

Central

Texas Bluegrass

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IBMA Member

Vol. 33 No. 3

Mar 1, 2011



CTBA Guitarist! Let's PICK FOR THE RECORD!!!



WHAT; Pickin' For The Record

(PHOTO BY JEFF LAVENDER)

WHEN: March 20th, 2011, 1:00-4:00PM

WHERE: The Texas State Capitol in Austin!

WHY: Come and be a part of the Largest Guitar Jam Ever and an Afternoon of Pickin', BBQ, Record Breakin' & Troop Support on the last day of SXSW at the Capitol!

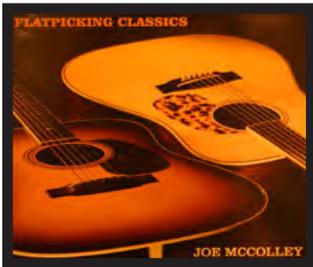
The goal is to bring together the **Largest Guitar Ensemble Record** back to Texas and to **raise funds for Soldiers and Vets that NEED A Hand.**

In August 2009, our Troop Support Nonprofit, Voices of a Grateful Nation along with our friends in Luckenbach brought together thousands of pickers from all over Texas and thirteen different states to establish a Guinness World Record for the largest guitar ensemble ever assembled to perform a particular song. You can take part in this event, Pickers Unite and let's take the record back to Texas!

Guitar
Info inside



The Listening Post



Joe McColley

If you didn't already know I have a nice surprise for you flatpickers out there. San Antonio native Joe McColley has enlisted the help of Winfield National Champions **Adam Wright** and **Mark Cosgrove** to put together a CD entitled "Flatpicking Classics". For the flatpicker this CD offers some "take notice" arrangements and exceptional flatpicking techniques. You'll want to play along!!!

Other types of instrumentalist will hear how the guitarist would to play "St Anne's Reel", "Ragtime Annie", "Red Haired Boy", and "Home Sweet Home".

Sometimes you hear of a local artist putting out a CD and you are thinking that it might not be professional quality. Think again. Joe put a lot of time and effort into getting the absolute best sounds out of those Collings Guitars. The CD is featured in Flatpicking Magazine podcast and is available at flatpick.com. Buy one. Let's support our local artists!



The Listening Post is a forum established to monitor bluegrass musical recordings, live performances, or events in Texas. Our mailbox sometimes contains CDs for us to review. Here is where you will find reviews of the CD's Central Texas Bluegrass Association receives as well as reviews of live performances or workshops.

Gibson Brothers play Bluegrass Heritage in DFW area



PHOTOS BY KEN BROWN

Dallas area audiences were given real treat by the Bluegrass Heritage Foundation. Reported in this newsletter last month, the Gibson Brothers have made a trip into Texas for several shows. This performance was Feb 19th.



The event in Arlington was fairly well attended and the Gibson Brothers put on a great show. Central Texas and Old Settler's attendees will remember the Gibson Brothers from a past Old Settlers Festival.

The Bluegrass Heritage Foundation has once again brought fine bluegrass entertainment into Texas. It's a long haul for Central Texans to go all the way to Dallas to hear this kind of entertainment. We need to figure out how to get these touring bands some local places to play.



Honi Deaton is back in Texas



PHOTO BY KEN BROWN

Honi Deaton and husband Jeff are now living in Texas. Originally from Irving the band played the Bluegrass Heritage Foundation show on February 19th. Audiences were treated to a show that contained Honi's original bluegrass tunes with a voice that has twice been nominated as Female Vocalist of the Year and songs that have won numerous awards. She'll be back in October for the Blooming Bluegrass Festival in Farmers Branch. Look for the flyer.

Ragged Union @ AFTM Mid-Winter Fest

Geoff Union was featured during the AFTM Mid-Winter fest with his new band Ragged Union. The band consisted of Chojo Jacques on fiddle, Josh Hoag on bass, and they were joined by the backing vocals of the beautiful and talented Christina Mills. Ragged Union fired through many of the tunes



penned by Geoff. Audiences especially liked the happy uptempo "Ferris Wheel" and rowdy anti-tax vibe of "Spirit of '94".

This may have been the first performance by the band. If you missed them at AFTM, the Fiddler's Green performance has been rescheduled to March 25th at 8pm.



Hickory Hill

If you've been a fan of bluegrass in Texas you have no doubt either heard, or heard of, the band that has been a fixture at bluegrass festivals in Texas for over 30 years. **Hickory Hill** has gone through some changes through the years but they are still solid in performance and the pride of many festivals. Many of you know that Don Eaves is no longer with the band but Jake Jenkins still lays down some excellent banjo.

