



Artwork by Emily Isbell

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Letter from the President
- New CTBA Board Member:
Simon Waxman
- CTBA 45th Annual Meeting &
Show
- CTBA Band Scramble & Garage
Sale Update
- CTBA Willa Beach-Porter
Scholarship Update
- CTBA 2024-2025 Board Elections
- Austin String Band Festival
- Bloomin' Bluegrass
- CTBA Member-Band Feature:
Strawberry Flats
- CTBA Business Member Feature:
Shades of Bluegrass
- CTBA Member-Bands
- CTBA Business Members
- 'Possum with the WiFi Password

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



It's crazy - CRAZY! - to think that this is the last time I'll speak to y'all before our big **Annual Meeting & Show on November 12th**. Heck, it's almost certainly the last "letter from the President" I'll write in 2023.

Re: the Annual Meeting & Show, please make your reservations and buy your tickets for the **2023 CTBA Annual Meeting & Show** ASAP! It's going to be one heck of an amazing event, we're really pulling out the stops this year. **The Po' Ramblin' Boys** and **The Karl Shiflett & Big Country Show!** Woo boy!

Now that the weather is more manageable (hallelujah for sub-100°

temperatures), I hope to see everybody at Oskar Blues on Sunday afternoons and/or the many, many bluegrass events around Austin. And, of course, feel free to drop me a line anytime at President@CentralTexasBluegrass.org.

Jon Lundbom, President, CTBA

NEW CTBA BOARD MEMBER

GET TO KNOW SIMON WAXMAN

by Julian Root, Newsletter Editor

Alas, CTBA Board Member **Evan Hall** has relocated to DFW and, as such, resigned from his position. **Evan: thank you for your service to the CTBA!** You will be missed.

The CTBA Board of Directors has elected CTBA member **Simon Waxman** to finish Evan's term.

(Note: as Simon is a local mandolin and guitar player, this will serve as your regular 'Bluegrass You Should Know' [BUSK] column. Yes, this is a long one. However, Simon is one of my favorite people I've met through the scene, and he is easily among the most articulate people - 'grassers or otherwise - that I know. Read on for an engaging, fun, and informative interview! - Ed.)

So, you're from Boston. Not exactly the bluegrass heartland, I'm guessing you were not a "bluegrass baby." How did you find your way into the high and lonesome?

I'm not a bluegrass baby, but I would submit that Boston is in fact grassland.

The scene is among the best and bustling-est anywhere. There aren't many hollers or cowpokes, but a bluegrass tour of Boston should set any doubters straight.

Having said that, I found my way to the high and lonesome in another East Coast city - namely Baltimore, while I was in college. Bucking the age-old trend, I fell in with the right crowd - the country, folk, and bluegrass crowd. See, I didn't have music in my veins as a kid. It just wasn't my thing. When I got to college, I didn't even listen to anything, much less play.

But then I met some guys who had a kegerator in their basement, so naturally I spent about four nights a week there for the next couple years. Those good people introduced me to, well, music, which in their case meant a lot of country rock from the 60s and 70s - the Byrds/Burritos/Graham Parsons, The Band, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, the country side of the Dead, and



so on. A heap of alt-country, tons of Gillian Welch. And let us not forget that this was the era of Old Crow Medicine Show. I was never much for "Wagon Wheel," but Big Iron World had me by the eardrums for sure.

It was among these same friends that I became acquainted with John Hartford. This was the first of two atom-splitting moments. Old John got me on the bluegrass path for real. I started with the longhaired bluegrass and worked my back to the shorthaired - a line that I happily steal from the unsurpassed concert film *Bluegrass Country Soul*, which I watched about eight times in senior year. That was important viewing, which introduced me to Crowe and the Country Gentlemen and the Osborne Brothers and many besides. ("Bluegrass 45," anyone?) It took a bit of time, but I eventually turned to Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, the Stanleys, Doc Watson, the Kentucky Colonels, and other purveyors of the ancient tones, then forward again to Rounder 44, Blake, Rice, Skaggs, and so on.

