



Central Texas Bluegrass Association

Bluegrass Bulletin

Serving the Central Texas bluegrass community since 1978

Member IBMA

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2015 Farmers Branch: Bloomin' Perfect!

Perfect weather. Perfect music. Perfect sound engineering. Perfectly immense crowds. Great food. Clockwork organization. Top of the line entertainers. How does he do it? I must remember to ask Alan Tompkins the next time I see him. Especially about *(continued on page 3)*



Balsam Range plays their Saturday afternoon set at Farmers Branch as record crowds overrun the park. Perfect weather, crackerjack organization, and a stellar lineup might have had something to do with it. Photo by K. Brown.

Rob Ickes at the Station Inn, Nashville.
November 10, 2012; photo by K. Brown.



November birthdays: Tom Adams, James Bryan, Mike Bub, Roy Lee Centers, Larry Cordle, Pete Corum, Randy Howard, Peter McLaughlin, Allen Mills, Alan Munde, James Alan Shelton, Junior Sisk, Eddie Stubbs, Ernie Sykes, Tut Taylor, Randy Waller, Josh Williams, Gene Wooten.

R.I. P. Bill Keith (December 20, 1939-October 23, 2015)

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the perfect weather. He must know someone at NOAA, right?

Unfortunately, I missed the first two bands on Friday afternoon as I struggled to thread my way through the parking lot. By “parking lot,” I mean, of course, I-35 between Temple and Waco. Yes, thanks, TxDOT. The entire, and I mean entire, stretch of highway between Temple and Waco was stop- and- go traffic on Friday. So I missed the *Helen Highwater Stringband* and the *Grascals*. I particularly wanted to hear *Helen Highwater*, since they’re new and I’ve never heard them; but I did pick up a copy of their debut EP at the record table, and you’ll find a review later in this newsletter. I’m pretty sure that this year’s festival set an all-time attendance record. I say that because I had to park all the way at the very back end of the parking lots, and I’ve never had to do that before. I needed a shuttle just to get to the shuttle stop. And on Saturday evening, the crowds stretched back almost all the way to the vendors’ pavilions at the rear of the audience area. When the audience starts having to bring binoculars to see the performers, you know you’ve got a successful festival going. The Omni Hotel opened up some fairly large rooms for evening jams, and there were some pretty good jams here, in the bar, and in the hallways — I sampled several of these, including a good jam with Roger Starnes and some others.

The evening sets by *Balsam Range*, *Hot Rize*, and *Del McCoury* (who received a “Bluegrass Star” award from the Bluegrass Heritage Foundation) were the highlights of the festival, at least for me. Del and the *Hot Rize* guys spent the last half of their sets taking requests from fans. Farmers Branch was the final stop on the 2015 tour for *Hot Rize*, but if you missed Tim O’Brien here, you can catch him as part of the **2015 Fischer Fest** at Fischer Hall on Saturday, November 14 at 7:15 PM.



The Farmers Branch Historical Park, site of the festival, showcases local architectural history from the late 1840s to the 20th century. What better place for a music that is sometimes obsessed with cabins? Photo by K. Brown.



Banjo picker Marc Pruett always seems to be having way too much fun. It must be those banjo endorphins. *Balsam Range* at their Friday night set. Photo by K. Brown.



Hot Rize closed out the show Friday night. In this photo, they look troubled by the knowledge that *Red Knuckles* is coming onstage shortly. Photo by K. Brown.



The *Del McCoury Band* played a long set on Saturday night before Lee Ann Womack. Photo by K. Brown.



Promoter Alan Tompkins addresses the audience on Friday night. Photo by K. Brown.

Curbfeeler Tanning Saloon

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Heidi Curbfeeler, prop.
1 (800)-tanyerhide



Balsam Range on Friday night. It's bluegrass, North Carolina style. Photo by K. Brown.



Hot Rize on Friday night, proving once more that when you have four world-class musicians onstage, you don't really need anything else. Except a lap steel. Photo by K. Brown.



Wendell Mercantile gets down as the *Trailblazers* usurp the stage on Friday night. Waldo Otto has a metal block. Knuckleheads go wild, throwing overalls onstage. Photo by K. Brown.

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Del takes requests late Saturday night. Jason Carter fiddles. Photo by K. Brown.



Blaine Sprouse (left, fiddle) and Keith Little (right, banjo) assist Peter Rowan. Photo by K. Brown.