The latest CD "**Old School**" features several gospel tunes including "The Old Crossroads" which was featured on BABA's compilation CD and "Stairway To Heaven"... no, not that one.... The CD was mixed in Longview and is comparable to anything coming out of Nashville. The instrumentation is clean, the vocal tracks are perfect, and yet it still has the feeling that you are listening to a live performance. This CD will be at the CTBA Garage Sale. Get it early. John Early....



James King plays BABA Monthly Show in League City Feb 19th



There's something about that Houston weather....it was a beautiful night Saturday, when Bay Area Bluegrass Association (BABA) has their monthly meetings. This month BABA had a rare opportunity to have the James King Band come to town. Some may remember James from the band Longview a real super-group with Dudley Connell, Don Rigsby, Joe Mullins, Glen Duncan and Marshall Wilborn. Oh, and about that weather, James broke a string before he played the first song and then broke another before he was through. Great bluegrass y'all.

PHOTOS BY TRAVIS POSEY

White Dove in League City

Most of the audiences that have been to Coughatta RV Park and the Spring Creek Bluegrass Club Festival in October or to their fourth weekend of the month jam know White Dove. These local musicians have been performing for years. Glen and Angie are no strangers to bluegrass jams and Gospel Bluegrass festivals. They once again brought their traditional sound to the stage. Angie's voice and her ability to build great arrangements are a pleasure.



LISTEN TO BLUEGRASS ON THE RADIO

KOOP Radio, Austin, 91.7, Strictly Bluegrass Show 10:00AM every Sunday

KPFT Radio, Houston, 90.1, The Bluegrass Zone, 4:00PM every Sunday

KSYM Radio, San Antonio, 90.1, Hillbilly Hit Parade, Noon every Sunday

KEOS Radio, College Station, 89.1, High Lonesome, 7:00PM every Tuesday

Randall's Good Neighbor Program

The process to get this started is a bit of a pain, but it makes donating to CTBA, your local schools, or your favorite non-profit organizations very, very easy. Just go to the link below, print the form and fill it out, enter **CTBA's code 9735**, and take to your local Randall's store:

http://shop.safeway.com/corporate/randalls/gn_houston_austin.pdf

Picks, Happenings, and Releases

Michael Cleveland &
Flamekeeper

Just another reminder that on Sunday, March 6th, at 6:00PM **Michael Cleveland and the Flamekeepers** will bring their lightening fast bluegrass sounds once again to the **Yegua Creek Evangelical Free Church near Elgin** at 1200 CR 466.



Steve Smith & Chris Sanders with Anne Luna, will be playing at the Uptown Theater in **Marble Falls** on Thursday **March 17th** and at a house concert in **San Antonio** on Saturday **March 19th**, 7-9pm, this event is put on by McSloan Concert series and seating is limited. Call or email for info, reservations, and directions: Tracy -210-737-2373, tsloan22@yahoo.com. Cost: \$15, BYOB. For more details on both of these events go to desertnight.com.



Each year thousands of artists promoters and musicians converge on Austin for the South By Southwest Music & Film Interactive Conference. This year's event is being held March 11-20th. The entire city is engulfed by musicians during this vibrant Spring Break week. Artists from around the world will come to Austin to showcase their bands. Some of the bluegrass artists being showcased are Trampled By Turtles and local Sara Jane who was recently picked as one of the Top Five acts at Folk Alliance by No Depression magazine.



Argyle is March 4th & 5th! There are several people from Central Texas going that way. This year's lineup is a good one. Doyle Lawson, Dailey & Vincent, Michael Cleveland, The Boxcars, The Travelin' McCoury's, Peter Rowan, Three Ring Circle with Rob Ickes & Andy Leftwich, Nashville Bluegrass Band, and Oklahoma's finest the Rockin' Acoustic Circus! There will be jamming in the local hotels after the shows so don't even think about sleep if you plan to go.



Tickets are going fast for the **24th Annual Old Settler's Music Festival at Camp Ben McCulloch**. Camping tickets will be limited so it's a good idea to get your tickets early. This year's lineup includes the exceptional mandolin playing of the one and only **Sam Bush**. The lineup is loaded with great mandolin players. There's always great music and great jamming in the campground. Get your tickets now. Once again, CTBA is a proud sponsor of the festival. See you there?



Learnin' a Little: By Jamming

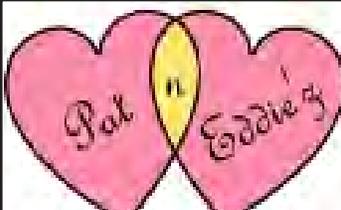
Beginner / Intermediate Jam is still goin' strong...

The beginner/intermediate level Jam still takes place at ArtZ Rib House on south Lamar every second and fourth Saturdays. The slow Jam begins at 2:00pm. This is when we like to play our slower favorites, such as "All the Good Times are Past and Gone", "Kentucky Waltz", or "In the Pines". It gives folks who are new to bluegrass a chance to learn the songs and keep up without being intimidated by the usual fast beat of bluegrass music.