After all that, I should be done, but I promised another atom-splitting moment. That came in a one-room shack on my friend's ancestral property in the small town of Thurmont, Maryland. It was the summer of 2007, and it was there that I experienced, for the first time, a bluegrass jam. I was shocked and transported and altogether mystified. How did these people, who had never practiced together, play together? How could they play music they had never heard? What was this vocabulary, so concise and so enigmatic, by which they communicated the changes - and what, in any case, were the changes? What did they mean by "tenor part?" How did they know so many songs? Did that guitarist just pick up a mandolin and seemingly know what to do with it? How could they still play and sing with all that booze in their blood?

I didn't immediately start playing. I didn't know, really, what I had encountered. But I knew it was special, and after I attended another jam the following summer an explosive thought crawled into my consciousness: I can do this. I can still conjure the feeling I had in that moment, and I would venture it is the most vitalizing feeling I have ever had.

Fifteen years later, picking and singing with friends remains the activity I love most.

Amen! You've lived in a few different places and have traveled around a fair bit. Do you think there is still a sense of "regionality" in bluegrass? Between those places, have you noticed much difference in the canon of songs, etiquette among players, tendencies toward instruments/styles etc?

I moved back to Boston after college and spent the better part of a decade there before living in Rochester, New York, for not quite two years and then Austin since summer of 2019. I have certainly experienced differences in these scenes.

In New England, the bluegrass scene has a lot of overlap with old-time music, which I also play and very much love, and also some cross-pollination with Irish, Scottish, and Canadian Maritimes styles. There is a great deal of influence from the Berklee College of Music, which churns out surpassingly skilled and highly creative pickers and arrangers. You'll get a bunch of cellists showing up to festivals and sawing away on bluegrass and

old-time, no doubt under the influence of Crooked Still.

In Central Texas, you'll find more singer-songwriters in the bluegrass world, and strong influences of western swing. This is especially apparent in the playing styles of fiddlers and in rhythm guitar playing. You also hear a lot of classic country songs played in bluegrass jams - more than you do in New England, although that's perfectly legal there too. I have picked up some new-to-me variants of songs I played back home, although I don't know that this reflects regional specificity.

I've also spent some time in the west and listened to Colorado bands. That scene harbors its own aesthetic - the Yonder Mountain thing is strong. It's not my favorite style, but there are strong musicians developing it.

I would guess that regional differences were more pronounced pre-internet, but some distinctions hold, if fuzzily. I think you will find the most trad approaches in parts of Tennessee and North Carolina, and above all Virginia, especially when it comes to banjo styles. You'd better play it like Earl did, my friend. And if you want a bunch of hippies yelling ("gang vocals"), there are plenty to be found in Colorado.

Now you're in Texas. Or at least Austin. How'd you end up here? How does the Austin/Central TX scene compare to other places you've been? What changes would you like to see? What are your favorite aspects about the scene?

I came to Austin with my partner Chelsea when she took a faculty position at UT, where she teaches music theory. She's trained on Brahms but also plays bluegrass accordion, if you can believe it, and is a fellow CTBA board member.

One thing I'd like to see more of are open jams. We have a lot of bluegrass nights in town, but they're bands playing gigs. I'm talking about participatory music. The only weekly bluegrass jam in the central part of town is at Oskar Blues on Sundays, and thank goodness for that. Everett Wren runs an open jam once a month at the Butterfly Bar, and thank goodness for that. It's VERY open. There have been other efforts at times. I think we could use more of that. A more participatory scene.

My favorite thing about picking in Central Texas is the lack of any firm barrier with country music. I love playing country songs in bluegrass jams, and players here know so much from both repertoires. Playing those country songs adds a lot to a bluegrass jam. I'm also a fan of jamming on the porch, the backyard, and in the living room, and people here will come from miles around for a good pick.

You're also a recently minted host on KOOP's Strictly Bluegrass. That show has five different hosts all selecting from the many tributaries to the sea of grass, how do you select songs for your playlist?

