever Performance
1:00	Katherine Dines Family Music Performance
2:30 - 6:00	Crafts, songwriting, storytelling, group singalongs
3:00	Children's Talent Showcase
5:00	Washboard Willie's Jamboree
<b>Sunday</b>	
10:00 - 1:30	Crafts, petting zoo, solar cooking, group games
10:00	Mainstage practice
11:00	Kids and Katherine Dines with special guests-Mainstage
1:00	Juggling School with Kaj and Laurie
2:30 - 6:00	Crafts, songwriting, storytelling, group singalongs
3:00	Mysto the Magi
3:45	Songwriting with Jessica
5:00	Washboard Willie's Jamboree

The Academy is funded in part by the Town of Telluride's Commission on Arts and Special Events.

**TELLURIDE  
BLUEGRASS  
FESTIVAL  
STAFF**

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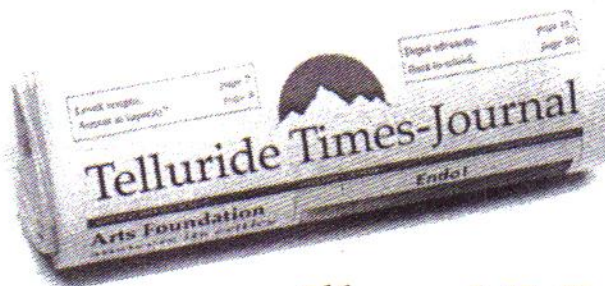
The Telluride Bluegrass Festival wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of Charlie Haas and the San Miguel Valley Corporation. It is with their cooperation that Telluride has developed one of the most admired musical traditions on the planet.

It is our hope that The Festival may in some small way show how the reasonable cooperation between private property owners and governing entities, each with legitimate interests to protect, can provide substantial economic, cultural, recreational, social and yes, even environmental, resources for the entire community that would not be possible without this cooperation.

Please contact us at 728-4408 during or after The Festival if you are aware of a situation where our cooperation, help or support could mitigate any undesired experiences you may have associated with The Festival.



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# MIGHTY CLOUDS OF JOY

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gospel

With a list of fans that includes Paul Simon, Mick Jagger and a hefty backing from their faith in God, the Mighty Clouds of Joy will bring their inspirational and R&B flavored gospel voices to the stage at Bluegrass.

The Clouds have enjoyed success for more than 30 years (with 25 albums and more than a handful of Grammy awards) and are considered by many to be the greatest group of the gospel scene.

But the Clouds — who perform 10 a.m. Sunday — are not secular by any means.

The four voices of the Clouds — Joe Ligon, Richard Wallace, Michael McCowin and Wilbert Williams — have strived over the years to build upon their strictly church backgrounds and provide audiences with contemporary, fiery music that makes you want to dance.

The Clouds hit big on the disco scene with their number one hit



"Ride the Mighty Highway" and have pulled together a sound that crosses borders of style but maintains a strong religious presence and message.

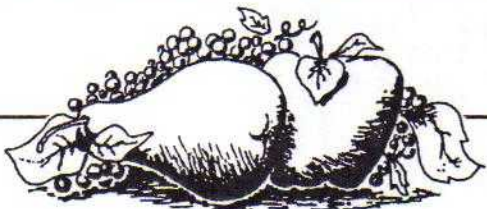
As written in a 1992 article in the *Milwaukee Journal* following a Clouds show, "After the traditional 'Will the Circle be Unbroken,' took on a wickedly funky beat, Ligon decided to make sure no one mistook the Clouds for a

secular band. 'Some people call this a next tune contemporary gospel,' he said, introducing their raucous 1976 hit [Ride the Mighty Highway]. 'Whatever it is, I just call it a good message.'"

The Clouds carry out a tireless tour schedule through 10 months of the year, bringing their songs, hearts and voices to perk the humdrum ears of parish-like audiences

around the country.

The voices blend and the band kicks in to get those in attendance up and moving, feeling the music as well as hearing the message. As Jeff Bradley, of the *Denver Post*, wrote after a concert in Aspen, "The Mighty Clouds of Joy had virtually the entire audience out of their seats clapping, dancing and shouting, 'Oh yeah!'"



— a bistro —

# 221

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# PETER ROWAN

## awake me in Telluride

by Jason Silverman

Rowan's musical wanderlust took him all over the North American map: he rocked with David Grisman and Jerry Garcia, did the Tex-Mex with Flaco Jimenez and Ry Cooder, Reggae'd with Sam Bush and Jerry Douglas and experimented on his own with folk, Carribean, Native American and flamenco music.

Now, some 30 years later, Rowan's travels have taken him right back where he started — roots country/bluegrass music.

Rowan's new album, recorded with his brothers Chris and Lorin, is an all-acoustic celebration of mountain music. It's called *Tree on a Hill* and it features songs by Doc

Watson, the Carter Family and the Stanley Brothers. Peter and the Rowan Brothers will perform songs from *Tree on a Hill* 1:45 p.m. Sunday afternoon.

When the brothers Rowan were recording the '70s albums *The Rowans*, *Sibling Rivalry* and *Jubilation* on Asylum Records, they invented a mish-mash of music, meshing elements of rock, Reggae and pop with their bluegrass. Now with *Tree on a Hill*, the Rowans are more focused, according to Peter.

"We've tried to be a musical democracy in the past and it has usually been a disaster," he said during a recent phone interview. "Now we're just taking one aspect and concentrating on it."

"Right now, I'm more interested in simplifying than in expanding and stretching out. I don't want to explore styles and skim the surface. It's a great time for bluegrass-oriented acoustic music and I want to be deep in that groove."

And Rowan said that the classic tunes, juxtaposed with some Rowan originals, have been the perfect vehicle for roots mountain

music.

"I've been playing these songs since I was a teenager," Rowan said. "Focusing on this material — just taking one aspect and working on it — has given us a much sharper edge musically."

Rowan was born to a musical family in Boston, and became a sensation as a teenager. When he was just 14, his band The Cupids recorded a single that became a local hit.

Still, he decided to play it safe and attend college. He lasted two years before realizing his destiny lay in the bluegrass world. Rowan didn't have to wait long for his big break: Monroe soon offered him a job in his band, which was playing at the Grand Ole Opry.

Rowan's duties were varied; in addition to singing lead and playing guitar, he drove the band bus and booked the shows. He also soaked up the wisdom of the man he calls "the arch-druid of bluegrass."

In 1967, Rowan began jamming with David Grisman, eventually forming the rock-fusion band SeaTrain. The two SeaTrain albums were produced by Beatles' producer George Martin. Jerry Garcia joined Rowan and Grisman in 1973 to record *Old and In the Way*, the best selling bluegrass album of all time.

Rowan has worked extensively with his brothers, with Flaco and Jimenez, and with a who's who of bluegrass greats. He has written songs for Ricky Scaggs, Janie Fricke and Michael Martin Murphey, among others, and recorded the solo *New Moon Rising* (1988), which was a Grammy nominee for Best Bluegrass Album.