Jacque Austin and Steve Mangold do a great job of managing the group and provide

helpful instruction to anyone who needs a little guidance. The regular Jam begins at 4:00pm and continues until 6:00pm, or whenever we get tired of playing. You will find us out back on the patio on the second Saturday, and usually inside in the banquet room on the fourth Saturday. If you have some free time on these days, and think you would be a good fit, please come join us. It is just another way that CTBA can help keep bluegrass music alive and well in Central Texas.

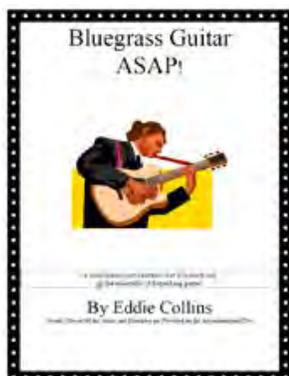



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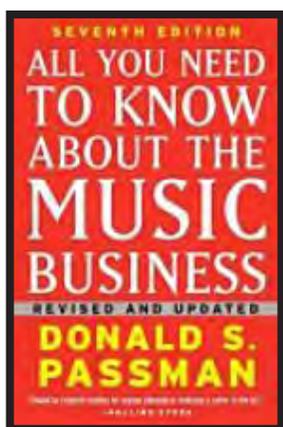
Learnin' a Little: Books & Such



"Fellow pickers, This was a labor of love, years in the making...thanks to everyone for encouraging me to get this done. The initial feedback has been tremendous. Good luck with all your picking endeavors". Eddie Collins

From Mother Maybelle Carter's soloing technique to the intricacies of Doc Watson's rhythm style, Bluegrass Guitar ASAP! covers all aspects of flatpicking bluegrass guitar. No prior music experience is needed. More experienced players can randomly select a given topic, whereas novices should go through the book sequentially as early concepts form the foundation for the higher-level picking. The lessons have been developed through Eddie's years of teaching and have proven successful with learners of all backgrounds. Bluegrass Guitar ASAP! is 128 pages with two instructional CDs – one plays every example in the book; the second is 32 songs performed by a bluegrass band. Special introductory price includes free shipping!

Check out samples from Bluegrass Guitar ASAP! at www.eddiecollins.biz



Part of the required reading in preparation for IBMA's Leadership Bluegrass class in Nashville next month is that everyone must read "All You Need to Know About the Music Business" by veteran music lawyer Donald Passman. This is the seventh edition of the book and covers everything from the latest in technology file sharing challenges for performing artists to navigation of the ins and outs of songwriting, music publishing, and copyrights. Most folks consider this book to be "the industry bible" and over the past eighteen years has sold hundreds of thousands of copies. This book will take you through selecting and hiring your team of advisors, structuring commissions, percentages and fees, methods of maximizing your concert, touring and merchandising deals, and talks in detail about film, television, streaming on demand, ringtones, and digital downloads. Even if you are not or never plan to be a touring musician, if you plan to hang out with the pros now and then, it's good to know their business.



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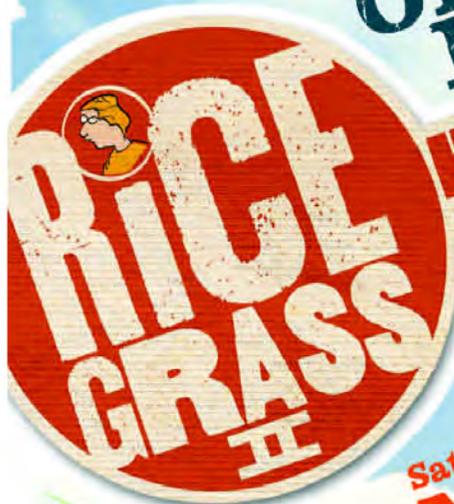
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Meet a CTBA Member: Jeff White

Introduce yourself. Tell us your name, a little bit about yourself, what city you live in, and why you joined CTBA.

I'm Jeff White and I first discovered CTBA when I chauffeured my young daughter to the Thursday night BIG Jam when she was learning to play guitar. I quickly discovered lots of really good, homemade music, and I was hooked. But I wouldn't pick up an instrument and join in for a while yet. First, I needed to teach Beth high school physics, so we built, from scratch, the electric guitar she was wanting. I did a decent job of it, and Beth's guitar instructor informed me that "I couldn't build guitars that good without playing them – my lessons would start next week!" So I picked up a cheap dreadnaught and began learning some basic chords while I built my first acoustic guitar, Cocoa.

Rose and I moved to Llano as soon as we got Beth off to College. We were happy leaving the "big city rat race", but quickly missed the CTBA jams. So I started a local jam so we could keep on "making music" with other players. I continue to do "a little coding, a little woodworking, and a little picking" almost every day. We continue to support CTBA for all the good programs they support and to keep up with our musical friends in the Austin area.

