



Bluegrassin'

Volume 20 Issue 2

March—April, 2018

The Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association is a non-profit association dedicated to promoting, preserving, and sharing our love of bluegrass music in a spirit of family and friendship.

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Upcoming Bluegrass Events

- March 2—Lil' Smokies, Rialto, Bozeman
- March 3—Infamous Stringdusters, Wilma, Missoula
- March 9—Lochwood Bluegrass, Top Hat, Missoula, 6:00 pm
- March 10—Leftover Biscuits, Brewery, Kalispell, 5:00 pm
- March 10 - MRBA Winter Jam Series, Missoula—Ruby's Inn - Pickin' and grinnin' starts at 2:00 pm. Potluck at 6:00 pm, followed by more pickin' and grinnin'
- March 10 - Yonder Mountain String Band, Wilma, Missoula
- March 24—Lochwood Bluegrass, Draughtworks Brewery, Missoula, 6:00 pm
- April 14—MRBA Spring Festival, Lone Rock School, Stevensville (See pg. 4 for details)

Note:

1. *Dates and times are subject to change. Please check with venue prior to event.*
2. *If you play in a band, (or know of a local bluegrass band) please e-mail the band's web page or Facebook page link to the editor so we can check it for events to list in the bluegrass newsletter. Thanks. (kate@appcom.net)*

Recurring Shows and Jams

- ◆ **Missoula**—Pickin' Circle. Montana Distillery (631 Woody St.)
Tuesdays, 6:00 pm
- **Helena** - Bluegrass Jam, Staggering Ox, Tuesdays, 6:00 pm
- **Whitefish** - Open Jam, Montana Tap House, March 25, 6:30 pm

Please send information on open jams and shows to the newsletter editor.

Message from the Prez

Mike Conroy

We were all saddened to hear that our buddy Bill Neaves Sr. of Hamilton was tragically killed in a car wreck on February 9. I have known Bill longer than I have known Tari, and that's quite a while.

Recently I had decided to see if I could build a fancy style-5 banjo, and I met with Bill a couple weeks ago to get some tips. He was going to help me with the neck inlays and fancy engraving on the pot. It was fun to see how excited we both got over planning our course of action. Bill had such a zest for life and was everyone's friend. He will be missed a bunch.



Our last Ruby's Jam will be Saturday, March 10. We have been having so much fun at the winter jams at Ruby's, and I would like to thank folks for coming, joining in the fun, being with friends, and pickin' and grinnin'.

Our MRBA Festival will be April 14, with a big lineup of groups that will be playing that day. This festival is our only fundraiser, and we want to thank all the folks who come and play and volunteer to help, and those who come to hear the music and support the Association. Check out the listed band schedule on Page 4 to see when your group plays.

WANTED—DESSERTS FOR SPRING FESTIVAL

News from the Lone Rock Festival Kitchen 2018:

We are gearing up for another great day in the kitchen! Each year I am amazed at the wonderful desserts you all contribute to the spring festival. Any sweets are welcome. Some favorites are pies of any kind, cheesecakes, and cobblers. We can always use help in the kitchen, so stop by any time.

Thanks, Susan

Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association

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If you would like to get your newsletter delivered electronically via e-mail, send a message to:

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(P.S.—It will help keep down printing and mailing costs for the Association.)



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E-mail _____ Individual (\$10.00) _____ Family (\$15.00) _____

Do you want the newsletter delivered electronically? _____ YES _____ NO

Renewal _____

New Member _____

Please mail your application to: MRBA, PO Box 1306, Missoula, MT 59806

* * * MRBA Spring Festival * * *
Stevensville, MT - April 14, 2018

Well, we're getting geared up again for a great festival with great bands and a whole lot of fun! **If you would like to volunteer to help at the festival with the ticket tables, in the kitchen, or staffing merchandise sales, please call Mike or Tari at 821-3777.** You can also just check in that day with the organizers, and they'll find a spot for you to help. Sunday morning we will have a free biscuit & gravy breakfast for folks camping at the school.