And he's done more.

His 1993 *Awake Me in the New World* is a concept album that goes far afield, exploring the musical heritage of the Carribean.

Still Rowan believes that the Afro-Cuban, Reggae and Latin grooves he loves to play all mesh naturally with bluegrass.

"Playing bluegrass is like playing classical music," he said. "While it's extremely precise, it's much less narrow than everyone thinks. When you learn to really play bluegrass, it teaches you everything about music. It takes you in all sorts of directions."

Crucial Country, with which Rowan will perform 10 p.m. Thursday, is a perfect example.

Founded to play weekly gigs at Nashville's The Station Inn, the band quickly took off, embarking on a successful tour in 1993.

Crucial Country takes all kinds of musical styles — blues, Reggae, Native American — and allows them to sing through the bluegrass.

"We aren't playing Reggae trying to play bluegrass," said Rowan. "We are playing bluegrass and letting the other rhythmic impulses emerge, letting the Reggae feel come out."

"It all comes from playing bluegrass. Bluegrass has so much in it that if you go deep enough, everything will start coming out. And if you know what those things are, you can go with them. And once you recognize how all the different styles are related, you can really take off. That's the part of bluegrass that's really fantastic and exciting."

"All the music's in here, boys," Bill Monroe used to tell his band, The Bluegrass Boys. "You don't have to go anywhere else." But Peter Rowan, who, as a 22-year old Blue Boy, was still just a boy, decided to go other places anyway.



Times-Journal photo/Rob A. Huber



# DAVID WILCOX

*what a  
good life  
means*

by David Owen

In a day and age when so much of music seems to be all sheen and no substance, one can find hope in the fact that singer/songwriters like David Wilcox still ply their trade, writing timeless melodies and songs from the heart. A native of suburban Cleveland, Wilcox first found himself inspired by artists like Joni Mitchell and John Martyn while attending Antioch College in Ohio.

"I would say that this new acoustic thing that's happening — it's very different. It's rock 'n' roll that's talking about solutions as well as questions..."

— DAVID WILCOX

Performing came later, at McDibb's, a local nightspot in Asheville, N.C., where he was attending Warren Wilson College. It was there that Wilcox began to hone his live presentation and began to infuse it with an intimate intensity that has become his trademark.

His recording career began in 1987, with the independent release of *The Nightshift Watchman*, on the Song of the Wood Music label. Later, after landing a chance at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe, he caught the eye of A&M record's Patrick Clifford. The relationship has resulted in three albums, the first of which, *How Did You Find Me Here*, sold over 100,000 copies, mostly through word of mouth.

Wilcox's song writing has always been a very personal tool, a kind of therapy and release. This means personal themes are often at the forefront of his writing efforts."

My music didn't come to me as a message to the world. So for me to stay the same, I have to do it in terms of what it does for me. It tells my stories and teaches me what I want to learn," Wilcox explained in a recent interview.

His second A&M effort, 1991's, *Home Again*, had a jazzier feel that found a soulful, flannel voice dealing with an array of personal demons.

"It's true that the second album reflected a harrowing experience," Wilcox says. "While the first album has a lot of escapist songs about wanting to disappear and find my life somewhere else, *Home Again* was me realizing that I could run, but I couldn't hide. It had to do with the work that got done once I went back and tried to fix the things that need to be fixed."

Late 1993 found Wilcox married and with a new outlook on life, music and a new

album, *Big Horizon*. "These are songs about coming to terms with what makes a good life," Wilcox says. "A good life doesn't necessarily mean a life of good luck and easy times. Like a good book, there's always some adversity in life to make things interesting."

"This is the harvest from my previous work," he continues. "There's happiness here, but it's deeper this time. The songs have a solid foundation of joy from my

dipping down to find what's true."

Happier times, however, do not mean that Wilcox has lost touch with his past, or that songs from less pleasant times need to end up on the back burner. "I like to interpret a song when I'm performing it, listening for a way to make it new. But I don't regret putting it down the way it was ... It's like looking at an old photograph, you know. You don't say 'That's a bad photograph because I don't look like that anymore.' It's a great photograph, but it's just a younger you." Often compared with James Taylor and described as a "folk musician," Wilcox recently told *Spin* magazine how he felt about his music

and the latest "folk" movement.

"When we say 'folk music' now, we're referring to an era of popular music where people were singing other people's songs and trying to associate with a tradition most of them didn't get," Wilcox said. "I would say that this new acoustic thing that's happening — it's very different. It's rock 'n' roll that's talking about solutions as well as questions and so the music is less shouting to the world about what's wrong and more talking to each other about what we can do to fix it.... We're saying, 'Come here, listen to this,' and that's when the acoustic music comes in, I feel."

Wilcox can be seen 7:15 p.m. Thursday.



## FREEWILL SAVAGES

*'Ralph Stanley  
and the Sex  
Pistols'*

The traditional music of the southern Appalachians is taking a giant, unorthodox leap forward into the twentieth century with the new world music of the Freewill Savages.

Keeping in line with the Telluride Bluegrass Festival's bold exposure of borderline traditionalists, the Freewill Savages, who play at 2:45 p.m. Thursday, embrace the traditional elements through an innovative exotic consolidation of rock, zydeco, jazz, Irish, funk and even reggae. The Savages' sound is hard driving, tensely rhythmic dance music which still pleases string music fans.

With four pillars of the old-time community plus a drummer, the Freewill Savages mix and blend.

A respected member of the old-time community, Al Sharp, toured internationally with Plank Road. A New Orleans local and a member of Beausoleil, he produced two Grammy-nominated recordings for the highly regarded Cajun band. With the

Savages, Sharp shines on five string and tenor banjos, acoustic and electric guitars and fiddle and sings lead and harmony vocals.

Dirk Powell also plays five string banjo, fiddle, acoustic and electric guitars plus bass and keyboards. He was a member of the old-time groups the Wildcats and the Wandering Ramblers and arranged "Sally Ann" for the Horseflies' MCA release *Gravity Dance*.

A theater music composer and international touring musician from the 70's and 80's with old-time bands Plank Road and Ace Weems and the Fat Meat Boys, James Leva is a shoe-in Savage. Playing fiddle, acoustic and electric guitars, five-string banjo, Leva also sings lead and harmony vocals.

Dave Grant, the Savages' bassist, is a member of five bands at last count. Ranging from old-time to swing to reggae, Grant's multi-musical experiences add an eclectic yet coherent style to the Savages

neo-traditional music.

Drummers take traditionalists on another journey. Securely attaching his freewill style to the Savages, the dance maker **Spencer Lathrop** liberally coats the music with Caribbean rhythms. His innovative stand-up style, established with his band **Rude Buddha**, is Lathrop's trademark.