Do you play an instrument?

I enjoy playing the Guitar. I find an abundance of challenging music to keep me busy learning how to make the guitar sound so very different. There's flat-picking, fingerstyle, rhythm in many different forms, and there's always accompaniment to others, espe-



cially singers. I really enjoy finding those really old, and almost forgotten, songs and try to breathe a little "life" into them.

What bluegrass artist do you like to listen to most?

That's a tough question! My Nano has 2200 bluegrass songs, so I enjoy many different artists. A few that I always like to hear are: Charlie Waller's baritone voice; Norman Blake's storytelling; Jim Hurst's guitar chops; Steve Smith's soaring mandolin; and Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally's duets. I really like to find lesser known artists, though. They have an originality that's often missing in the big name acts. Some I really like are Cherryholmes, The Forbes Family, and Uncle Earl.

What is your all time favorite bluegrass song?

I really like the traditional verses; Norman Blake's recording of "When It's Lamplighting Time in the Valley"; and "I've [Just] Seen the Rock of Ages" that's on the Central Texas Bluegrass CD, Volume 1.




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Artist Profile:

MilkDrive

I had the wonderful opportunity to sit down with Dennis Ludiker and Noah Jefferies of Milkdrive. The other members of the band Brian Bekan and Matt Medford couldn't make it to the interview. I felt fortunate to get the opportunity to sit down with a couple of young rising stars.

CTBA: *MilkDrive came together back in 2009 and it's real evident from listening that you are all totally in sync with each other.*

Dennis: Yes, we grew up playing together quite a bit. We were always into the same style of music and we started writing it real early on too.

CTBA: *Who does the writing?*

Noah: As far as the instrumental stuff, everything that we did on our last album was original (other than two covers) that Dennis, Bryan, and I wrote. The rest was all stuff

that I wrote in High School before I moved down here. There were some that I've written since I moved here.

CTBA: *When was that?*

Dennis: Seven years ago last September?

Noah: Yes I graduated from High School and went to Boise State on a jazz guitar scholarship for a year. That wasn't really working for me. When I was there, there wasn't anybody that were pickers. I grew up doing the family band stuff. My family and my first fiddle teacher's family they were pretty much the only string music out there.

CTBA: *Lets talk about some of your early influences.*

Noah: I grew up listening to old bluegrass. My Dad's a pretty traditional bluegrass musician. I also



listened to old country Waylon, George Jones

CTBA: *Was that the stuff you listened to?*

Noah: Yes, that's what I grew up listening to so I grew up playing bluegrass and gospel music which is what I did all through High School. Our family would travel around and do that.

CTBA: *And during this time you were studying jazz guitar?*

Noah: No (laughter) that whole thing was from left field. My junior and senior year of High School a friend of mine got our school to start a jazz band. They offered it at zero hour so people would come in at 5:30am to join the jazz band. I had played saxophone from 4th Grade until then and it was right when I started to pick up the guitar. I never



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needed to play the guitar because my Dad played it. So I wanted to play everything else. Before I knew it he was buying me a guitar and got me a book and said "learn this". I had a good friend who was an awesome piano player. He played drums in my band 36 String Swing. He turned me on to some jazz stuff. I really had no jazz experience when I went to Boise State. I was able to improvise and understood chord structures but my sight-reading was bad so when I went in to audition; things were going well until he asked me to sight read. Then he said, "OK you've got the jazz guitar position in the band. I trust you will study your parts before you get to class." It was all playing lines with the brass instead of playing chords, which is what I was used to. Not a whole lot of jazz background.

CTBA: *Dennis how did you meet Noah?*

Dennis: Up in the Northwest at the National Fiddle Contest and other contests. His family and my family were all in the fiddle contest circuit where we would see each other many times during the summer.

CTBA: *Did that include Weiser (pronounced wheezer)?*

Dennis: Yes, Northwest Regional.

Noah: There's Northwest Regional then one for Idaho and Washington. They have it in Lewiston, ID and Clarkston, WA back and forth which is called the Banana Belt. I don't know why it's called that but I used to take fiddle lessons from his Dad two or three times a year. Sometimes we would come up and stay for a week. My teacher in Idaho had about 60 students. They all get together and perform. They are called the Junior Jammers. They would do these performances and the money they collected would go towards scholarships for fiddle players. So the scholarships would give them airfare and lessons somewhere. We would fly to Spokane and take lessons from his parents. We actually met at a Banana Belt fiddle contest and we were playing basketball in

between our fiddle rounds (laughter).

Dennis: We started jamming together, especially at Weiser where you had a whole week of just serious picking where we didn't have to work on contest stuff. We were just playing and we could pick on some David Grisman stuff. It would put us in more of an improvisational mindset. We started doing that probably when we were about 13 or 14. Noah had already been doing it but he really sparked our interest.