IBMA Awards Are Early

This year's IBMA awards were definitely "Early." No, I don't mean they were premature, I mean that most of them went to the *Earls of Leicester*. The Earls won **Entertainer of the Year**, **Instrumental Group of the Year**, **Album of the Year**, **Gospel Recorded Performance of the Year** (for "Who Will Sing for Me"), **Male Vocalist of the Year** (Shawn Camp), and **Dobro Player of the Year** (Jerry Douglas); and Jerry also shared the **Instrumental Recorded Performance of the Year** award with Rob Ickes and the late Mike Auldridge, for the "Three Bells" CD. When you need a wheelbarrow to carry your awards home from Raleigh, you must be doing something right, eh?

I hope you also got to see the Earls on *Bluegrass Underground* earlier (uh, I mean previously) in October. Their set was, as Wayne Ross would say, "celestial," and some of the most powerful bluegrass I've ever heard anywhere. You can easily find clips from this show on YouTube, but the audio and video quality are nowhere near that of the broadcast. The YouTube audio comes from the camera mike, not from the board. I hope the *Bluegrass Underground* folks eventually make this show available for purchase on DVD.

2016 Lineup for *Bluegrass Underground*

Good news from McMinnville, Tennessee: the 2016 season of *Bluegrass Underground* will include some bluegrass well worth watching. Here are a few of the taping highlights:

- February 13: Darin and Brooke Auldridge; Joe Mullins and the Radio Ramblers
- April 16: Becky Buller Band
- May 21: Helen Highwater Stringband
- June 11: Danny Paisley and Southern Grass
- July 8: The Boxcars; Molly Tuttle
- October 15: Flatt Lonesome
- November 12: The Grascals

Check your local PBS station for air dates. In Austin, it's KLRU. Best bluegrass filmed in a cave, ever.

Gööber

New ride-sharing service in Catwater, East Zulch, and Cain Switch.

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Agnes Curbfeeler, Owner-Operator
Catwater, Texas



The Hillbenders at Farmers Branch. I didn't see them bend any topography, although I think there was some occasional distortion. That's Chad Graves on the dobro. Photo by K. Brown.

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Roy Glover (1934-2015)

CTBA members who used to frequent ArtZ Rib House or served on the board of directors will remember Roy Glover as a staunch supporter of the CTBA. At a time when the association was having trouble finding a new editor for this newsletter, Roy took on the job in April, 2007, and carried it out until December, 2008, when failing eyesight forced him to relinquish the position. Volumes 29 and 30 of the *Bluegrass Bulletin* are mostly the product of his efforts. Eddie Collins notes that he was on the board that sponsored the Monthly CTBA Saturday night shows at ArtZ.

Born Lee Roy Glover in Fort Worth, he was an Army veteran, was self-employed in the construction business, and lived in the small Hays County community of Mountain City, southwest of Buda. He liked to collect and restore antiques, and played with the *Silver Creek Ramblers*. He died on October 17, two days after his 81st birthday.

Roy was an asset to the CTBA and will be missed.



Rob Lifford Checks in from Spain

In early August my family and I arrived in Granada, Spain, where we've arranged to spend a year.

The kids (ages 10 and 8) are attending a local elementary school. They already had a basic understanding of a lot of academic Spanish from the AISD dual-language program in place at Becker Elementary, but there's no question that the full-immersion experience they're having now is quickly kicking their Spanish language skills into a much higher gear.

We live in a beautiful and very old part of town called the *Albayzín*, a maze of narrow cobblestone streets that frequently open into small plazas housing restaurants and shops. The neighborhood has its roots in the era when the Moors (Muslims of north Africa and Europe) dominated the region from the early 700s to the late 1400s.

So far, musical experiences here have been relatively few, but that is bound to change. The hillside neighborhood adjacent to ours is full of homes and small restaurants/café's set in caves,

and there many cave venues that are famous for Flamenco performances, so we'll be sure to take one in soon. I've met up with one other foreign parent in the neighborhood whom I'll pick some tunes with occasionally (he mostly knows rock/pop tunes but is game to learn some bluegrass, so I'll be tutoring). Last weekend I had the chance to attend a rooftop-terrace jam with a bunch of young musicians, mostly local college students, where a lot of *cerveza* was enjoyed and songs of all kinds were shared, from jazz standards to traditional flamenco to some Spanish pop. I always enjoy trying to fit the mandolin into places where it wouldn't be expected, and this was no exception.