The boldness, innovation and creativity of the Freewill Savages stir up a new way of looking at Appalachia.

As **Jerry Douglas** put it, "The Freewill Savages are the perfect marriage between Ralph Stanley and the Sex Pistols."

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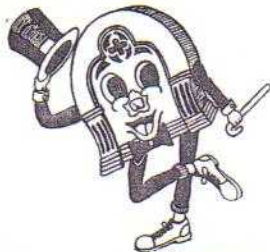
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## STRING FEVER

*industrial  
influenced  
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Emily and Robby Ricks, ages 19 and 16 respectively, have talent galore. Emily plays bass with the band, but as a fiddle player, she has won many top honors. When String Fever formed, she got the bass job because she was the tallest.

Her brother Robby is the 1990 Utah State Fiddle Champion and won first place in Telluride's 1993 National Fiddle Contest.

String Fever is the youngest band ever to win the National Band Contest during the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. As instrumentalists, they outclassed many musicians twice their age and voiced their way to the top with tight, mature three-part harmonies.

A great thrill for the band, Daron Shupe humbly says, "It was cool. We were up on stage and all the people were there. They really liked us."

Selected out of a field of more than 200 bands, the Rocky Mountain Regional judges nominated String Fever for the Pizza Hut International Bluegrass Showdown to be held in Owensboro, Ky. this September.

"If we win in Owensboro, we get a recording contract," says Daron Shupe. "We are mostly recognized in the intermountain region and winning would get more people to recognize us and we'd get some money."

It may seem almost unhip to be a country/bluegrass musician at an age when most kids are worshipping Nirvana or Guns 'n' Roses but as Daron says, "Most of my friends think it's way cool. My peers don't really listen to bluegrass. I listen to industrial music like Nine Inch Nails and Ministry."

"I like bluegrass. But for me, bluegrass was like a family chore. When I was young, I woke up and practiced before school. Most kids did the dishes. I played banjo."

String Fever will perform Thursday morning at 11:15 a.m.

Bluegrass music holds some of the most talented players on earth. Musicians strive for 20 years or more to perfect their art and gain recognition in this highly competitive arena.

An aspiring teenage musician could only hope to bask in the aura of the genre's great players like Sam Bush or Emmylou Harris.

The next generation is here and they mean business. String Fever is the group of youngsters who not only play the same stages as the greats, they demand and get respect from the masters.

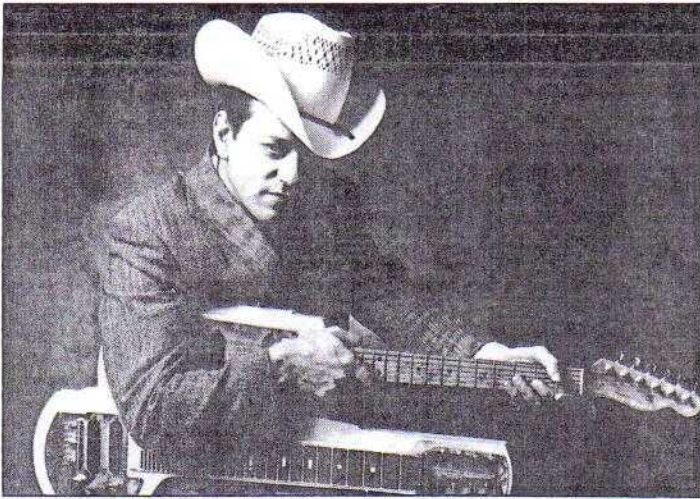
"This is a wonderful new band," says Emmylou Harris, referring to String Fever. "I'd like to see them on more shows. I'd like to do more shows with them."

Sam Bush began playing mandolin before the members of String Fever were born. Praising the group, Bush says, "I should have been in a band like String Fever when I was their age. What a marvelous band they are."

A five-piece traditional outfit, String Fever consists of two pairs of siblings plus new member Clark Johnson on guitar.

Daron and Tara Shupe, ages 20 and 17 respectively, have very little formal training but play like they have been meticulously taught by Tony Trischka and Sam Bush.

Daron's banjo wizardry won him the title of Utah State Champion in 1990 while Tara's mandolin proficiency has placed her as the top mandolinist in Utah for three straight years.



# JUNIOR BROWN

## and his guit-steel

by David Owen

It is difficult to say whether or not Austin, Texas, found Junior Brown or Junior Brown found Austin. But it does seem clear that the unique country artist and the funkiest music scene in the country were destined for each other.

There seems to be no shortage of elements that separate Brown from his comrades in the country genre, beginning with his fan club, a group which includes Nick

Lowe, Elvis Costello and Ry Cooder. There are his regular Austin audiences, which range from rednecks to skinheads, all drawn by his sense of humor and deadpan lyrics.

Finally, there is his guitar playing, or "guit-steel" playing, which is the backbone of Brown's sound. The "guit-steel" is the only instrument of its kind — a double-neck guitar with six strings on top and a lap steel on the bottom.

"I was playing both the steel and guitar, switching back and forth a lot, and it was kind of awkward," Brown recalls. "But then I had this dream, where they just kind of melted together! When I woke up, I thought, 'You know, that thing would work. They make double-neck guitars and double-neck steels, so why not one of each?'"

The talented musician's road to Austin began in Kirksville, Ind., in a house that was always full of music. "My dad was a piano player and so I started playing little melodies on the piano before I could talk," remembers Brown. "We lived out in the woods outside Kirksville and there's a lot of country people out there. I used to hear country music over the radio, Ernest Tubb and stuff. When we got a TV, I watched his show and I've always been a big fan of his."

Over the years, Brown had the opportunity to meet Tubb several times and to pick up a word or two of advice from his childhood idol: "Keep it country, son."

"He was concerned about country music getting watered down," Brown says. "He wanted young people to get a hold of it and try to carry it on. I was one of the young people he told it to and it kind of sunk in."

Junior, in turn, has done his part to keep the tradition alive. In the mid-'80s, Brown taught guitar at Oklahoma's Hank Thompson School of Country Music, part of Rogers State College. It was during this stint that he met "the lovely Miss Tanya Rae," as she is usually billed. She was the woman who would become his rhythm guitarist, backup vocalist and wife. "I kept her after class," laughs Brown.

Despite his allegiance to the country sound, Brown has not been afraid to let a broad range of music influence his style. Everything from Hawaiian strains to Jimi Hendrix has found its way into his music. It was this blurring of the stylistic lines that lead Brown and Tanya Rae to Austin, longtime home to musicians following their own paths and carving out their own niches.

The two set up shop at Henry's Bar & Grill and, slowly but surely, their shows began to attract the full spectrum of Austin's populace, from cowboy hats to combat boots and everything in between. "It's music for everyone," Brown is fond of saying.

As his reputation has grown, so has Brown's career. Nick Lowe gave a Brown tape to anyone who would listen, and a sizable European following and overseas deal soon followed. Last year, the Americans finally followed suit and *Guit With It* was released on Curb Records in August of 1993.