CTBA: *So Grisman was an influence. I have to admit that when I first heard you I heard a lot of what I thought was Grisman influence.*

Noah: Yes, my Dad liked Grisman but it was a little too new for him. I should probably say that he doesn't dislike Grisman at all but things in that realm start to get out there, where he is more the traditionalist. That was all my first training when I was learning the guitar. I was learning old Grisman tunes. I had a Grisman book with chords and such. There was somebody in Idaho that knew him very well and he had all these hand written charts from Grisman. She said that she would let me borrow those. This year we went to the Four Corners festival, even Winfield and we would jam so many Grisman tunes but it's surprising how many people don't play them.

CTBA: *Yes, a few people know EMD but...*

Dennis: People would say, "Wow, you know so many Grisman tunes" and we would be like how could you not?

CTBA: *So Grisman was indeed an influence. That is fantastic. Bela Fleck did some things after Grisman, what about those recordings?*

Dennis: "Drive" was also one of our big influences. We were obsessed with all of Grisman and all of Bela's style of music.

CTBA: *I'm glad to hear that. I couldn't help but notice that you've taken this all to another level. That's like the*



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musicians best compliment for someone to take their stuff and drive it miles ahead. On your CD you have some exceptional songs. What struck me about it is that the names of the tunes are cool. You have titles like "Philbowl Baggins", "Glass Eye", "Baby Arm", but my personal favorite song title is "C to E".

Noah: No, it's "C not E". There's a story behind that title. I was teaching my younger brother how to play the upright bass because I thought it would be better to have an upright bass in the band rather than the city bass. We used to go out in the front yard and bring out two stools when it was nice outside. We would play these songs that I was writing. Nobody had heard them yet and I hadn't even totally figured them out. So I was telling him this is the part I'm trying to write so you can learn the part and we can turn it into a song. This particular song starts on a C and he always wanted to start it on the E because it sounded right to him to start it there. So there was this shouting match out in the front yard. "C not E" and then we were 1-2-3 and he would hit the E again (groans). Seriously it's C not E (laughter). So now it's a reminder to the bass player to know where to start.

Dennis: What we've always said about instrumental music is that there is no subject matter because there are no words so why would you need to have the name mean anything at all. So yes, whatever it was that we were thinking or maybe made up a character, a back story for them even.

CTBA: *Let's talk some more about that. How do you guys go about developing or creating your material?*

Noah: Most of it is done audio style rather than writing out the notes. As far as songs that don't have any meaning to things "In Your Dreams" is a song that a lot of people think it's called that because it's a really pretty song.... The song is actually called that because when I was writing it I had it recorded on this digital recorder. That's actually how I write most of my material. If I have an idea, I'll lay down a guitar part and then the bass part. So usually when the song is presented to the band it's already been recorded with all four parts. I play the guitar, fiddle, mandolin, and bass and then say here's how it goes and now do what you do with it. But that particular song I was laying down the ideas for it and I was at a fiddle contest. Now, this is a 16 channel digital recorder that I'm hauling around (laughing) and showing my friend Katrina Pierce. Her Mom was my fiddle teacher; she played in the band 36 String Swing. So I bring out this song for everyone to listen to and she is like "oh, isn't that really pretty, he's going to name it Katrina, after me" and I just jokingly said "In your dreams", and then I thought hey that's a great name for a song. But as far as how we create it's just recording an idea and then...

Dennis: A lot of the things we have are things we have written but haven't done anything with and sometimes those things will fit right in with what Noah has written very nicely. It's getting easier to write songs now that we have the basis of the style down and somewhere to shoot for.

CTBA: *Do you, Bryan, and Matt write?*

Dennis: Yes we all write.

Noah: Bryan is the only one in the band that has written anything lyric wise. Our new album that's coming out in April is a lot more vocals. There are eight vocal tunes and five instrumentals.

CTBA: *Are you performing those tunes now?*

Noah: We've been trying to play all of the new material. There's two of the songs on the album that we have been playing for the past couple of years.

CTBA: *Where did you record the new CD?*

Noah: We did seven days in Nashville with Bil VornDick.

CTBA: *Oh wow! That's incredible! He is amazing!*

Noah: Yes, he did all of Bela's albums. Recently he did Rhonda Vincent. So, we did it all in those seven days and then drove back. He's been sending us the mixes.

CTBA: *Were you laying down tracks or did you lay it down live?*

Dennis: We did the vocals separate but we did the instruments all live, no layering.

Noah: Bela (Fleck) is playing on our new album.

CTBA: *Awesome! Are there any other guest artists?*

Noah: Bela is the only one. Bil asked us if we wanted anyone else and we didn't really want anyone to double any of the instruments that we play.

CTBA: *Let's talk about your touring. You guys are going places. This year you are playing in Oklahoma, Missouri,*

Michigan, Nashville, Pagosa Springs, RockyGrass, Poor David's, Mucky Duck, but folks can come out to RiceGrass II and see you on March 26th. Will it be this band and what's in store for Fischer?