Directions (Lone Rock School is at 1112 Three Mile Road, Stevensville, MT 59870 (watch for festival signs)
Directions from South (from Hamilton): Traveling north on Highway 93, turn right at Stevensville turnoff; drive one mile. When entering Stevensville, turn left onto East Side Highway. Continue 5-1/2 miles. Turn right on Three Mile Road and continue on Three Mile Road for 3 miles. School is on the left just past the fire station.

Directions from the North: (from Lolo): Turn left at Florence (Conoco station) onto East Side Highway. Continue on East Side Highway 6-1/2 miles. Turn left onto Three Mile Road, and continue on three Mile Road for 3 miles. School is on the left just past the fire station.

Lone Rock 2018 Festival Schedule

12:00—12:25	Kids in Bluegrass
12:30—12:55	Bluegrass 101
1:00—1:25	Bittergrass String Band
1:30—1:55	Darby Sireens
2:00—2:25	Tin Cup
2:30—2:55	Flatgrass
3:00—3:25	Hogleg Slough Band
3:30—3:55	Mike & Tari Conroy Band
4:00—4:25	Skookemchuck Bear Claws
4:30—4:55	Pinegrass
5:00—5:25	Spring Thaw
5:30—5:55	Elk Ridge Ramblers
6:00—6:25	Salmon Valley String Band
6:30—6:55	Acousticals
7:00—7:25	Silver Gravelys
7:30—7:55	Chet Rudyard & Friends
8:00—8:25	Ruby Jewel Band
8:30—8:55	Add Hawk Bluegrass

MONTANA ROCKIES BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

**SATURDAY
APRIL 14, 2018
NOON-8:30 PM
LONE ROCK
SCHOOL**

1112 Three Mile
Creek
Lone Rock School is located
5.5 mile north-east of
Stevensville on East Side
Highway, then 3 miles up
Three Mile Creek.

**FOOD
AVAILABLE**

**ADMISSION
\$5 NON MEMBERS
\$3 MRBA MEMBER
UNDER 12 FREE**

FEATURED BANDS

IN ORDER OF PERFORMANCE

- Kids in Bluegrass
- Bluegrass 101
Hamilton, MT
- Bittergrass String Band
Stevensville, MT
- Darby Sireens
MT & ID
- Tin Cup
Hamilton, MT
- Flatgrass
Missoula, MT
- Hogleg Slough Band
Kalispell, MT
- Mike & Tari Conroy Band
Carroll, MT
- Skookemchuck Bear Claws
White Bird, ID
- Pinegrass
Missoula, MT
- Spring Thaw
Missoula, MT
- Elk Ridge Ramblers
Deer Lodge, MT
- Salmon Valley String Band
Salmon, ID
- Acousticals
Missoula, MT
- Silver Gravelys
Alberton-Arden, MT
- Chet Rudyard & Friends
Missoula, MT
- Ruby Jewel Band
Anaconda, MT
- Add Hawk Bluegrass
Missoula, MT

Oldtime Bluegrass

FESTIVAL & FUNDRAISER

For information: 406-821-3777 • mtbluegrass.com

Artistworks Bluegrass Vocal Course Review

by Mark Vosburgh

New Year's is a fine time for resolutions, and some of my most enjoyable ones revolve around music.

Bluegrass is an awesome tradition in this regard, since it provides the opportunity to study face-to-face with many excellent artists. Over the years I've taken live workshops/vacations/musical retreats with John Reichsman, Caleb Klauder, Laurie Lewis, Kathy Kallick, Mike Compton, Ben Winship, Roland White, Darrol Anger, Sharon Gilchrist, Chris Henry, and others.

This year, I'm expanding my reach to connect with New York City's thriving bluegrass scene. In November, I started an Internet-based Bluegrass Vocals course with Micheal Daves. Daves is a Grammy nominated artist who has recorded with mandolinist Chris Thile (Punch Brothers, Nickel Creek, Prairie Home Companion Host). Since 2006 Daves has maintained a weekly residency on Tuesday nights at The Rockwood Music Hall in Manhattan, where he continues to draw a devout following, and he uses the informal setting to showcase special guest appearances with a who's who of bluegrass musicians including Noam Pikelnny, Chris Eldridge, Sarah Jarosz, and Aoife O'Donovan.