Powered by the "guit-steel" and Brown's humor, his songs include tales of run-ins with the law and titles like "My Wife Thinks You're Dead." The album, and Brown, is truly for everyone. Brown will hit the Shellman stage 7:15 p.m. Saturday.

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# ALISON KRAUSS

by Ellen Sammon

While most high school kids were listening to Van Halen and learning trigonometry, 22-year-old Alison Krauss was performing with her five-piece string band, Union Station. After 10th grade, the talented fiddler left her Illinois high school to pursue her love: bluegrass music.

Although she does not like to talk about her age, Krauss has been called a child prodigy. At the age of five years Krauss had mastered the classical violin and was stirring up dust in musical circles.

Krauss was introduced to bluegrass music on a field trip to a fiddling competition.

"I didn't have any music for bluegrass tunes, so I just started learning them by ear," said Krauss in an interview with the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

To her surprise, shortly before her 15th birthday, Krauss landed a recording contract with Rounder Records.

"I was freaking out when I got the record deal," she said. "I remember not long before that sitting, listening to a record by [master fiddler] Mark O'Conner. I was just watching the label go round and round and thinking 'Maybe someday I could make a record for this company.'"

While the young artist expressed some regrets about missing out on certain high school rites of passage, (she left school after

## bluegrass authenticity

tenth grade and attended the University of Illinois for one-and-a-half years before hitting the highway), Krauss said "I would've been mad at myself for not doing what I did. I always wanted to play music, but I kind of wished I had been in high school all four years. That's the time where you make such memories, but the trade-off has been worth it."

While now immersed in the sounds of country, folk and Dixieland jazz, as a teen Krauss occasionally dialed into Casey Casem's top forty and, in the seventies, listened to Foreigner, Lynard Skynyrd and Journey.

Krauss' approach to traditional bluegrass is unique, she combines alternate traditional string band arrangements with country pop.

"First of all, we're not pure bluegrass. I wanted a band that could play new songs and new arrangements of songs like 'Little Cabin Home on the Hill' without being tasteless. But I like playing with a banjo. Without that, I wouldn't even want to do it," said Krauss in an interview with *Virginian Pilot*.

In 1992 Union Station produced their fourth album, which received kudos from a



panel of *New York Times* music critics, who nominated the release, *Every Time You Say Goodbye*, one of the ten best albums of 1992.

A *Times* writer said, "In contrast to the suburban leanings of much current country, Ms. Krauss' pretty ballads and fiddle reels

have a rustic bluegrass authenticity."

Krauss' voice, which will be on stage this year at 3:15 Sunday, has been likened to Emmylou Harris and Dolly Parton. Some critics describe Krauss' powdery sweet voice as "angel music."

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# PACO DE LUCIA

*the sound  
of the gypsy*

by David Owen

Flamenco music is described as a scream of pain, of frustration and of anger. It derives its power from the dark side of life. It is the music of the socially rejected Gypsy and non-Gypsy cultures of Andalusia, and it is the music of Paco de Lucia.

De Lucia was born Francisco Sanches Gomez to a poor family in the southern Spanish city of Algeciras, which lies at the southernmost tip of the Iberian peninsula. He would later take his mother's name, Lucia. Paco's father, in order to make ends meet, played guitar nights after his very full work days. Much of de Lucia's childhood was spent in an area populated by Gypsy families; this influenced his music along with the teachings of his father. His father approached music with a determined zeal bred from desperation, a passion he passed along to his sons. He was determined that they would not suffer as he had.

De Lucia remembers that the lessons of his youth were difficult ones, but he doggedly

stuck with it, largely because of the joy he saw in his father's eyes as he watched his son become a guitarist.

De Lucia's first public performance came on Algeciras' radio at age 11, and by 14, he was touring with the flamenco troupe of Jose Greco, an association which took him all over the world. It was also during this stint that de Lucia met the guitar great Sabicas. It was this flamenco legend who told the young Paco that his playing was strong, but that to be

special he needed to begin creating his own music.

It was these words that led Paco de Lucia to become one of the finest and most innovative flamenco players of all time. De Lucia's recording career began in 1967 and has continued to be remarkable and prolific up until his most recent recording, Sirocco — named after hot African winds. Today, in addition to recording, he continues to tour and write his innovative and ingenious compositions. The driving force of his younger years — to support his family — is accomplished. But de Lucia has not lost the connection with his lean years, they gave his music the passion it expresses to audiences all over the world. De Lucia's set begins 5 p.m. Sunday.



continued from page 17

Dudley Connell is on Tony Trischka's *World Turning* record and works for Smithsonian Folkways Records in Rockville, Maryland, preserving old recordings for the museum of America.

McLaughlin is working with Josh Crowe in a duo format, reviving the tight vocal harmony tradition of the Louvin Brothers.

For the last two years, Adams has been the International Bluegrass Music Association's banjo player of the year. He was one of the featured banjoists on Rounder Records Banjo Extravaganza tour and live album. Adams reputedly has the best Popeye laugh on the planet.

Stubbs is a well known public radio personality in Washington D.C. on WAMU-FM while Shatz is the bassist for Tim O'Brien and the O'Boys.

The Johnson Mountain Boys perform for their first time at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival on Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

THE JOHNSON MOUNTAIN BOYS

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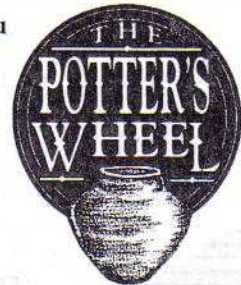


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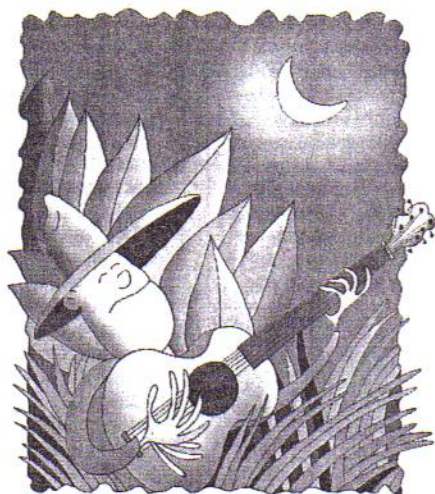
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# SAMMONJOHN *still jamming*

by Geoff Hanson

Last year, festival promoter Craig Ferguson officially crowned Sam Bush king and John Cowan court jester of the Telluride Bluegrass Festival.

Ferguson presented the former members of New Grass Revival with their respective headwear during their SammonJohn set last year.

Bush and Cowan are the embodiment of the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. They have been a part of this event since the beginning — well, almost.

The first Telluride Bluegrass Festival was held in 1973 to showcase the talent of Telluride's Fall Creek and the Black Canyon Gang Band from Montrose.