Dennis: Yes, we're excited about that one.

CTBA: *Will you have your CD available then?*

Noah: No, it won't be available until April 5th.

CTBA: *Who's label?*

Dennis: Our label.

Noah: Yes, ours. We've talked to some labels but we just decided that it would be a better approach to do what we wanted to do then let them figure out who wants it, later on. As opposed to trying to do it through them, especially with the producer we want to work with. Having Bil (VornDick) on board is, in a way, it's a ticket. He is all about the music. He is very supportive of what we are doing and he wants help get our stuff out there. For example, if we want to get on with a particular festival we have asked Bil to say something to them. He can get on email with two lines, saying you should check out these guys, they remind me of Bela, Sam, & Flux when they were young and (snaps finger) sure enough they call right up.

Dennis: He's brought us the help we needed at the time.

CTBA: *Because he knows...*

Dennis: For sure.

Noah: He seemed as excited about the project when we were done with it as we were. He said that he hadn't been this creative in a long time so it was cool.

CTBA: *Right, this definitely is great music you are performing. It's good to see that you are getting recognized, getting recorded by some of the top people in the business, and getting the opportunity to play these big festivals. Are we going to get to hear all of the new material at RiceGrass?*

Noah: Yes, all of the new stuff with a lot more singing.

CTBA: *The sound system is good at RiceGrass. That reminds me of another question I wanted you ask you. In addition to your playing being exceptional, your instruments are fine sounding too. All of you have great quality instruments. Can you talk about what you are playing and how you amplify if necessary?*

Dennis: We may have five mandolins between us (holding his F Model Collings). We've played them all live to see what kind of tone they will get. This one is the newest one. I'm using a (L.R.) Baggs Radius and it takes quite a bit of EQ to control it. I've also got the Featherlight installed underneath but I'm not as pleased with that sound.

CTBA: *Do you ever work with both at the same time?*

Dennis: I did some blending for a while but it's really a hassle.

CTBA: *If you have an opportunity to go acoustic over direct which do you prefer?*

Noah: Plugged in. With a lot of the tunes we do we need the boost pedal for what we're doing. We can step in and out, we just prefer plugged in, especially with monitors.

CTBA: *Do you use Darren's boxes?*

Dennis & Noah: Yes. Yes.

Noah: We all use the Redeye. That's like the industry standard now. We've watched that pedal change so much over the years. I know it changed before we came along but he brought them out to us and started having us try them.

CTBA: *Talk some more about your setups. What guitar are you using?*

Noah: On stage I play a Bourgeois Advanced Slope D. I've got an Ibeam pickup in it (L.R. Baggs). It sticks on the inside and rather than being directly on the saddle so it doesn't pick up as much string noise and acts more like a microphone. It makes the entire top a microphone so with wedges (monitors) you have to find your frequencies. I also have an ART Tube Pre-amp and a DBX 15 band EQ so I can sweep some things. It's in a rackmount case. Brian usually uses the other side. He got Darren to make a blender pedal but now he had Darren make him one that has two channels so you don't necessarily have to blend them out to one output.

CTBA: *He's had pedals with double outputs before...*

Noah: Yes but you could only run one at a time. He made one for Brian that would bypass that.

Dennis: He's changed a lot of stuff for us. He's been awesome. The little light that comes on when you click

the button we had him change that.

Noah: He changed the treble knob to not be so drastic and the gain.

Dennis: We said, how about a light? He said, nobody has a problem knowing if it is on or off.

Noah: We were saying we need it. We didn't want to do all this stuff on the fretboard and then try to remember if it was on or off. Sure enough, he came the next week with one with a light on it. He's done so many awesome things. Brian has used a Baggs pickup but here recently he went to a condenser mic and he uses the other side of my pre-amp & EQ.

Dennis: I usually have a 31 band EQ but it's in the shop right now. Sending the best signal you can to the sound guy cuts out a lot of problems.

Noah: Muff, uh Matt, sorry, we call him Muff, plays a Kay Bass with a Realist pickup. He plays through one of those SWR Redhead bass amps.

Dennis: It sounds really good.

Noah: As far as in the studio the only thing I did different is that I played a Mossman guitar. That's on loan to me from a friend in Oklahoma. This friend of mine just recently got the first Winfield trophy guitar which was a Mossman. He knew that it was something because it was super, super fancy. He took it into a shop so they could work on it and they took the neck off and written on the body in pen was "this is the trophy guitar for Winfield". He wanted me to try one of his Mossmans. I didn't use the trophy guitar but the one I used was a 70's model. The trophy guitar actually belonged to Jimmy Giles. He called Jimmy and the Winfield people wanted to get hold of it too because this year is the 40th anniversary and they wanted to get the first guitar that they awarded.

