



# IdaGrass

Volume 12 Issue 1

January-February 2016

## UPCOMING BLUEGRASS EVENTS

### **SPBGMA 42TH ANNUAL BLUEGRASS MUSIC AWARDS**

February 4-7, 2016

Nashville, TN

[www.spbgma.com](http://www.spbgma.com)

### **WINTERGRASS**

February 25-28, 2016

Bellevue, WA

[www.wintergrass.com](http://www.wintergrass.com)

## ONGOING BLUEGRASS JAMS— IDAHO BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

### Beginners Jam every Wednesday--Boise

A beginner bluegrass jam is held on Wednesdays from 6:30 to 9pm in the Pioneer Building (106 N 6th St), right next to Wise Guys Pizza (Main and 6th)

### **Open Jam at Boise/Meridian KOA RV Park**

Meridian, Idaho

Every Tuesday 7 – 9:30 pm

## ONGOING ISBA SPONSORED BLUEGRASS JAMS

### **Middle Zone Jam:**

The Middle Zone Jam is held on Thursdays at Stan and Trudee Stickland's home, 5714 Centerbrook Drive, Boise. Call for details: 208-377-5326

### **Northern Zone Jams:**

On the third Sunday of the month at the Lenore Store on Highway 12, from 1-4 PM.

The Saturday jam at Jack in the Box is on hiatus until further notice.

### **Southern Zone Jam:**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month, 7-9 PM, downstairs at Gertie's Pizza in Twin Falls. Call for details: John Boyer at 208-733-4552

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The purpose of the Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association:

- To preserve and perpetuate bluegrass music as a heritage of our country;
- To promote the education and enjoyment of bluegrass music;
- To promote fellowship among all musicians and supporters who have a love for bluegrass music, regardless of race, creed, color, ethnicity, or ability to play music.

**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK**

Snow, and lots of it. That's what's outside right now...so sitting on the front porch picking (and yes, grinning) is not the first thing on my mind. However, there's no "off" season for music, no matter where you play it, or listen to it. Local venues most likely exist where you live; look for them. Jams happen on a regular basis; seek them out. Friends nearby have instruments and voices; invite them over. Music lifts the spirits, brightens the mood, and awakens our minds. Your degree of expertise is far less important than your level of involvement, so don't let fumbling fingers and chord confusion stop you from becoming involved. (Do, however, please stay on the beat. Failure to do so will not win friends.)

There are songs to sing, chords to chop, and runs to play, and friends to enjoy. So...let's play some music!

PT Limehouse  
Editor, IdaGrass

**YOUR INPUT. PLEASE.....**

Randy Berg and his merry band of organizers are deep into planning the 2016 ISBA Spring Jam in Kamiah. At the moment, they're working on getting sponsors, and would love your ideas and suggestions for bands. If you have someone in mind, contact Randy at [rlberg@live.com](mailto:rlberg@live.com), or call him at 208-816-1263. Better yet, you could decide to become even MORE involved, and join the crew at their next meeting, to be held February 6 at the Jack in the Box in Lewiston. Many hands make light work, and all that...and there's always the possibility of a jam session after the meeting, I suspect. Ask Randy when you call him!

**CALENDAR MARKING TIME AGAIN**

And jot down the dates for that Spring Jam and Camp in Kamiah. We'll be gathering May 19-22 at the KOA Campground (same location as previously, just now a KOA facility). This is always a great weekend, and the best possible way to kick off your festival season, so plan on it!

**MESSAGE FROM THE ISBA CHAIRMAN**

Greetings ISBA members,  
Most bluegrass music lovers can agree on one thing, and that is that we need to attract more young people into our ranks.

With that in mind, I've been asking for suggestions on how to accomplish this goal. During the ISBA festival last September at Weiser, I asked members of the band **Ron Cole and Cherry Springs** for their opinions on the subject. Their answer, along with some others, is that we need an ISBA Facebook page.

Mike Millward, a long time ISBA member, has volunteered to establish and maintain a Facebook page. He is, however, requesting advice and suggestions from experienced Facebook users on the best way to set up the page for a non-profit organization.

If you have experience in the set-up and management of a Facebook page, and would like to help, please contact Mike Millward at [mwmillward@q.com](mailto:mwmillward@q.com)

Take care everyone,  
Stan Strickland

**BLUEGRASS JAM ETIQUETTE AND THE GOLDEN RULE**

Much has been written about bluegrass jam etiquette. More often than not, such writings

take the form of lists of do's and don'ts. Even a quick google search on the subject will reveal that there is no shortage of lists of this type.