I have a ton of music on an old



hard drive that I listen to. I burrow deep into the YouTube rabbit holes. I look up old vinyl to find material that's new to me. **SecondHandSongs.com** is an incredible gift. I browse the festival circuit to see who is doing good work right now. I let Spotify give me recommendations because why the heck not. Let AI be your friend. I think back to the stuff that got me hooked on bluegrass. I pay

close attention to bands of the 80s, 90s, and early aughts. This was an amazing era for bluegrass, and I want to give it plenty of attention when I'm programming a show. I try to get regional variety and human diversity on the air, which is easier to do than many realize because they just listen to the same old good old boys all the time. I am not willing to play a crap song just because the picking on it is stellar; great pickers are easy to find, but great music is another matter.

Who do you think is the most under-appreciated bluegrass act on the national scene right now? What about the most under-appreciated act from any era?

Historically, I think Texas's own Lynn Morris is criminally under-appreciated. *(I couldn't agree more! - Ed.)* Joe Val gets a lot of love in New England but much less beyond, and that's a pity. Geoff Union, who used to be based in Austin, is among the best bluegrass songwriters of his generation. Listen to the Whitstein Brothers. John McGann is an incredible picker who never got his due. Southern Blend. Ernie Thacker. Roy McMillan. Karl Shifflet, whom the CTBA is bringing to town. Your boys Mike Lilly and Frank Necessary and all the folks they played with. Chubby Anthony. The Goins Brothers. Robert Bowlin. The Deadly Gentlemen. There are lots of other greats like Buzz Busby, Boot Hill, the Virginia Squires, and Lost & Found that are receding from memory but at least enjoyed a strong fandom in their day.

As far as folks that are working for it right now, I'd love to see more attention paid to Twisted Pine, the Old Hat String Band, Sister Sadie, High Fidelity, the Price Sisters, Joe K. Walsh, Mr. Sun, The Barrel Boys...

(For the folks who don't know, I'm also a host on Strictly Bluegrass. So thanks for the ideas - I'll try to remember to thank you on mic! - Ed.)

OK, time to play hardball, Waxman. Which songs/tunes would you be happy to never have to hear/play again?

Oh boy. Let's not ruffle too many feathers. My least favorite popular fiddle tune is "Big Sciota." There's nothing inherently wrong with it; it's just terribly overplayed. As for vocal numbers, I could do without "Why You Been Gone So Long?" Come on. It's boring.


CTBA 45th ANNUAL MEETING & SHOW

Reservations (for CTBA members) and tickets for the **45th CTBA Annual Meeting & Show** are now available!

CENTRAL TEXAS BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION THE 45TH ANNUAL MEETING & SHOW

PO' RAMBLIN' BOYS

2023



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12

KARL SHIFLETT

THE & BIG COUNTRY SHOW

LIVE AT OSKAR BLUES BREWERY AUSTIN
10420 METRIC BLVD, AUSTIN 78758
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2023 5 P.M.
TICKETSTRIPE.COM/CTBA2023

CENTRAL TEXAS BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION OH BOY! FIDDLER'S GREEN MUSIC SHOP OSKAR BLUES BREWERY

Please join us on **Sunday, November 12th**, at **5PM** for the 45th CTBA Annual Meeting! This year will feature performances from **The Karl Shiflett & Big Country Show** and, our headliners, **The Po' Ramblin' Boys**.

If you are a CTBA member in good standing, you can reserve your ticket(s) at TinyUrl.com/CTBAReservations

If you would like to purchase tickets in advance, they are **only \$20** and are available at TicketStripe.com/CTBA2023. But...for only \$5 more, you could **join the CTBA** and reserve your seat! Memberships start at \$25/year. Visit CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join to learn more.

See y'all there!!!

CTBA BAND SCRAMBLE & GARAGE SALE UPDATE



Listen, y'all: we're trying our best. But it's been so hot out there. So. Hot. And the **CTBA 45th Annual Meeting & Show** is, like, five or six weeks away (!?!).

So here's the plan: the next **CTBA Band Scramble & Garage Sale** will be held (pending any shenanigans) at **Oskar Blues Austin** on **Sunday**,

March 3rd, 2024.