CTBA: *This band has stayed intact since its beginning.*

Dennis: We couldn't imagine anyone else being...

Noah: Brian, Dennis, and I have known each other so well, since we were kids.

CTBA: *When did you say your CD would be released? Is there a special event planned for the release?*

Noah: April 5th is the release date. Yes. We're having a CD release at the Saxon Pub on April 8th. We may also be doing a Waterloo "in store" event but...

Dennis: We don't have the date on that yet.

Noah: We're also playing in San Marcos with Green Mountain Grass at Tantra (Coffee Shop).

CTBA: *Green Mountain Grass. I like those guys and Tantra is really a hip place. When is that gig?*

Noah: Yes it is cool, outside, it's supposed to be the 6th or 7th. That whole week we are going to have several shows and some will be with Green Mountain Grass because they are wanting to come up to Austin and play more.

CTBA: *They are playing Old Settlers this year too.*

Noah: We are too!

CTBA: *That is excellent. I'm glad you are in that lineup. You deserve it and your band is "that crowd". They'll love you guys. Where can people find your CDs?*

Noah: Our web site is milkdrive.com and it's being redone when the new CD comes out. You can order from there. It's in Waterloo.

CTBA: *What about bookings for private parties and such?*

Noah: Nancy Fly is our booking agency.

CTBA: *Nancy is fantastic. You'll be real happy with her. She's top notch. Oh, I almost forgot. I had a question to ask from one of our members. The question was: when do you practice and how often?*

Noah: (Laughter) We actually were practicing before we came over here. We are all in other bands but we are on the verge of doing this full time. We all go out on the road and come back and only have a couple of days before somebody has to get on the road again. That's usually when we try to cram in practice. Some are working day jobs. We got together about 11:00 and started playing about noon (laughter).

Dennis: We had to talk about playing first.

Noah: Right now its been a completely different beast. It used to be that we played songs that we had played for years and Matt came in with a completely different background, didn't know fiddle music, didn't know any of that. He grew up listening to jazz. He's doing awesome for someone that has been thrown into

this style of music.

CTBA: *A few more questions. How do you develop material? Are you working off of melodic concepts or do you just let a mode take you places?*

Noah: Sometimes we start with a melody that may actually get put in different places. There's one song that consists of two different ideas and it's called "The Adventures of Smiley Bob Parts I & II" that will be on the new album. "Part I" was actually written as a bass part. It's not really a melody it's just the bass part to the song. It was the first thing written and it has five or six different parts. It was a bass part that laid around on the recorder and then I laid the guitar part, then the mandolin part and didn't have a melody for it. And before I knew it I was writing "The Adventures of Smiley Bob Part II" before the first one was even finished and was trying to incorporate ideas from the new one to help create a melody for the first one and that's actually how it came together.

Dennis: It comes from both places equally. There are some songs that are just chords...where there's not a super melody there, it's just this feeling that we wanted or chords we wanted to solo over.

Noah: That's a recent development. The older stuff that I wrote was melody driven like "Kay's Tune". That was written on the mandolin and was a pretty sounding song, what should I name it. My Mom's middle name is Kay. I asked, do you mind if I name a song after you, and she was like "oh sure". So the song was "Kay's Tune".

CTBA: *I was going to ask about that song title because it is such a beautiful tune but I was afraid there might be a sore subject there. So it was for Mom. How cool is that?*

Noah: I thought she might like that.

CTBA: *Guys, I've taken a lot more of your time than I really expected to but I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know you guys and I know our readers will enjoy this. I always ask folks in these interviews about their hobbies. What hobbies do you have, what do you do outside of music...Dennis?*

Dennis: I'm trying to remember a time. This kind of goes back to the practice question. We don't just sit at home and practice. We have this thing that its really hard to feel like you are doing anything constructive with music unless you are feeding off of someone else and really learning. So it's hard for us to sit by ourselves and play so I'll study music by listening to it and I want to keep my hands busy so I play video games.

Noah: I watch Netflix (laughter). When I planned the move down here it was because music was what I was all about doing all of the time. I just joined in the past three weeks other bands with Slim Richey & Meaux Jeux, The Stray Gypsy's, I also joined Dennis with Danny Levin Sweet Bunch of Daisies, so I just added more stuff to my plate but it's something different. That is just as interesting as going off to do something else.

Dennis: I like to golf.

CTBA: *It's good to see your creative energy. That you are producing your own material and it's good to hear that the real life in your music is when you are together and there are conversations going on back and forth with the music. This has been a real pleasure. Is there anyone you want to thank that we may have left out. Heidi maybe?*

Noah: Honestly, we wouldn't be where we are today if we hadn't met Heidi (Labensart). The music would be here but a band with members in other bands and we only play Sunday Monday & Tuesday...to get Pagosa Springs and Winfield...there's just no way a band playing three days a week could play any of those festivals without Heidi.