Every jam situation is different, and playing music with other people in a jam setting is a complex social activity. Furthermore, two people writing about jam etiquette may have very different sets of priorities in mind. For instance, one writer may be especially concerned about people with less jamming experience or playing ability doing things (or failing to do things) at a jam that might make the jam less enjoyable for those with more experience and ability, while another writer may be more concerned with how to make newcomers to a jam feel welcome there. For these reasons, among others, even the longest list of jam etiquette do's and don'ts can never be comprehensive, and some points on one person's list of do's and don'ts may conflict with points on someone else's list.

When making use of such lists, whether for the purpose of trying to find specific ways to improve on one's jamming skills or, more generally, for the sake of becoming more like the kind of person who tends to get invited frequently to private jams – both of these are good reasons to concern oneself with jam etiquette – there is one 'do' to always keep in mind: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. All the do's and don'ts of jam etiquette relate back to this.

Being a good jammer is not about being able to memorize and abide by someone's list of things to do and not do, but rather is about being the type of person that one's fellow jammers will be happy to see at the jam and will enjoy playing music together with. This is the type of person who has respect for his fellow jammers and is able and willing to put himself in the other person's shoes.

For instance, you may have appreciated it when the person calling the next song to be played announced the song title together with the key clearly and loudly enough so that you didn't have to ask the person sitting beside you: 'What song are we playing?' 'What key is it in?' You may have liked it that, although you had never heard the song before, it turned out to be much easier to catch onto than the song that the last person called. Even more so, you may have liked it that the leader of the song seemed to be doing as much as he could to help you and others unfamiliar with the song to follow it, keeping his hands clearly visible to the group, playing towards the group, making appropriate eye contact with people, and offering other helpful cues through his posture and way of playing and leading the song.

On the other hand, when it came your turn to call a song, you may not have liked it so much that some people were 'hoodling' on their instruments, or otherwise not paying any attention to you, when you tried announce the song and kick it off. You may have liked it even less, when right in the middle of the song, some guy showed up with an electric guitar and amp and proceeded to ask the person sitting next to you to move over a bit so that he could get access to an outlet to plug his amp in. And, you may have felt like calling it a night and going home (but to be polite, you didn't immediately get up and walk away from the jam), when, after drowning you and everybody else out on the last half of your song, he took it upon himself to call the next song, prefacing it with the disclaimer: 'I know that this is probably not a bluegrass song, but...'

Happy Pickin',

Jason Homey

[Banjomaster1@yahoo.com](mailto:Banjomaster1@yahoo.com)

## **SONGS TO SKIP AT YOUR NEXT GIG**

*Chris Jones in Bluegrass Express, September 9, 2015*

I've mentioned this before, but I have a theory that a sizable chunk of modern bluegrass fans aren't listening to the lyrics of any of the songs. I've even tested this theory out on more than one occasion: once, when I deliberately wrote a verse to a song that was complete nonsense, and another time when I performed Prince's *Purple Rain* like it was an *Oh Death*-like Ralph Stanley song. I got some compliments on both songs, but no one commented or seemed at all surprised by the lyrics, "I only want to see you bathing in the purple rain." I think the melody sounded good to them and they liked the mandolin break. Now I have to expand the theory to suggest that many bluegrass singers are also not paying attention to the lyrics of the songs they're performing. This is why you sometimes hear *Hot Corn*, *Cold Corn* and *Mother's Only Sleeping* delivered with the same emotional weight.

I truly believe that some people are just hearing the nice duet singing in *Knoxville Girl*, and the lyrics, "She never spoke another word, I only beat her more, until the ground around me within her blood did flow" don't really register at all. They think of it as a fairly pleasant song. There's a girl, she's from Knoxville, I think a river is mentioned in there somewhere. It's nice.

Some of this may be due to the fact that a couple of generations of bluegrass listeners and singers now have grown up with the influence of pop music lyrics that were either not meant to be paid attention to, or were meant to be listened to under the influence of some form of hallucinogen.

It's not a recent phenomenon, either. I submit The Beatles' *I Am the Walrus* as an example,

or perhaps this verse from Cream's *SWLABR*, which, by the way, stands for "She Walks Like a Bearded Rainbow." This may sound funny to us in 2015, but in 1967, a lot of people were walking like bearded rainbows. It was a national problem. From verse 3:  
 You've got that pure feel  
 Such good responses  
 You've got that rainbow feel  
 But the rainbow has a beard

Could I sing those lyrics at a bluegrass show to the tune of *Poor Ellen Smith* and get away with it? I believe I could.

This is the reason that, unfortunately, you sometimes hear singers performing songs at private engagements that are several degrees beyond inappropriate, like the same *Knoxville Girl* at an elementary school program ("Hey, it's got 'girl' in the title. It must be good for kids!").