The course includes video, audio and written material to study covering:

- Bluegrass singing fundamental
- Ear training
- How to sing harmony
- Advanced baritone parts and 3-part harmonies

After studying the online material, students are encouraged to submit a video of themselves performing a song or an exercise. Micheal then records a video where he provides feedback on your submission. All student and instructor feedback videos are available for all students to see. The cost is reasonable. I signed up for a year at \$18/month. Artistworks offers sales available throughout the year that allow you to sign up for as little as \$12/month.

So here's my review of the course so far: I love it! Here's why.

As well as being insanely talented, Micheal is a good teacher. His students range from raw beginners to quite accomplished vocalists, and he effortlessly and gently guides them into expanding their knowledge and pushing their musical boundaries. He points out that everyone, no matter how accomplished, has knowledge "holes" that they can fill in. Micheal successfully connects the dots between classical vocal instruction and the bluegrass tradition. He bases his training on teaching classic bluegrass original material with an emphasis on singing in a way that protects your voice.

It's great to get direct feedback from Micheal on my submissions, but it's also amazing how much I can learn by watching him give feedback to other students. There are many common pitfalls/mistakes people make as they learn music, and the video exchange format is a great way to share musical knowledge and training.

So, the format works very well, the teacher is great, and the cost is reasonable. Does it work?

Here are my primary take-aways after working the program for a little more than a month.

- **Inspiration!** Micheal's song choices are excellent and fun to sing. Taking the course and knowing that Micheal will be reviewing it makes me want to dive deep and take his instruction to heart.
- **A better "ear" for the music.** Micheal points out some of the vocal movements that make great singers great. From the Stanley Brothers to Bill Monroe to Del McCoury to Hazel Dickens, it is fun to listen more closely to their music and listen for the little things that they do in their singing.
- **More awareness of how I use my voice.** I love to sing high tenor parts and Micheal quickly pointed out that I'm often straining my voice to hit the high notes. He's got me working on "opening" my voice and pointed out how Bill Monroe and Del McCoury have great open voices and don't strain on those fantastic high parts!
- **More attention to the little movements of song.** It's really easy to just sing and not pay attention to details, but I'm learning that the cool stuff lives in the details! This is especially true for harmony singing and where it is so important to slow down and pay attention to how the parts fit together.
- **Expanded repertoire.** Micheal is very knowledgeable and is introducing me to some great music I haven't sung before and teaching me more about the bluegrass greats.
- **Improving my mandolin playing.** You read that right. In my vocal course, Michael is a stickler for playing mandolin breaks and working out vocal parts that closely match the melody of the song, right down to the little details. I'm finding that the gap between what I sing and what I play on the mandolin is closing, and that is a good thing!
- **Paying more attention to my singing.** For me singing has mostly been just another way/reason to play be able to play my mandolin. I'm upping my vocal game by embracing vocal study and paying more attention to my singing.
- **Expanding my comfort zone.** It is a little intimidating to put stuff up and have videos reviewed by a teacher for all the Internet world to see, but I'm quickly getting over that. It's becoming apparent that Micheal is right. We all have things we can learn, and we can learn by watching each other.

So there you have it. Can't wait to bust out some of my new songs at our MRBA jams. After all is said and done, the best reason to study music is so we can get together to sing and pick!

Ellie Nuño



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Photos from the January & February Jams



Young fiddlers at January Jam



Anne Merrifield, Melora Neaves & Verna Molenda



Roger & Chris



Girls be Jammin'



Sister Jam —Phyllis & Paisley



The Ercks

The Birth of the Kamiah Super Jam

By Helen Smith

Early in 2006, the newly formed board of the Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association met in Nampa, Idaho. In attendance were Ron Cole, Al Jackson, Bob Greer, Pete Northcutt, Steve Gleason, and Will Williams. They were brainstorming over how to create a yearly gathering that would connect bluegrass musicians and be one of the first events of spring, following the cold latent winter months. After much discussion, the 1st Annual Spring Bluegrass Jam, at Hoot's in White Bird, Idaho, was set for the 3rd weekend of April, and work began.