So far, no real bluegrass to speak of, and while I'm definitely in a state of withdrawal, it hasn't reached a critical stage yet. From my inquiries so far, it seems that Barcelona is the spot in Spain where a small but solid bluegrass/Americana scene is in place, so I'll be sure to visit there, see what I find, and report back in another dispatch.

Meanwhile, I'll keep on practicing on my own, drinking cheap wine and eating *tapas*, and looking forward to my next chance to jam with y'all. — **Rob Lifford**

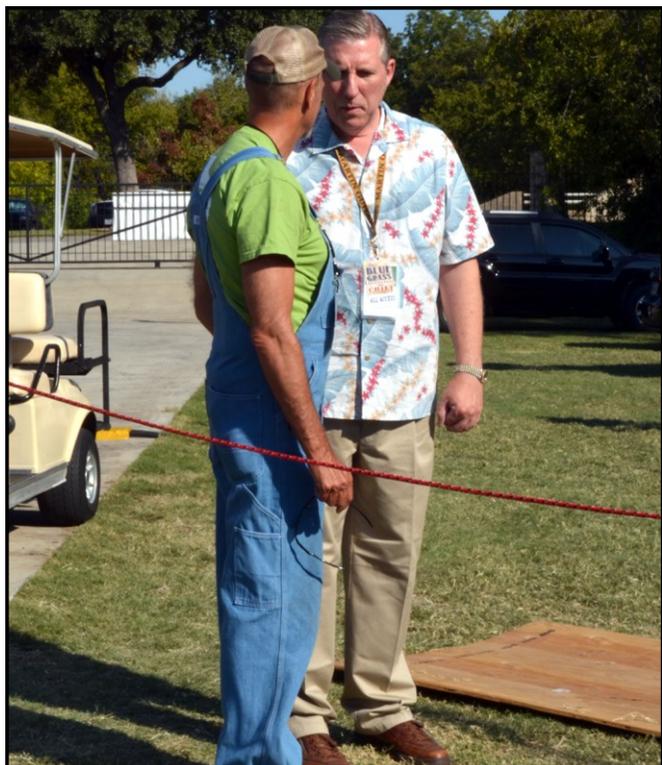
Editor's note: Sounds like Rob is really *Out of the Blue* for now, but maybe he'll develop his own *Bluegrass Underground* in one of those caves.

New Sierra Hull CD Coming

Sierra Hull will be releasing her third album, *Weighted Mind*, on Rounder Records at the end of next January. The new album is produced by Bela Fleck (who also plays on one track) and includes vocal support from Alison Krauss and Abigail Washburn, and according to the press release, instead of the full bluegrass band (*Highway 101*) she's used on previous recordings, the instrumentation will be more sparse. Sierra plays mandolin and octave mandolin, as usual.

We'll be looking for this one. She's brilliant, and whatever she comes up with is bound to be good. I hope she tours through Texas to support this new recording.

Promoter Alan Tompkins (on the right) is the guy who makes it all happen at Farmers Branch. Photo by K. Brown, from last year's festival.



CD Review: *Helen Highwater Stringband* (2015, no label, no number)

Glory Bound / This Crazy Feeling / Blue Train / Please Baby / Cryin' and Singin'

What happens when you combine a couple of bluegrass pickers who are known for having a foot in both the *avant garde* and traditional music camps with a couple more pickers who are pretty solidly traditional-minded? You get this: four pickers, five cuts on this introductory EP. It's banjo-free but otherwise pretty traditional-sounding. The first and fifth cuts are written by fiddler Shad Cobb, the third by Johnny Cash, the second by Homer and Walter Callahan, and the fourth is unattributed. No liner notes. The bluegrass world has, in recent years, seen a number of bluegrass "supergroups" coalesce (and then fade away) when musicians find they have a little extra time on their hands. Remember the Dan Tyminski Band? Perhaps the Rambling Rooks fall into this category, too. The selection here includes gospel, blues-inflected, slow, medium-tempo, and fast. Missy Raines sings lead on "Blue Train," but otherwise, the guys mostly handle the vocals.



Compton's distinctive rhythm mandolin style, with its equal emphasis on the downbeat and backbeat, dominates this recording and is at times reminiscent of his tenure with the Nashville Bluegrass Band. "String band" seems like a pretty good tag for this group, situated somewhere between mainstream bluegrass and old time string bands.



Vintage buggy at the Farmers Branch Historical Park. Photo by K. Brown.

