

Bryan Sutton was named Guitarist of the Year at the **International Bluegrass Music Awards** ceremony held October 2 in Louisville, Kentucky (www.ibma.org). Other winners included the **Del McCoury Band** (Entertainer of the Year), **Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder** (Instrumental Group), **Kenny and Amanda Smith** (Emerging Artists), and **J.D. Crowe** (Hall of Honor inductee). *Alison Krauss and Union Station Live* and *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*, Vol. III received nods for Album of the Year and Recorded Event of the Year, respectively.

Picking their way to the top of the heap at the 2003 **Walnut Valley Festival** in Winfield, Kansas, Jeff Troxel of Cody, Wyoming, and Bob Evans of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, garnered top flatpicking and fingerpicking honors, respectively.

NEW RELEASES

Visionary California guitar maker Steve Klein is celebrated in Paul Schmidt's new book, **Art That Sings: The Life and Times of Luthier Steve Klein** (Doctorow Communications, [973] 779-1600, jdoctorow@aol.com). Illustrated with photos from Klein's life as well as his famous guitars (Big Thunder, Moon Guitar, Electric Harp Guitar) and clients (Stephen Stills, Joni Mitchell, Michael Hedges, David Lindley), the book traces Klein's career from the influence of Dr. Michael Kasha through the hiring of primary builder Steve Kauffman and the advent of the KisoKlein line of guitars.

Earthjustice's **Campaign for the Universal Right to Clean Air and Water** has gotten a boost of star power from **Norah Jones, Bob Dylan, Bonnie Raitt, and Willie Nelson**, who have contributed songs to the compilation CD *Where We Live: Stand for What You Stand On* (Higher Octave, www.higheroctave.com).

CYBER NOTES

Guitarist **Jorma Kaukonen** has launched Break Down Way (www.breakdownway.com), an interactive

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What They Play

Libby Kirkpatrick owns two acoustic guitars—a 1999 Shanti D-35 built by northern California luthier Michael Hornick ([209] 795-5299) and awarded to Kirkpatrick as her first-place prize at the Telluride Troubadour songwriting and performance competition and a 1981 Alvarez Yairi DY53 that she bought used in 1992. “I only take one with me on the road,” she says. “I leave the other at home and miss it horribly. Right now I’m missing the Alvarez, but I figure the Shanti is the baby and deserves a little more mothering before I put it in the closet.” On both she uses medium-gauge phosphor-bronze John Pearse strings which she plucks with her fingernails and a variety of medium-gauge flatpicks. She’s fitted the Shanti with a B-Band (www.b-band.com) under-saddle pickup and internal microphone, and she runs the two signals into two direct boxes with a stereo Y cable.

at age three) through boarding school in Massachusetts, art college in upstate New York, travels through Asia and Europe, and massage therapy school in Boulder, Colorado.

“When I was in art school,” Kirkpatrick explains, “I was making these pieces that weren’t successful because they weren’t translating into other people’s experiences. Once I had rebelled against my upbringing in a background where at the end of the day you still needed to try to get more money so you could be part of the cricket club and the social scene, I was getting into an awareness of the wonder of life, of how we’re floating on this big chunk of rock in the middle of this vast dark ocean that apparently doesn’t end. Acknowledging that helps put things that are less important in their place. But I was frustrated because I felt like that topic was unspoken in my work.”

That started to change when Kirkpatrick transformed herself into a professional musician in Boulder in the mid-1990s. Having fallen in with the musical denizens of the Double Dig Farm, including such jam band circuit regulars as String Cheese Incident, the Motet, Tony Furtado, and itinerant singer-songwriters Dan

Bern and Chris Chandler, and holding the memory of the “totally personable and interactive” concert Ani DiFranco had given at her college (“I was most inspired by the foundation she laid for a woman to go out there and kick some butt”), Kirkpatrick made what she considers the logical leap from bodywork to singing onstage. “The thread between music and massage therapy is the idea of communing deeply,” she explains. “It feels like an opportunity for healing.”

Kirkpatrick’s wholehearted plunge into writing and performing has reaped a host of rewards: she won the 1999 Telluride Troubadour songwriting and performance competition, garnered honorable mention in both the 2002 John Lennon Songwriting Competition and the 2003 *Billboard* Songwriting Contest, and took first place in the 2003 LadySixString Songwriting Contest. But honors rank low on Kirkpatrick’s list of priorities. “What’s important to me is the interaction with the audience,” she maintains. “When I have the attention of somebody, that’s when the best in me comes out.”

—Derk Richardson

Going for the Song

While the jam band scene is not especially known for acoustic-based music, Nederland, Colorado’s Yonder Mountain String Band has garnered a dedicated audience through its speedy picking and mix of free-form improvisation, quirky original tunes, and bluegrass versions of classic rock songs. “We have short attention spans,” says Yonder Mountain guitarist Adam Aijala. “Keeping things spontaneous is the solution to that. It keeps us interested, and I think it might be the main reason our fans come out to see us.” But when the quartet set out to record its third studio album, it radically narrowed the wide-ranging focus it shares with such Colorado-based peers as String Cheese Incident and Leftover Salmon. *Old Hands* (Frog Pad, www.frogpadrecords.com) features 13 tightly executed songs, all written by longtime Yonder Mountain pal Benny “Burle” Galloway—

quite a departure for a band that cites influences as diverse as Bill Monroe and Metallica and has been known to play a bluegrass version of Ozzy Osbourne’s “Crazy Train.”

Yonder Mountain (Aijala, mandolin player Jeff Austin, banjo player Dave Johnston, and bassist Ben Kaufmann) befriended the California-born, Louisiana-bred Galloway at a parking lot picking session. “Those were the lean days when Dave and I collectively weighed about 200 pounds,” recalls Austin. “Burle would have elk steaks on the grill and man, he’d feed us. The first time I ate red meat in ten years was at Burle’s house. He had shot it and cleaned it, and right after that I fell off the wagon.”