The next year, Fall Creek members Kooster McAllister, J.B. Matteoti, Fred Shellman and John Herndon decided to invite the festival's first national act, the New Grass Revival.

**'S**ession work provides a nice challenge to try to fit in with different people. You don't want to stand out. The trick is blending in with someone else's sound and making them sound better. I get to strut my stuff when I come to Telluride.'

— SAM BUSH

Sam Bush played mandolin for New Grass, and John Cowan had just joined the band as a vocalist and bassist.

"That first year, we discovered that there were a bunch of people just like us and they all lived in Colorado," Bush said. "We felt that Telluride was the perfect place to play. Over the years, we've made so many friends there, it's a hard place to beat."

Since 1973 Cowan has missed a few Telluride Bluegrass festivals, but Bush has played 20 years in a row, with no intention of ending that streak.

New Grass Revival broke up at the end of 1989. In the spring of 1990, Emmylou Harris called Bush and asked him to form an all-acoustic band to back her up. Bush agreed and formed the Nash Ramblers. Fellow Ramblers John Randal Stewart on guitar, and drummer Larry Atamanuik will back up Sammonjohn Saturday night.

Bush works extensively as a session player in Nashville, joining forces with musicians as diverse as Leon Russell,

Alabama and Peter Rowan, to name a few.

"Session work provides a nice challenge to try to fit in with

different people," Bush said. "You don't want to stand out. The trick is blending in with someone else's sound and making them sound better. I get to strut my stuff when I come to Telluride."

Bush broke his elbow six months ago when he slipped on some ice after attending Jerry Douglass' son's birthday party, so he has been busy healing himself.

Cowan is busy working on a recording project that he is undertaking with Rusty

Young of Poco, Pat Simmons from the Doobie Brothers, Marshall Crenshaw and Bill Lloyd. Cowan has also logged time as the Doobie Brothers sometime bass player, though the Doobies have not let Cowan open his mouth for fear that their own vocals might be overwhelmed by Cowan's exceptional voice. Cowan has also been collaborating with Al Kooper on a contemporary rhythm and blues album.

Last year, the Sammonjohn set was one of

the hottest sets of the entire festival. The band served as the festival house band, an organic music machine that expanded as the evening progressed. At the end of the night, there were over ten people on stage as Peter Rowan led the all-star cast through a Bob Marley medley of "No Woman No Cry" and "One Love."

And when Bush and Cowan take the stage, they are inevitably joined by banjo player Béla Fleck, thus leaving guitar player Pat Flynn as the only member of New Grass Revival not on the stage.

But John Randal Stewart is more than an adequate replacement for Flynn, and for three or four songs a year, Telluride audiences are treated to a new incarnation of New Grass Revival. And it only happens in Telluride.

Sammonjohn will knock out Telluride audiences as the headliner 9 p.m. Saturday.

Times-Journal photo/Rob A. Huber





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Tony Trischka says he's been "peeling away the layers of the onion and finding out about the banjo" for 31 years.

Well known as a progressive banjo stylist, Trischka is rewriting the real story of the banjo.

His historical approach to this traditional instrument is best heard on his 1993 release *World Turning*. With guest artists Alison Krauss, Dudley Connell, William S. Burroughs, Van Dyke Parks, and members of R.E.M., *World Turning* is a milestone for banjo recordings.

As Don McLeese of *Rolling Stone* says, "The results reflect the amazing possibilities of an instrument often defined by its limitations."

From that conceptual recording, Trischka has created a live show which compresses

150 years of banjo history into one 90-minute performance. Opening with music from West Africa, the set brings to life slave songs from the 1850's, Pre-Civil War minstrels, ragtime, light classical fingerpicking, old-time Appalachian music, and Trischka's groundbreaking progressive style.

As a stylist, Trischka is establishing an evolutionary process that far removes the banjo from the hills of Appalachia.

Blending banjo performance with a featured narrative, Tony Trischka and World Turning create a musically exciting and verbal history tour of the banjo and America.

World Turning's black female narrator exemplifies how Trischka says he is, "trying to bring in the black and African influence and how it's been overlooked."

The bluegrass tradition owes as much to Africa as it does to Ireland and Scotland. The slavish mentality brought the culture of rhythm to the Americas, and with it a strange instrument called the *halam*.

Originating in Senegal, West Africa, the *halam* is an animal skin stretched over a gourd and strung with five strings. In America it became the banjo.

If the banjo is the signature instrument in bluegrass, Tony Trischka is signing his autograph on it.

"I've spent 27 years doing progressive works with the banjo," says Trischka from his New Jersey home. "In the last couple of years, I've been focusing on the World

Turning project to get my creative juices flowing, getting inspiration from slave songs, the minstrel music, old-time music and that's what is getting me excited.

"I am attempting to do the history of the banjo without it being too teacherly, but it [World Turning] is absolutely a historical perspective on the banjo.

"It's on the line between a concert and a theater piece, a celebration of the banjo from its roots to its branches."

Recording more than 14 albums since 1974, Trischka has arguably done more for the banjo than any other recording artist.

When premier banjo crossover artist Bela Fleck was 16, Trischka gave him banjo lessons. Today Fleck and Trischka collaborate on recordings and on stage.

"We've done three tours together and played together in New Zealand in February," says Trischka.

"We have mutual influences and we both think similarly in a lot of ways. We complement each other."

*Billboard* magazine calls Trischka, "One of the most inventive banjoists alive."

He performed at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival in 1985 with his progressive group Skyline and again in 1991 with the New Jersey/Nashville-based group the Big Dogs.

An author of eight books on the banjo and a columnist for *FRETS* magazine, *Acoustic Musician*, *Sing Out!* and *Banjo Newsletter*, Trischka's television appearances and performances in Japan, Hawaii, all over Eastern and Western Europe, Australia and Korea confirm his position as the leading international purveyor of the banjo.

Tony Trischka plays at 1:15 p.m. Thursday.



# TIM lyrical weight O'BRIEN

Expect Tim and Mollie O'Brien and the O'Boys to wow the Bluegrass Festival crowd 3:30 p.m. Saturday with a show of dynamic musicianship and songwriting. Tim O'Brien, as Telluride bluegrass royalty, has done so in one incarnation or another since the festival's inception.



He is "one of the sharpest lyricists I've ever heard," said Mary-Chapin Carpenter; Lyle Lovett has described Tim as "a consistently great singer, player and songwriter."

He first stepped on the Telluride stage as a member of the premiere band Hot Rize, and later established himself as a solo artist with his album *Odd Man In*.

O'Brien's solo albums roll along at an easygoing country pace, allowing the lyrics to hold the weight of the songs. However, together with the O'Boys, the albums attack with a country-funk aggression that complements themes of heartache, loneliness and failure.

On *Time to Learn*, the O'Boys are joined by Carpenter in an aching confession. In *A Perfect Letter to Hide*, written with Keith Little, O'Brien examines the trials of those who drink to escape bitter reality. "Few are chosen, few ever see the light," he wails in the *Few Are Chosen*.