We're sorry to miss 2023 (and ooh boy do I want to get some stuff out of my garage...), but logistics are as logistics do. We have a weather-appropriate (and Q1) date in the calendar for 2024, **let's make it one heck of an event!**

CTBA WILLA BEACH-PORTER SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

The CTBA is thrilled to announce **we have awarded two ArtistWorks scholarships!** Congratulations to CTBA members **Chris Melas** and **Scott Stegall**.



Chris Melas grew up in a musical family, being introduced to classical guitar by his older brother. He eventually decided to pursue bluegrass flatpicking and has been an active member in Austin's music scene since 2014. Chris regularly performs in town and has an active roster of guitar students.

Scott Stegall grew up playing bluegrass and old-time banjo in the North Carolina Piedmont. Following a stint in college (and after writing a thesis on the history of American fiddlers' conventions), he commissioned into the U.S. Army and relocated to central Texas. You can catch Scott playing guitar, banjo, fiddle,



and yodeling Jimmy Martin-style at bluegrass watering holes throughout Austin.



Many thanks to **ArtistWorks** for **partnering with the CTBA** and making **these scholarships available** to bluegrass musicians across the great state of Texas. And there are still ArtistWorks scholarships on offer! Each scholarship recipient will receive a **one-year ArtistWorks membership** to the study track of their choice from the 30+ courses offered through ArtistWorks. ArtistWorks scholarships are available to **any Texas resident aged 12 years or older** (no age limit).

And, of course, we are still accepting applications for **2023 CTBA Willa Beach-Porter Scholarships**

If you or someone you know is interested in **attending a bluegrass camp**, please consider applying for a scholarship! CTBA Willa-Beach Porter Scholarships are available to **any Texas resident aged 12-18**.

If you or someone you know is interested in a scholarship, head on over to **CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Scholarship** and apply today!



CTBA 2024-2025 BOARD ELECTIONS



Ballots are out now for the **CTBA 2024-2025 Board of Directors Election!** All CTBA members in good standing are invited to vote or their choices to serve on the CTBA Board for the next two years. **Vote early, vote often!**

And remember: **if you join the CTBA** between now and the Annual Meeting, you get to **have your say in CTBA**

leadership and you get free admission to the big event, too! Visit CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join to learn more.

AUSTIN STRING BAND FESTIVAL

AUSTIN
STRING BAND FESTIVAL

DAIQUIRI QUEENS

THE JOYMAKERS • NOKOSEE FIELDS TRIO
BELEN ESCOBEDO • LOST PATTERNS
AUSTIN LOUNGE LIZARDS • LUKE BULLA
LAST SHOT GOT HIM • THE LOST PINES
LLOYD AND APRIL • ALLEY GRASS

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

SHOMOS FOUNDATION | | | | | FIDDLER'S GREEN MUSIC SHOP |

OCTOBER 20-22, 2023
CAMP BEN MCCULLOCH - DRIFTWOOD, TX - WWW.AFTM.US

Our buddies at **Austin Friends of Traditional Music** remind us that the Austin String Band Festival is coming back to Camp Ben McCulloch October 20-22! There will be bluegrass on the grounds, with bluegrass-specific jams and performances from **Lost Pines** and **Alley Grass**. It's an awesome event, we'll see you out there!

BLOOMIN' BLUEGRASS

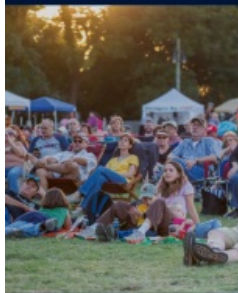
Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder | Del McCoury Band
Suzy Bogguss | Russell Moore & Illrd Tyme Out | Appalachian Road Show
Lonesome River Band | Authentic Unlimited | The Cleverlys
Carson Peters & Iron Mountain | Kristyn Harris & Hailey Sandoz
Texas & Tennessee featuring John R. Bowman and Steve Huber



14th ANNUAL

BLOOMIN' BLUE GRASS FESTIVAL

IBMA BLUEGRASS EVENT OF THE YEAR NOMINEE



GRASSROOTS STAGE ARTISTS

Bobby Giles & Texas Gales | Mockingbird
Gerald Jones & the Clone Mountain Boys | Salt Creek
Jon Christopher Davis | Riley Gilbreath & Lone Star Blue
Kristyn Harris & Hailey Sandoz | Justin Pickard
E Flat Porch Band | Harvest Moon Countrygrass