Eddie Throws in the Towel

Longtime CTBA stalwarts, Eddie Collins and Tim Towell, will perform a special CD release show at Austin's legendary Saxon Pub, 1320 S. Lamar from 6:00 to 7:30 PM on Saturday, November 7th. This special show is in celebration of Eddie's new CD, [Keep On A Pickin'!](#), which features 14 of his original tunes. You can see a YouTube video of one of the songs at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBVVB8eDowIg>

Eddie will pick banjo, mandolin and guitar alongside Tim's blazing flatpicking. There's a \$5 cover charge. (512) 448-2552 for information.

Sunday, November 15: Fiddler's Green Zilkerjam

Last year, the weather shut down the fall Zilker Park jam sponsored by **Fiddler's Green**, so they'll have a go at it again this year on Sunday, the 15th, noon to 4 PM. If the weather cooperates. As usual, it's at the Zilker park polo grounds. Meander through the park until you spot a bunch of folks picking old time, Cajun, bluegrass, and celtic tunes and eating barbecue supplied by Ben Hodges. Get there early, because parking is at a premium. And if you haven't stopped by Fiddler's Green lately, you really should go and see what's new. It's where I buy all my strings now. "Acoustic music spoken here" is their motto, or at least it ought to be.

Chasing Blue: An Update

We central Texans are familiar with *Chasing Blue* because this Boston-based bluegrass band has occasionally toured through our area, since mandolin picker Suzanne Oleson is a native Austinite. She graduated from the Berklee College of Music in 2012 and has toured with *Chasing Blue* for almost six years. But now she's left the band, has moved to Nashville, and released a debut solo album that follows the rock and roll pathway. Her new CD features electric guitar, pedal steel, fiddle, bass guitar and upright, and percussion.

Meanwhile, *Chasing Blue* is still touring, and Mike Reese (guitar), Maggie Mackay (banjo), and Alex Muri (bass) are still in the band, along with Laura Orshaw (mandolin) and Danny Musher (fiddle). We hope they'll keep coming here.

Right: Suzanne Oleson and Mike Reese at Patsy's Cowgirl Café, August 28, 2010. Photo by K. Brown.



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CTBA Artists and Bands

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(512) 484-0751 karen@karenabrahams.com www.karenabrahams.com

Cole Anderson

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Better Late Than Never

Duane Calvin (512) 835-0342 BLTNbluegrass@gmail.com

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Cara Cooke (512) 280-9104 caracooke@gmail.com

Blue Creek Bluegrass Gospel Band

Bing Rice (830) 253-7708 bluecreekbg.com bluecreekbing@cs.com

Blue Skyz Band

Mike Lester (210) 913-9597 www.blueskyzband.com

Bottom Dollar String Band

John Ohlinger (512) 431-5150 bottomdollarstringband@gmail.com

David & Barbara Brown

(361) 985-9902 ddbrown@grandecom.net

Carper Family Band

Jenn Miori carperfamilyband@gmail.com

Chasing Blue

(512) 963-7515 suzoleson@aol.com www.chasingblueband.com

Christy & the Plowboys

Dan Foster (512) 452-6071 dan@fostersplace.com

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Pine Island Station

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The Piney Grove Ramblers

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The Prime Time Ramblers

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(718) 374-1086 james@jamesreams.com www.jamesreams.com

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Shawn Spiars

(512) 627-3921 sspiars@gmail.com

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Rolf & Beate Sieker (512) 733-2857 www.siekerband.com thesiekers@aol.com

The Stray Bullets

Bob Cartwright (512) 415-8080 bob.cartwright@sbcglobal.net

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CTBA Area Jams and Events

AUSTIN AREA, CTBA

Every Sunday, 3 PM-??, CTBA Sunday jam at Hill's Café, 4700 S. Congress; (512) 851-9300.

2nd and 4th Saturday, 3-5 PM, beg./int. jam at Wildflower Terrace, 3801 Berkman Drive; Steve Mangold (512) 345-6155.

1st and 3rd Thursday, 7-9 PM, beg./int. jam, Northwest Hills area; Steve Mangold (512) 345-6155.

Every Thursday, 6-9 PM, beg./int. jam, Texican Café, 11940 Manchaca Road; Dave Stritzinger, (512)689-4433.

Every Tuesday, 8-10 PM, Texas Old Time Fiddling, Scholz Garten, 1607 San Jacinto; (512) 474-1958.