The schedule included workshops, a free bluegrass show on Friday evening featuring: Silver City (Boise, ID), Mike and Tari Conroy (Conner, MT), Grangeville Bluegrass Company (Grangeville, ID), Hotwire (Council, ID), and Heavenbound (Nampa, ID), a Saturday afternoon buffet, and much jamming. The catchphrase was, *"Three Glorious Days of Bluegrass – 'we'll jam until we pass out or our fingers fall off, whichever happens first."* That first year the weather was warm and wonderful. There were jams in each corner of the café, several in the back ballroom and outside in the parking lot. There were pickers from Idaho (north and south), from western Montana, and a few from Washington.

At the conclusion of that first Spring Jam, the ISBA board realized that although the temperate weather of White Bird made it great location, we had already outgrown the facility. So a search was made for a location with more camping space, but was still warm enough in early spring. After some searching, the Lewis-Clark RV Resort in Kamiah became the new (and still current) location for the Spring Super Jam.

The ensuing years have seen much growth. Pickers who love to jam invited other pickers. The free bluegrass show moved to Saturday afternoon. Local residents brought their lawn chairs and were introduced to bona fide bluegrass presented by outstanding bands from Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. A bluegrass 'Open Mic' was added to Friday night to allow pickers the opportunity to exhibit their skills. Raynae Redman tutored and encouraged young musicians within the Kids In Bluegrass program. Fine musicians have generously shared their skills in instrument workshops.

The Kamiah Super Jam is now in its 13th year, and over the years it has seen variety in some things. Weather: most years have been beautiful, with sunshine all weekend, but there have been a few years that were a little wetter. Accommodations: some folks sleep in tents or RVs while others stay in cabins or hotel rooms. And there have been potlucks, raffles, power outages, and t-shirt sales – just to keep things exciting. However, one thing is constant, and as the name suggests, jamming is still at the heart of this bluegrass gathering.

***Mark your calendars for the next Super Jam on June 1-2-3 at the Kamiah KOA.
Details will be included in the next newsletter!***

Blugrass Profiles

A couple of newsletters ago there was a page for people to fill out their “Bluegrass Profiles.” I thought it might be fun to share some of the profiles that MRBA members completed. E-mail me your profile, and I’ll include it in the next newsletter! Thanks to Mike Evock for sending in his profile.

Mike Evock

- Plays the banjo.
- Favorite Bluegrass Songs to Sing: Brown’s Ferry Blues, Boil Dem Cabbage Down, Cripple Creek
- Favorite Bluegrass Banjo and Fiddle Tunes: Off to California, Red Haired Boy, Liberty, Banjo in the Hollow, Blackberry Blossom
- First Bluegrass Festival Attended: HardTimes in 2013

February Hootenanny—Stevensville, MT



Pioneer Jack Winthers with Clyde, Paula, and Mike



Angel at the Hootenanny

Grammy Awards - 2018



Winners—Best Bluegrass Album

The Infamous Stringdusters: *Laws Of Gravity*
&

Rhonda Vincent And The Rage: *All The Rage - In Concert Volume One [Live]*

Other Nominated Albums

Michael Cleveland: *Fiddler's Dream*

Bobby Osborne: *Original*

Noam Pikelnny: *Universal Favorite*



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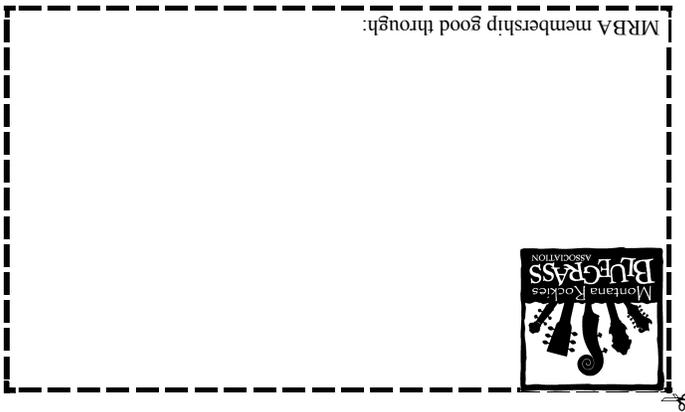
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