CTBA: *Is that the advice you would give other musicians...find an agent.*

Noah: Yes. Get someone that believes in your music and wants to work hard for you. Heidi knows our music inside and out because she's a long time fiddle friend too.

Dennis: Yes, we met her at the same contests. She and T.J. Thompson, our road manager, keep the boat afloat.

CTBA: *Guys, thank you again. I've learned a lot. A lot of us are looking forward to seeing you at RiceGrass. CTBA's members are musicians as well as listeners and I know that when they see good musicians carrying the music forward with your intensity, that it is really a joy for them too. See you down the road. Keep on pickin'.*



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Produced by:
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Bluegrass From The Edge: Hearing and Listening

by George Wilson

I hate my metronome. It just clicks more truth than I care for sometimes. Roland White said I needed to use one so I do but that doesn't mean I have to like it. Use it I do, however, and it has made a difference, good and bad. I believe I'm keeping better time and that's good but it also makes me acutely aware when somebody doesn't.

Using a metronome is a lot harder than alluded. You have to start slow. No, really, you have to start slow or you will not get the hang of it. Set it at 60 and pick rest strokes with your right hand alone. Do it on all the strings. Then move to some scales. When your right hand, left hand and the metronome all work together you can move on to exercises. By training yourself to follow the beat it will be easier to align yourself to the bass player. It will also make you more aware of the time keeping errors. What to use? My home practice unit is a Korg TM-40 Tuner/Metronome that is on its third set of batteries. I have the (free) Gibson iPhone app that has a tuner and metronome that I use to set my timing before a jam session. At work I use the online metronome at Metronomeonline.com. The Korg and the Gibson both have 'Tap In' functions that allow you to determine the beat of live or recorded music.

So maybe you're listening to a favorite Bluegrass band, perhaps to pick up a new song or lick, but are you actually hearing them? I was contemplating that the other day in my office. A cut from the Bryan Sutton album *Not Too Far From the Tree* came up. I recognized the cut and knew who was playing from their style. What I could not hear, however, was any real difference in guitars. Since this is an office system, meant to lubricate the work day and not provide for critical listening I was not unhappy but it did make me question my recollection of how the album sounds on a larger system. Was it just the iTunes copy?

I connected my iPhone to my system and called up the tune. Sure enough, without even retrieving the CD from storage, I could clearly hear the difference in instruments being played. The 1s and 0s remain the same but sound different. The difference was the speakers and the power to them with the speakers being the big thing.

Now in cost terms you can spend as much on audio as you care to, beyond the cost of pre-war Martin or Gibson Loar F-5, but if you think of it as any other musical instrument you have roughly the same value proposition. My system would be in the D-18, J-35 range with most of that in the speakers. When I play the aforementioned album I can clearly hear Dan Crary's Taylor and Doc Watson's Gallagher and so forth as having distinctive voices.

Like luthiers, speaker designers have concepts of how their product should sound. So, like choosing an instrument, careful listening should be part of the decision process. Make a CD of favorite tunes and songs, emphasizing mic'd acoustic instruments and vocals from singers you know well. Use that CD to evaluate speakers and systems, not the one the salesman carries around.



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Our members range from listeners and lovers of bluegrass music to world-class professional musicians who all have the same desire: to promote the music.

CTBA provides a link between clubs, restaurants, and other venues and Central Texas Bluegrass musicians.

CTBA sponsors jams, workshops, provides scholarships to needy musicians, donates to other non-profit organizations, supports radio stations that promote bluegrass music & musicians, and provide festival venues for our listeners and fans of bluegrass music to enjoy. KEEP ON PICKIN'

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Contact www.waterlooicehouse.com

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- Mar 13 Air Cargo, Threadgills North, 11:00am**
- Mar 16 Blacktop Bend, Austin Farmers Market (Triangle)**
- Mar 17 Steve Smith & Chris Sanders, Uptown Theater, Marble Falls, 8:00pm**
- Mar 18 The Sieker Band, Central Market West Gate, 6:00pm**
- Mar 19 The Sieker Band, Artz Rib House, 7:30pm**
- Mar 19 Steve Smith & Chris Sanders, House Concert, San Antonio, 7:00pm**
- Mar 25 Blacktop Bend, Simplicity, 7:00pm**
- Mar 25 Ragged Union, Fiddler's Green, 8:00pm**
- Mar 26-27 RiceGrass Festival, Fischer, TX - CTBA sponsored**
- Mar 26 The Sieker Band, Tomball German Heritage Fest, 6:00pm**
- Mar 27 Blacktop Bend plays the Capital 10K Race**
- Mar 27 Piney Grove Ramblers, Threadgills North, 11:00am**
- Mar 27 The Sieker Band, Blacks BBQ in Lockhart, 1:00pm**



Central Texas Bluegrass Association

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