BANDERA

4th Friday of each month at Silver Sage Corral- east of Bandera. Starts at 6:30 pm. For more info call (830)796-4969 (Not on Good Friday)

BELLVILLE

Texas Bluegrass Music jam/show Jan. through September, **4th Sat**, 4pm jam, 6:30 pm show. Coughatte Recreation Ranch, 2812 Nelius Rd. (936) 697-5949 coleebiller@aol.net
www.TXBluegrassMusic.com
Plenty of RV camping, restrooms, showers.

CORPUS CHRISTI

2nd Sunday, 2 PM, jam at Heritage Park, 1581 N. Chaparral St. Bill Davis (361) 387-4552, stx.bluegrass@gmail.com

DALLAS

1st Tuesday, 7-9 PM, Charley's Guitar Shop, 2720 Royal Lane #100. (972) 243-4187
www.charleysguitar.com/Events.asp

DICKINSON

Every Friday, 7-9 PM, Dickinson BBQ and Steakhouse, 2111 FM 517 East.

FAYETTEVILLE:

Texas Pickin' Park: Jam **2nd Saturday**, Apr.-Nov. beginning at 6 PM on the courthouse square. Acoustic instruments only.
For info: info@texaspickinpark.com
www.texaspickinpark.com

GARLAND

Bluegrass on the Square: **Every Saturday**, March- November between Main and State Sts. At 6th, 7:30 PM to 1 AM

GLEN ROSE

3rd Saturday, Oakdale Park, Paluxy River Bluegrass Association, free stage show and jam; John Scott (817) 525-0558.

HOUSTON

1st Tuesday, Fuddrucker's, 2040 NASA Rd 1

JOHNSON CITY

3rd Saturday, 2-6 PM, jam at The Dome, 706 W. Main St., Hwy 290 W; Charlene Crump, (512) 632-5999. Potluck at 6 PM, optional jamming afterward.

LEAGUE CITY (BABA)

3rd Saturday: Jam 5 PM, Stage show 6:30 PM Jan- Nov., League City Civic Center, 300 W. Walker St. (281) 636-9419. Sponsored by Bay Area Bluegrass Association.

LIBERTY HILL

4th Saturday, 4-9 PM, jam at the Stocktank, 8950 Ranch Road 1869, Liberty Hill; (512) 778-6878.

LLANO

4th Saturday (Jan.-Oct.), 5:30-10:30 PM, *Bluegrass in the Hill Country* jam at the **Badu House**, 601 Bessemer Ave.; (325) 247-2238; www.bluegrassinthehillcountry.org

PEARL

1st Saturday: Jam all day/night, stage show, 12:15 PM-6:15 PM; food and RV hookups available. Pearl Community Center, on FM 183, 7 mi. south of Purmela; contact info@pearlbluegrass.com. Check web site for show schedule: www.pearlbluegrass.com

ROUND ROCK

3rd Saturday, 2-5 PM, jam at Danny Ray's Music, 12 Chisholm Trail; (512) 671-8663.
www.dannyraymusic.com

SAN ANTONIO

Every Monday, 6:30-8:30 PM, at The Barbecue Station, 1610 NE Loop 410 at Harry Wurzbach exit; (210) 824-9191.

Every Tuesday, 6-8 PM, bluegrass jam (up the hill) and country jam (to the left) at Home-wood Residence at Castle Hills, 1207 Jackson Keller Rd.

SCHULENBERG

1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:0-9 PM, jam at Schu-lenberg RV Park Community Center, 65 N. Kessler Ave. Laretta Baumgarten (979) 743-4388; camp@schulenbergrvpark.com

TOMBALL

Saturday, noon-4 PM, bluegrass jam at Kleb Woods Nature Center and Preserve, 20301 Mueschke Road, Tomball. (281) 373-1777 or (281) 910-4396.

tonynema@earthlink.net

Editor's note: this list of jams hasn't been verified in a long time. Call ahead before checking out an unfamiliar jam, to make sure it's still active.

Curbfeeler's Sundries.

Emu jerky, live crawdads, bear traps, jawbreakers, milled flooring, cane fishing poles, pickled eggs, overalls, shotgun shells, sorghum molasses, lottery tickets, barbed wire, cattle guards, beans, kerosene, outboard motor oil, inboard motor oil, harness and tack of all kinds, pe-cans, chilipetins, japa-leeno candy, gingham curtains, lag bolts, carriage bolts, gravel by the cubic yard, weed eater line, surfcasting weights, flaxseed poltices.

Rufus Curbfeeler, Prop.
Catwater, Texas

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