I've heard murder ballads, in which the fiancé—or even the bride—is brutally murdered, sung at wedding receptions. Not long ago, I heard someone sing James King's *Bed By The Window* at a man's 90th birthday celebration (that's the song about two elderly people withering away in a nursing home. One of them dies mid-way through the song).

In case you should be playing some events like these yourself, and you're used to thinking of song lyrics as a series of vowel sounds with some consonants thrown in for variety, I've created a handy list of songs to avoid at all costs for certain occasions. Feel free to print this out as needed:

**Wedding reception:** *I Know You're Married But I Love You Still*

Others to steer clear of:

- *A Face in the Crowd* (about the guy who was her old flame at the wedding, completely bummed out about the whole experience), and...

*Veil of White Lace* (the song about the guy who means to murder one bride and accidentally murders a complete stranger in a wedding dress)

- **A 21 year-old birthday celebration:** *He Died a Rounder at 21* The fact that the word "died" is right in the title should deter most people, but still others might just see "21" and think it's a good idea.
- **A Mothers Against Drunk Driving fundraiser:** *Mountain Dew*
- **A law firm Christmas party:** *Philadelphia Lawyer* (The lawyer is murdered in the end)
- **An engagement party:** *You're Not a Drop in the Bucket* This is the Flatt and Scruggs song celebrating multiple partners:  
"I must admit I like the gals, they're always on my mind  
But just remember babe I'm not the one woman kind"
- **A prison concert:** *99 Years* (either one) Some prison songs are okay, but avoid the hopeless kind.
- **Women Against Violence fundraiser:** *Down in the Willow Garden* No, this is not a song about nature and gardening. There are plenty of other songs to avoid at this kind of gig, but this one manages to combine poisoning, stabbing, *and* throwing in the river: "I drew a sabre through her, it was a bloody knife . . ." Need I say more?
- **National Cotton Council annual convention:** *Cotton Mill Man* "Lord don't let my son grow up to be a sweaty cotton mill man"
- **Peabody Energy executives' retreat:** *Paradise* There are lots of others to steer clear of here, like *Dark as a Dungeon* and *Black Lung*, but *Paradise* is the John Prine song that actually mentions Peabody by name.
- **A vegan convention:** *Feast Here Tonight*, or *Ground Hog*

Of course, you can always throw one of these in just to see if your audience is really listening, but then you might catch the exact moment when the person who hired you is actually paying attention. That won't end well.



**DUES INFORMATION AND MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_State\_\_\_\_\_Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_Email Address\_\_\_\_\_

IdaGrass, the ISBA newsletter, is offered either in email or printed letter format. Using email saves the Association the cost of postage and printing. We want you to receive the newsletter in whichever format you prefer. To offset production and mailing costs, membership dues for those electing USPS hard copy of the newsletter are \$20.00. For those members choosing email delivery, annual dues are \$15.00 for an individual or family.

I would like to receive the newsletter:       Email                       US Postal Service

I am joining as:                                       New Member               Renewal

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Yearly membership runs April-April.

Please mail to:              **Idaho Sawtooth Bluegrass Association**  
   **c/o Trudee Strickland**  
   **5714 Centerbrook Dr.**  
   **Boise, ID 83705**

**Have ideas, comments, questions, or concerns?  
Want to get involved? Here's your Board of Directors:**

**Northern Zone**

Randy Berg, Orofino  
[rlberg@live.com](mailto:rlberg@live.com)

**Southern Zone**

John Boyer, Twin Falls  
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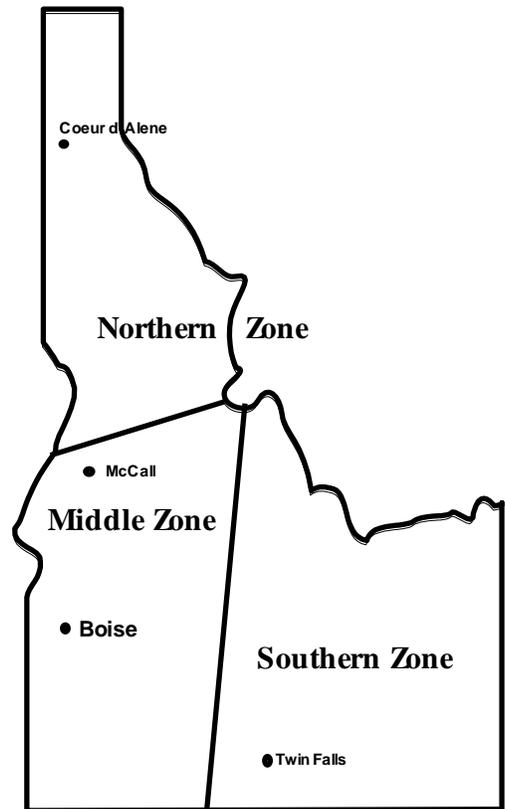
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