Tim and the O'Boys are joined this festival by Tim's sister Mollie, who has graced Telluride's jazz and bluegrass festivals alike. "We're kind of folk martians," Mollie explained of the group's musical bent. "We play all kinds of stuff in a bluegrass vein: jazz, folk, gospel..." She added, "We get a big grin to get to go there and play."

# LOOSE TIES

*swing,  
pop, jazz  
and  
audience  
influence*

No strangers to spectacular natural wonders, Loose Ties, from Jackson Hole, Wyo., returns to the Telluride Bluegrass Festival after a year's hiatus.

Telluride provides a "more eclectic" musical event than occurs in other, more traditional festivals, which is "good for bluegrass in general," according to their manager.

It is this blending of traditional bluegrass music with the added influence of swing, pop and jazz, as well as touches of gospel, folk,

and now, the blues, that distinguishes Loose Ties from many other bands.

Involvement and camaraderie between the audience and the band is one that Loose Ties thrives on; they give performances in which the audience almost becomes a player themselves. As for those players with instruments, Loose Ties consists of electric bass player Phil Round, mandolin man Ben Winship, banjo player Ted Wells, and guitarist Joel Kaserman.

Not only a tight, talented band, each member brought some impressive personal musical accomplishments to the band. Round, who is also the principal vocalist, studied at the Berklee School of Music, Winship has won several awards for his songwriting talents, Wells was the first graduate of St. Lawrence University with a degree in banjo, and Kaserman, who joined the band in 1990, grew up in Australia and developed a unique style all his own.

Extending their many talents beyond performing at events and festivals across the country, the members of Loose Ties are also credentialed teachers and have participated as judges in the National Flatpicking Championships.

This is a band that relies on the audience to provide energy and enthusiasm to offer a stellar performance; and they bring a unique sound and style as diverse as the Bluegrass Festival-goers are themselves.

Friday morning at 11, get ready to be a part of one of the best experiences of the festival.

# THE LONESOME RIVER BAND

*stretching traditional  
boundaries*

When The Lonesome River Band arrives at the Shellman stage Sunday at 12:15 p.m., they'll bring to Telluride a sound that is "extremely leading-edge in music," according to John Emerson, who represents the band.

The band, who released their first album independently, is now signed with Sugar Hill Records and their most recent album, titled *Old Country Town*, hit the top of the bluegrass charts this June. The Lonesome River Band has also been a Final Nominee for the International Bluegrass Music Association (IMBA), and won the Album of the Year Award in 1992 for the album *Carrying the Tradition*.

With a reputation for bringing new faces and fans to bluegrass events around the country, organizers believe that The Lonesome River Band is "the real thing," in an industry surrounded by hype and exaggerated claims.

Telluride provides "expansive" marketing and exposure for The Lonesome River Band, who is looking forward to this festival not only to increase their own listeners, but to expose fresh ears to the incredible world of bluegrass music.


The Lonesome River Band provides a

contemporary take on traditional bluegrass music and are constantly looking to improve and advance their music and performances.

Members of the band are Ronnie Bowman, lead vocalist and bass player, Sammy Shelor, banjo player, and Tim Austin on guitar. Rounding out the band's roster is 19-year-old newcomer Darryl Webb, who has been described as a musical "prodigy" on the mandolin. The band is enthusiastic about the addition of this gifted musician to an already extremely talented band.

The Lonesome River Band, with the number-one bluegrass album for the month of June and a talented newcomer in their midst, should be a high-energy event stretching the traditional boundaries of bluegrass music into a memorable performance.

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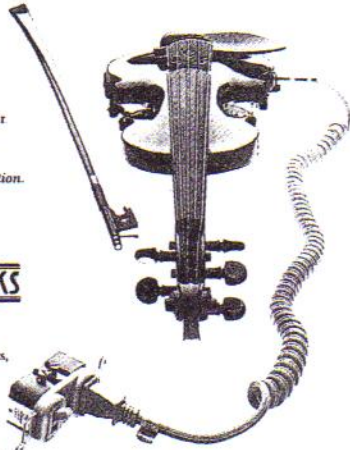
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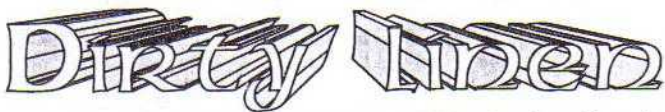
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# BAD LIVERS

by David Owen

*expect a full meal*

A lot of different terms have been used to describe Bad Livers — everything from acoustic, speed-metal, bluegrass, thrash to cowpunk. All these terms, however, mean little to the Livers, whose focus is on just playing what comes naturally and relying on the principle that good music cannot be kept down for long.

Born from the Austin, Texas, gig scene, Bad Livers came together in 1990 as much out of attrition as out of any master plan. Banjo/guitar player Danny Barnes began booking himself as the "Danny Barnes Trio" around the town. The established sound of this title was misleading, because the trio consisted of whomever Barnes could scrape together to play that night. Over time, Ralph White and Mark Rubin fell into place to round out the group, as the three discovered their mutual influences and interest in musical history.

While all three have backgrounds that include forays into the punk, reggae and Cajun scenes, Rubin says it is their collective interest in history and their respect for their instruments that keeps the music pure.

"Some musicians who play the traditional instruments play almost as if they are apologizing for them," Rubin said while pumping nickels into a Lake Tahoe slot machine. "We like and respect the instruments and the music we play. We don't feel

any need to lose any of that."

The other thing that stands out about Bad Livers is that they are committed, above all, to making the music that feels right to them with no concessions to those who would try to pigeonhole them into one industry slot or another. Whether paying homage to Flatt and Scruggs, Bill Monroe, Metallica or the Stooges, the band is true to its roots and will not adjust its musical focus at the expense of any of its other foundations. As one journalist once put it, "Listening to Bad Livers is like entering a parallel universe, where bluegrass is the only musical language. But it's expansive enough to accommodate everything from Johnny Cash to Jimi Hendrix."

"We have had all sorts of temptations dangled in front of us by people who wanted us to become something we are not," Rubin said. "The compromises have been too great. We have a friend who is a blues player and record companies are always asking him to 'put on the blues suit.' Those are allowances I just can't make. I am absolutely incapable of putting on the suit."

Fortunately for the band, they have found a record company, Touch & Go — the label for bands like Therapy? and Pegboy — that is willing to take them for what they are and make no demands.

"They give us just enough rope to hang ourselves with," said Rubin. "We send them a tape and they put it out backed by whatever

resources they have available."