“When we met him, he came across as a jack-of-all-trades mountain man,” confirms Aijala, “but you have no idea how deep a guy he can be. We were playing all these tunes and

online guitar school. The pay-as-you-go website's features include user-controlled video angles and email contact with the instructors.

There may be no free lunch but there's **free sheet music** at www.tuscanyguitar.com/tuscany/lagnappe.htm, where you can download PDF files of classical works by Puccini, Castellacci, Visotsky, and others, plus carols for the holiday season.

IN MEMORY

Famed for his work in Johnny Burnette's seminal Rock 'n' Roll Trio, influential rockabilly guitarist **Paul Burlison** died at home in Horn Lake, Tennessee, on September 27, after a long struggle with cancer. He was 74. His pioneering fuzz guitar sound (the result of a loose tube in his amp) and riffs on such classics as "Tear It Up," "Honey Hush," and "Train Kept A-Rollin'" were later echoed in the blues-rock of the Yardbirds, Led Zeppelin, and Aerosmith as well as the revivalist rockabilly of the Stray Cats and others. Emerging from retirement, Burlison recorded a 1997 solo album backed by members of Los Lobos and the Band.

Rockabilly pioneer **Ronnie Dawson** died at his Dallas, Texas, home on September 30 at age 64. Although he had cast himself as an R&B singer ("Snake Monroe"), a western swing performer (with the Light Crust Doughboys), and a folk artist (with the Levee Singers), Dawson was best known for his hell-bent guitar-driven rave-ups on such songs as "Action Packed" and "Rockin' Bone." He enjoyed a comeback with new recordings in the 1990s before being struck with throat cancer.

Honky-tonk legend **Floyd Tillman** succumbed to leukemia on August 22 at age 88. Best known for composing "It Makes No Difference Now" (a hit for Bing Crosby in 1939) and scoring his own chart toppers with "They Took the Stars out of Heaven" and "Slipping Around" in the '40s, Tillman was also heralded as one of country music's first great electric guitarists. He recently recorded *The Influence*, his first album in two decades, featuring duets with Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, George Jones, and Dolly Parton.

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Yonder Mountain String Band playing to the crowd at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, 2003.

it came up that he wrote them all. I like how he says a lot with few words. There is a simplicity to both his lyrics and his playing." Of Galloway's "The Pride O' Alabama," for instance ("I met her on a lonesome midnight train / Rollin' slowly out o' Union Station / She was staring out the window / At the rain"), Aijala says, "He plays it differently than I do—I can't play guitar like him at all—but just playing with him has influenced my approach."

Choosing material from Galloway's vast repertoire proved difficult. Before heading into the studio with producer Sally Van Meter, Yonder Mountain had to winnow the list down from 50 songs. During the recording, the band had some stellar assistance from Darol Anger (fiddle), Tim O'Brien (fiddle and harmony vocals), Jerry Douglas (Dobro), and Dirk Powell (accordion), as well as Van Meter (Weissenborn and resonator guitars and vocals). Asked how the band got some of the top players in bluegrass involved in the album, Austin jokes, "We drugged them. No, they all happen to be friends of ours. Darol is the unspoken fifth member of the band. He is the ultimate mentor. The fact that we are also close to Sally and Burle (who added guitar and vocals on several tunes) and James Tuttle, who engineered it, made the project about the relation-

ships we have between the four of us and with close friends. It was personal."

Many jam acts have trouble transferring their live energy into the studio, but *Old Hands*—recorded in only eight days, with almost all the solos recorded live in single takes—has a sound reminiscent of their live shows. "I didn't do one guitar overdub," says Aijala. "I might have fixed one or two vocal things, and Dave sang later, too, since he plays banjo, and playing 16th notes on the banjo while singing eighth notes can be difficult."

Both the band and guest artists were excited by the performances in the studio, and Yonder believes that fans of its live improvisation will enjoy the record as a result. "Everyone who played on it loves it, and that means a lot," Aijala explains. "When we play live we think more of the crowd, but we have the *Mountain Tracks* series of live discs for that. I know some people won't like *Old Hands* because it is not as jam oriented, but people can come to our live shows for that. We didn't set out in the beginning to play music that everyone would like."

"I hope everyone takes into consideration that we took a risk making this record," concludes Austin. "I hope they appreciate that we are a better band, even live, than before."

—Candace Horgan

What They Play

Adam Aijala plays two Collings guitars, a 2002 D-2H and a 1998 CJ, equipped with L.R. Baggs saddle pickups and Joe Mills internal mics, which he runs into a Pendulum preamp. **Jeff Austin** plays a 1996 Flatiron Performer mandolin with an L.R. Baggs bridge pickup and a Joe Mills internal mic running through a Pendulum preamp. He also uses a Shure Beta 57 or 58 microphone. "That way I can step up to the mic for solos to get a more woody tone." **Dave Johnston** plays a Bill Bannister BR3 banjo with a Gerald Jones pickup mounted on the rods and a Shure SM98 condenser mic mounted on the pot. He runs both signals into an Avalon U5 mono preamp/DI. **Ben Kaufmann** plays an Eminence upright bass made by G. Edward Lutherie with a slightly modified Dave Gage Realist pickup and a Fishman bridge transducer between the G and D strings for fingerboard noise and attack. He runs the Realist pickup into an SWR SM-500 amp, while the Fishman goes through an Avalon U5 preamp. Both signals are sent to the front of the house, where they are mixed by engineer Ben Hines, who the Yonder Mountain members say is the key to their live sound.