FRIDAY & SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20 - 21, 2023

Friday 4:30 - 10pm | Saturday 11:30am - 10pm at the Farmers Branch Historical Park

Free Parking | Jamming | Arts & Crafts Marketplace
15 minutes from DFW Airport | Free RV parking available
Follow the festival on Facebook /bloominbluegrassfestival

STAY & PLAY
Discounted Festival
Room Rates Available Online

BloominBluegrass.com

PRESENTED BY



And if you're not in Driftwood that weekend, we hope you're in Dallas for **Bloomin' Bluegrass!** It's Texas's premier bluegrass festival, this year's lineup is totally killer, all I can say is that I'll see you there, indeed.

CTBA MEMBER-BAND FEATURE

STRAWBERRY FLATS

Strawberry Flats, an old-timey Austin-based band led by **Hannah** (vocals) and **Tony Giardino** (guitar and vocals), was born from a shared passion for time-honored music in 2021. With Hannah's Mississippi roots and Tony's upbringing near the Great Lakes, they blend a repertoire of old time country, bluegrass standards and original compositions that reflect those experiences.



In 2022, they turned their bedroom closet into a recording studio and produced their first (aptly named) album **Home Cookin'**, featuring all original songs that cover the essentials - from love to heartbreak to drinkin'.

You'll often find them at one of the many bluegrass jams in Austin, where Hannah is most likely singing a Carter Family or Dolly Parton tune (they sang "Before I Met You" at their wedding this year). It was at one of those jams they met their mandolinist, Kyle Smith, who frequently joins them on stage.

Follow this link to find them on Instagram, Spotify, or Facebook for upcoming shows and news on their upcoming album.