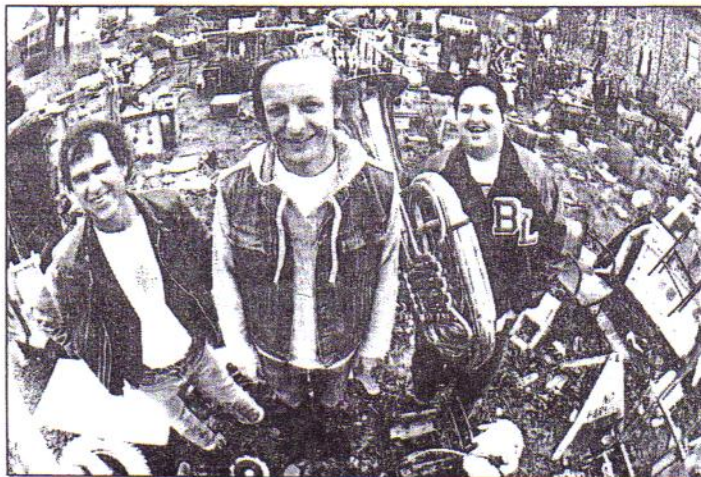
Despite the frustrations of classification and the occasional novelty act tag that follows them, Rubin said the band knows what is most important is the music, and ultimately, that is what makes the difficult times worth it. "The only reason the greats like Bill Monroe ever made it, was because they were bullheaded and stayed in the ballgame," said Rubin. "They realized that you can't keep good music down. Our one accomplishment is that we are still here after three records and over 1,000 shows."

Their latest album, *Horses in the Mines*, was recorded in a wood shed on an old analog 8-track. "We didn't do it that way because we thought it would sound special or to be cool; it was because it was all we could afford," Rubin said. "But, the end result is something we are really proud of. I think it captured more of our live feel than our last album. It

sounds a little like we set up in your living room." Bad Livers will also continue to tour as long as it remains feasible, knowing that the stage is their most powerful ally.

"We have had a range of experiences few can boast, from playing established folk rooms to premier punk clubs — and that has allowed us to touch a lot of different types," Rubin said. "It has also given us the opportunity to turn younger audiences on to the older artists who we respect and admire, turn them on to what turns us on."

"No matter what draws people in or what preconceived notion they have of us, it will not change how we act on stage. They are still going to get two full hours of Bad Livers," Rubin concluded. "We have never had an audience we didn't like, regardless of how they showed up. Good music cannot be denied." Bad Livers will be performing at 12:30 p.m. Saturday.



# SUGARBEAT

*born and bred out of the Telluride Bluegrass Festival*



Sugarbeat returns to the Telluride Bluegrass Festival for the third time this year at 2 p.m. Saturday. They have the unique distinction of being the only band born and bred out of the Bluegrass Festival.

According to bass player Sally Truitt, the band came together for fun, on a whim, and ended up walking away with first place in the 1992 Telluride Bluegrass Band Contest.

Tony Furtado was playing with the Rounder Records Banjo Extravaganza, where he met Truitt, who was playing bass with the troupe. Furtado knew singer/songwriter Ben Demerath and mandolin player Matt Flinger through various musical circles. It was Flinger who suggested the four get together to enter the contest.

"Everything really started when we won," Truitt said in a phone interview. "As winners, we were booked to play the festival the next year and we figured since we had at least one gig, we might as well call ourselves a band."

The band set up a three-month tour following the festival, playing dates on the reputation of one or another of the members — or as complete unknowns. "We basically just went around getting in people's faces," Truitt recalled. Just before their return to the 1993 Telluride Festival, Sugarbeat was able to put out a spec album, one that caught the interest of the brand-new Telluride Bluegrass independent record label. Soon after, the band became the young label's first signees. The band has kept up an active tour schedule for

the past year and a half, getting together from their respective homes every few weeks to play blocks of dates. Separate home towns make it very difficult for the four to rehearse, but it lends itself to their unique brand of songwriting.

"When someone comes in with a song idea, they bring it in raw, just a few notes or chords," explained Truitt. "Then each one of us, with our own musical personalities, helps to build it into something. Although our instruments are based in bluegrass, we bring elements of blues, jazz, rock, even grunge to our songs, so we always have to figure out how to adapt ourselves to new material.

"The lack of rehearsal time also keeps the band's songs in a state of evolution." A lot of ideas come when you're playing on stage, that's really the best kind of rehearsal," said Flinger.

"There have been times when it's late and people want us to keep playing, but we are all out of material. We'll just start experimenting as we go," added Truitt. "We are always ready for things to change in the middle, and the challenge is to see if we can grab onto each others' shirttails and go with it. As musicians, it's a lot of fun."

As they enter their third Bluegrass Festival, it is clear that the experiment is working.

If "at first there might have been a contrived feeling," said Flinger, Planet Bluegrass' offspring is doing well and the prognosis for the future is excellent.



# DOUGLAS, BARENBERG & MEYER

*telling their stories*

by Neal Roberts

Unique and sometimes strange marriages of music and musicians has always been one of the most remarkable things about the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. Some mixtures form here, others celebrate here.

The latter is why the trio of Nashville's Jerry Douglas, Edgar Meyer and Russ Barenberg love to play here and we love to hear them.

This year will mark the fifth time that the set list will show Douglas, Barenberg and Meyer. This time around they'll be playing 3:30 p.m. Friday.

"We started playing together as a trio four or five years ago," Douglas said in an interview from his Tennessee home. "We really enjoy it. It's a way that we can play our own tunes in a smaller band setting. It's a real workout. It's really physical because there's only three people and there are so many parts to cover. So we're trying hard and if one guy falls out for a while it's pretty nerveing. But sometimes you can use that to your advantage. We can make some loud noise."

That noise, as Douglas puts it, while strenuous, is really the fruit of a tree with only three branches. But those branches are thick since Douglas is considered by many to be the finest dobro players on the planet, Barenberg is a formidable guitarist and Meyer, as one critic put it, "does things on a double bass that I didn't even know were possible." That is the trio making the noise.

"When you get too many people on stage, things start to cancel each other out," Douglas continued. "So with the three of us, we've got a spectrum that's pretty spread out. It makes a bigger sound than it actually

should."

The seed for the trio came about in middle Tennessee, when Douglas got a call from a "radio station listener appreciation something," and he contacted Barenberg and Meyer. The three decided just to perform as a trio.

"They were into it. So we loaded up into the car and the further out into the country we got, I started to think, 'Man I don't know where we're headed. This could be like a Klan meeting or something as far as I know.' But we got there and it was a really cool thing. It was in the fall and it was cold, like playing Telluride. We had a great time and they really liked it. So that inspired us to go on."

And on they went.

Besides the three's own solo efforts, which include classical albums from Meyer and session work in the bluegrass field by all three, the trio is now touring as a unit and have committed themselves to their music.

Douglas, Barenberg and Meyer have just released a new album entitled *Skip, Hop and Wobble*. The album is instrumental and the title, which is one of the many interesting titles — that they have thought up, is meant to draw attention.

"When you write instrumental music you have to create some kind of mental image since you don't have words," said Douglas. "So you can either leave it completely open to the imagination or seed it somehow, with a little title here or a story here dropping a hint. But that may even be a complete lie. I'll tell this story and someone will come and say, 'Aw, I was there. I was there.' And I'm thinking, 'We'll that's great. If it got you there, great. But I've never been there.'"

*Skip, Hop and Wobble* is mainly original tunes and the trio is amped to give Telluride audiences a taste. The album includes simple yet funky tunes, with names like "Squeazy Pig" (which Douglas said came out of Meyer playing "some awful noises on the piano"), that are very accessible to audiences.

# PIERCE PETTIS

becoming  
confessional

by David Owen

Pierce Pettis has been called a lot of things — contemporary folk singer, political songwriter — but more than anything, he is a man driven by his emotions.

"I consider myself an emotional songwriter. I get emotional about lots of things, not just politics. When I write a song about my son, I am every bit as emotional as I am about any political issue. If something moves me I'm going to write about it, I don't limit myself."

Pettis' songwriting career began at the ripe age of 10, when he was encouraged by his guitar teacher to begin composing.

"I've always been a pretty creative person and I guess songwriting came naturally at first. It was a great outlet for things like adolescent frustration and other things. As time went by it became more and more a way for me to express myself until it eventually took over my life."

Born and raised in Fort Payne, Ala., Pettis realizes today that the lessons he learned from that guitar teacher were tremendously valuable ones.

"His name is Don Phillips and his philosophy was to teach people to teach themselves. He taught us to play by ear so we could hear songs on the radio and pick them out. The whole point was getting access to the music," Pettis recalled in a telephone interview. "I was still young enough to believe everything people told me, and he said, 'why don't you write a song,' so I did."

Pettis began his professional career as a staff writer at the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Alabama and, in 1988, became the first folk artist signed to Windham Hill Records. His latest release, *Chase the Buffalo*, represents a maturity that has come as a result of three earlier efforts.

"On the first two [Windham Hill] albums, I was trying so hard to prove myself," he said in a recent interview with the Dallas Morning News. "The last album, *Tinseltown*, did really well critically, and that was a real affirming thing for me. It took the pressure off. I

realized that was what I had wanted for a long time, somebody just to say I was pretty good at this so I wouldn't wonder if I was wasting my time." While Pettis describes *Tinseltown* as an having an "angry" feel and *Chasing to Buffalo* is more "about how you find yourself in the way you love people and the way that they love you," he says he is not an artist who is conscious of "periods" in his writing.

"I usually have a lot of songs at any one time. I don't know if I have periods, I am certainly not aware of them at the time. I do know I am starting to get more personal in my writing," Pettis said. "In the past I have been hesitant to get too confessional. Now, I'm a little more into the idea that I am in these songs. I don't want to write my life story, because it is not very interesting, but I can claim that these songs are an expression of who I am."

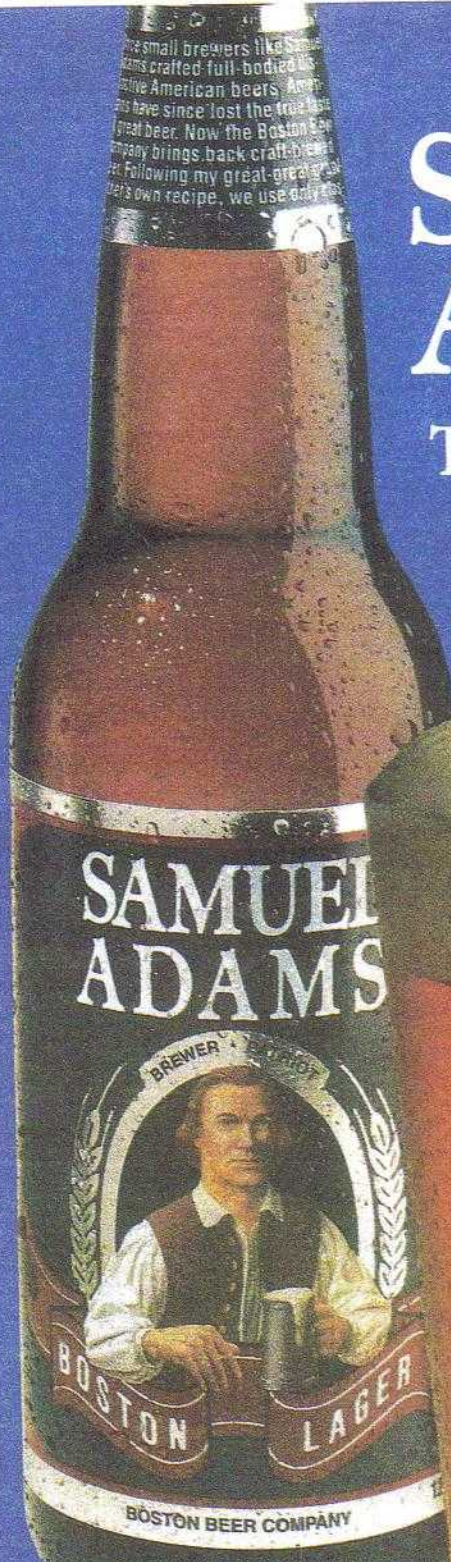
While *Chasing the Buffalo* is certainly a more personal album for Pettis and deals with the more intimate joys of life, like the birth of a son or a tribute to his grandmother's poetry, it also reinforces the fact that he is not afraid to deal with more volatile issues.

"I have never set out to be bold, but I also never want to limit myself to not being bold when the time called for it."

His striking "Stickman" is very forward in its treatment of AIDS, which has stricken both Pettis' friends and family.

"I don't want to be maudlin. I wanted it to be stark," he said. "That's the way it is — you can't romanticize these things. It's an affront to the dignity of those who suffer to romanticize their suffering. I felt an obligation to the people I knew to tell the truth." The personal and emotional investment he has made in *Chasing the Buffalo* is certainly paying off. The album, which also features the likes of Booker T. Jones and Los Lobos singer David Hidalgo, was recently voted Acoustic CD of the Year by the listeners of the Acoustic Woods Network. "It's the first time in my life I've ever been first at anything," laughed Pettis, "and it is particularly rewarding because it was the people who listen to the music who did this."

Pettis will also be featured on two new releases this year. The first is a tribute album to songwriter Mark Heard, who died in 1992, and who Bruce Cockburn called his favorite American songwriter. Heard was a very good friend of Pettis, who will appear on the album along with Cockburn, Victoria Williams, Michael Bean of the Call, and others. The second project is volume two of Rounder Records' *Big Times in a Small Town*. The album captures the live recordings of various artists, including the likes of David Wilcox, who were invited to Martha's Vineyard for an artistic retreat and who treated the locals to a few nights of acoustic entertainment. Pettis' show will take the Shellman stage at high noon on Thursday.



# SAMUEL ADAMS

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