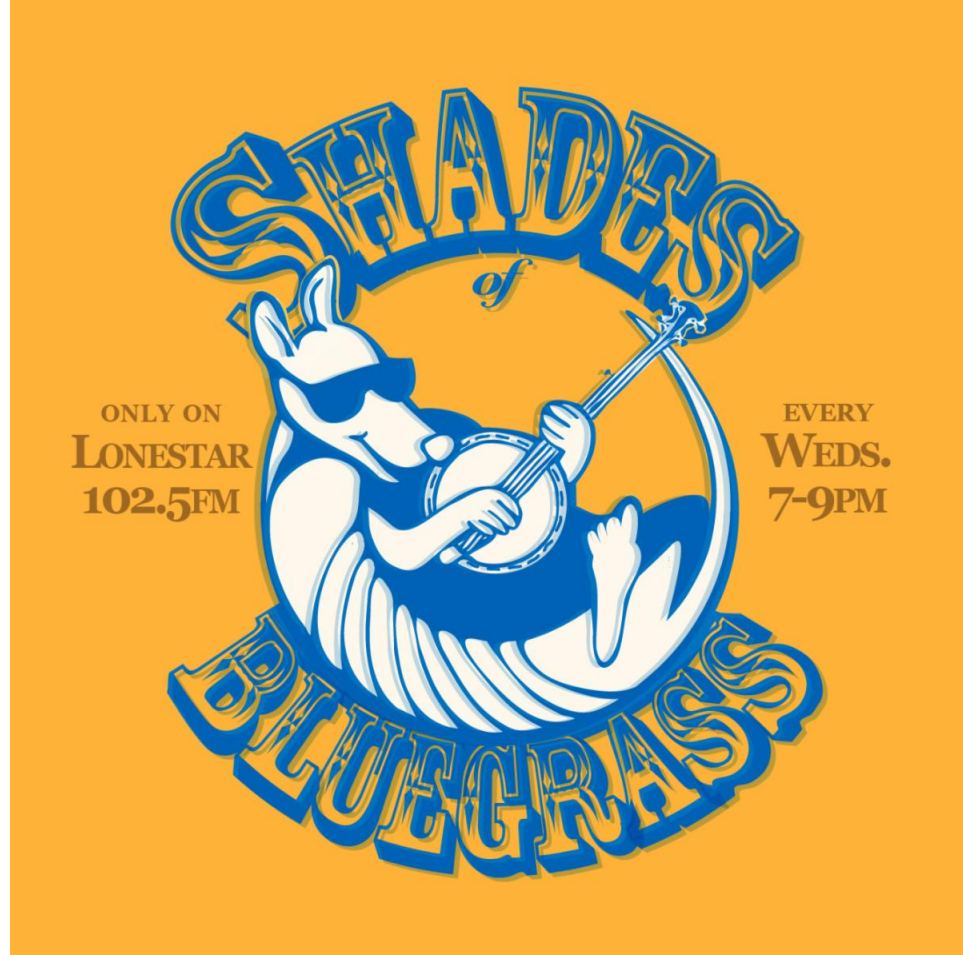
CTBA BUSINESS MEMBER FEATURE

SHADES OF BLUEGRASS

Like many colorful things in life, the **Shades of Bluegrass** radio show started out with a dare. "Everyone can do one radio show, but I doubt you'll make it past 10", came the initial prod over chicken fried steak for breakfast at Willow Creek Cafe in Mason, TX. We were up for the challenge, and 312 shows later we're still going strong. The 26,000 watt station Lonestar 102.5fm in Mason gives listeners a Texas take on country music, providing local talk and a few specialty shows for character.

We're **Kyle** and **Rachel Martin**, weekly producers, researchers and hosts of Shades of Bluegrass, heard 7-9PM every Wednesday night by at least a few dozen people around the Texas hill country. Starting in 2014, we took a break from 2017 to 2020, but have been going strong since then. Weekly we sift through a growing collection of +25,000 bluegrass songs to keep the show engaging and up to date. We've rounded up enough loyal sponsors to pay for our music purchasing habit and, some years, even pay for the gas to drive to the Kerrville Folk Festival.

Over six years of doing the show, we've worked to bring fun, exciting and heartfelt bluegrass to folks who aren't exactly familiar with the genre. The ultimate compliment is to hear a listener say "that was a great song! who was it?" To do this, we focus on musicians who are playing the major festivals around the country and try to attend at least one multi-day bluegrass festival per year - Telluride, Delfest, Rockygrass, and Old Settlers to name a few. This makes us aware of who is up-and-coming, how crowds feel about them, and how their live performances vary from their recordings.



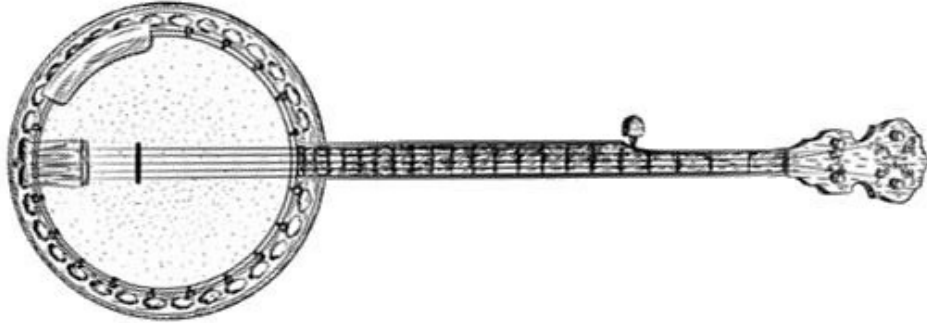
Our show is two hours long with a gradient of bluegrass sounds and eight talking breaks to discuss who we just played and a little information about what's coming up. The first hour is steeped in nostalgia, consisting of traditional and neo-traditional bluegrass, with the occasional folk, blues or string band thrown in to mix it up. The second hour is about the more contemporary sounds which are currently growing the genre, attracting listeners through folkgrass, punkgrass, jamgrass and anything that pushes the bluegrass envelope. When the envelope gets pushed too far and we feature a selection named after our biggest fan, the "Suzi Quasar Awkward Bluegrass Cover" - you'll laugh, you'll cringe, you'll cry at the blasphemy. You can hear us streaming on the stations' website at khlb1025.com or via the TuneIn app.

We're always seeking ways to grow the show into other opportunities. Due to licensing, we can't really do a podcast. We're currently setting up Spotify playlists with the exact show order, but lacking our colorful commentary. We've been in discussions with other small town Texas radio stations to syndicate our show. Currently, we're producing/promoting live bluegrass concerts in and around Mason, TX with our eye on creating a full fledged bluegrass festival in the future.

Shades of Bluegrass is our weekly escape from the frustrations of life to the magical land of bluegrass, and we hope to be able to visit it for years to come.

CTBA MEMBER-BANDS

The CTBA is proud to have the following **bands** as members and wholeheartedly recommend them for all of your Central Texas bluegrass needs!



Austin Monday Nighters
Black Diamond
Bobby Giles & Texas Gales
Brand New Key
Four Fights Per Pint
The Greenlawn Rangers
The Hillsideers
Long Prairie

The McKinleys
MoPac Traffic Jams
Randy Collier & Grassland
The Sieker Band
Strawberry Flats
Texas String Assembly
Wayside Bluegrass

If your band is interested in becoming a CTBA member, please visit **CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join** or contact us at **CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org** to learn more.

CTBA BUSINESS MEMBERS

The CTBA is proud to have the following **businesses** as members, please consider supporting them as they support Bluegrass in Central Texas!

Barton Springs Mill
Central Machine Works
Country Guitar Online
Lazarus Brewing Co.
Madrone Coffee Co.
Oh Boy! Print Shop
Oskar Blues Austin

Old Settlers Music Fest
Shades of Bluegrass
St. Elmo Brewing Co.
Texas Bluegrass Music
Vista Brewing
Woodtone Strings

If you and your business are interested in becoming a part of the CTBA, please head on over to **CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join** or reach out at **CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org**.

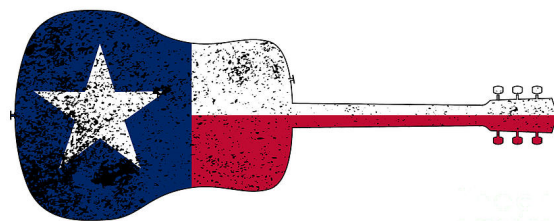
**' Possum with the
WiFi Password**

*...and other juxtapositions
by your editor, Julian Root*



In our interview a few scroll wheel lengths up, Simon Waxman talks about the inevitable and delightful cross-pollination of bluegrass and country music here in Central Texas. Well, that's some good timin', Simon. Cult classic country crossover act The Contenders just played a reunion show at the Continental last weekend to celebrate the long-overdue reissue of their one and only album. During their meteoric two year career

culminating with the 1978 release of their eponymous album, they won hearts from Austin to Nashville to New York City. "Neat," you say, "but where's the connection to Central Texas and bluegrass at large?" Well, good reader, I'm here to tell you that this is one of the most significant connections between region and genre in the realm of bluegrass adjacent. The names of the members alone tell the story: Walter Hyatt—later known as the celebrated Austin star "Uncle Walt," was the toast of the town for much of the late 1970s and early 1980s. If you don't recognize the name Champ Hood, go ask one of the old heads hanging out at South Austin Music. Oh, and Tommy Goldsmith? Yeah - when he isn't shredding the electric guitar, he's proving his singular bluegrass cred as Thomas Goldsmith. Go ahead, google that. OK, I'll do it for you. Thomas Goldsmith not only edited the single most comprehensive book of bluegrass lore and fact ("The Bluegrass Reader"), but in 2019 wrote "Earl Scruggs and Foggy Mountain Breakdown," surely the most comprehensive 200 pages ever written about two minutes of music. So there you have it. Go pick up copies of the Goldsmith books, buy the reissue of "The Contenders," and relish in the biggest and baddest slice of Central Texas Bluegrass Adjacent this side of Bloomin' (and I'll see you there!)



[Unsubscribe ctba@centraltexasbluegrass.org](#)
[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by ctba@centraltexasbluegrass.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!