

## [The Bluegrass Association of Southern California](#)

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### Board of Directors

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### About BASC

*BASC is dedicated to the support and promotion of Bluegrass music at all levels.*

*We support Bluegrass at the amateur level with our monthly Jam in the Park and monthly Pizza Night where audience members are encouraged to "sit in" with the band. We provide a showcase for the best local Bluegrass bands at our monthly BASC Night at the Braemar.*

*We build interest in Bluegrass by bringing some of the best national bands to Southern California, including such artists as J.D. Crowe, Laurie Lewis, IIIrd Tyme Out, James King, and The Special Consensus.*

*Most importantly, we provide a place where people who want to get connected to Bluegrass as pickers, as listeners, as volunteers or organizers – can get together and meet people who share their love of this great music.*

## It's All About the Jamming

Sunday, February 28, 2010  
**Bluegrass Jam in the Park**  
**CTMS Center for Folk Music**  
**Encino Park**  
**16953 Ventura Bl. Encino 91316**  
**1:00 to 4:00 PM**

Well, maybe not all, but pretty darn close. That's why we sponsor the Bluegrass Jam in the Park on the fourth Sunday of every month at the [CTMS Center for Folk Music](#) in Encino Park. And that's why this third

pickers with slick licks or occasional pickers who can just strum a few chords, it usually works out pretty good. Just folks having fun making music together.

Now this goes against the grain of our consumer culture in which most music, like other commodities, is something produced by professionals for others to consume passively. While it's certainly fun to consume Bluegrass on CDs and at concerts, it's the kind of music that by its very nature invites you to participate, to go out and get a guitar and try to play and sing a few songs yourself. And while it takes practice and maybe a few lessons, you don't need to be a professional to make it sound pretty good

and have a good time doing it.

So it's not surprising that wherever there are people who love Bluegrass music, you'll find Bluegrass jamming. Bluegrass associations like [BASC](#), [SWBA](#), [SDBS](#), and [CBA](#) sponsor weekly or monthly jams, as well as occasional campouts devoted to jamming. At bluegrass festivals, like the upcoming [Temecula](#), [Parkfield](#), (continued on p.2)



In front of the CTMS Folk Music Center in Encino Park

issue of the BASC eNewsletter is devoted to that somewhat peculiar socio-musical phenomenon known as the *Bluegrass Jam*. For a variety of reasons (some of which are discussed in the article on page three), Bluegrass music is particularly suited for jams. It's a gathering where folks who may or may not have met each other before get together with acoustic instruments (guitar, banjo, mandolin, fiddle, dobro, upright bass) to pick and sing Bluegrass songs that they may or may not have picked or sung together before. Whether it's a bunch of hot

### *Don't Pick or Sing?*

*You can still get involved. Help organize a jam, put together a concert, design a flyer, bake cookies, negotiate a new venue. The only limitation is your own imagination. Send an email to the editor today and become a BASC volunteer.*

## Jams Around Town

### The Soup Jam

3240 Industry Dr,  
Signal Hill, CA  
Tuesdays 7:00 PM  
Don Rowen 562-883-573

### The New Westside Jam

Industry&Jazz Cafe  
6039 Washington Blvd  
Culver City, CA  
1st Monday 7:30 PM  
Jeff Fleck 310-390-4391

### The Altadena Jam

Coffee Gallery  
2029 N. Lake  
Altadena, CA  
2nd Sunday 12:30 PM  
Dave Naiditch  
[french10@pacbell.net](mailto:french10@pacbell.net)

### Blue Ridge Pickin' Parlor

17828 Chatsworth St  
Granada Hills, CA  
1st Saturday 7:30 PM  
(818) 282-9001

### Orange County Archery

18792 Brookhurst St.  
Fountain Valley CA  
1st & 3rd Thursday, 6 PM  
Shelah Spiegel  
(714)454-1976

### Zoey's Cafe

451 E. Main St.  
Ventura, CA  
2nd & 4th Mon., 6-10 PM  
Gene Rubin  
[generubinaudio@earthlink.net](mailto:generubinaudio@earthlink.net)

### Editor

Jeff Fleck

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*All comments,  
suggestions, and  
submissions will be gladly*

## Jamming

(continued from p. 1)

and [Huck Finn](#) festivals, you get a chance to see some of the the best professional Bluegrass bands in the country, but if you walk around the RVs and campsites most any time of the night or day, you're bound to hear people jamming.

Check out our *Jams Around Town* feature for listings of some of the informal jams going on, maybe in your neighborhood. There's even a music shop in Granada Hills, Judy Hersh's [Blue Ridge Pickin' Parlor](#), that offers classes in jamming.

Now I hear someone asking: Why would you need to go to school to learn something so natural, accessible, and easy-going as a Bluegrass jam? Well it may be natural, but it's not exactly automatic. At the very least, you have to learn how to change chords at the right time and keep up a bluegrass rhythm on the bluegrass instrument of your choice. You need to learn a bunch of Bluegrass songs. If you haven't made your way to Bill Monroe. Flatt and Scruggs, and the Stanley Brothers yet, a reasonable shortcut to their music (but not a substitute) are the CDs made in the 1980s by the [Bluegrass Album Band](#).

Ultimately, the best way to learn how to jam is to go to jams. Don't worry if most of the jammers seem to be hot pickers because hanging around them will only help you learn faster. Watch them carefully and listen hard, then go home and listen to a lot Bluegrass CDs, practice, and get ready for your first "break."

Intimidation factor? That's something we all live with and learn how to overcome in our own way. One thing that helps is knowing how the best jams operate so you won't have to worry about doing something "wrong." Check out our *Jam Tips* on page four. Hey, they're only suggestions, but they might help you out in a jam.

*We're looking for a new venue for our monthly Bluegrass Pizza Night. Call or email the editor if you have a suggestion.*

Tuesday, February 16th

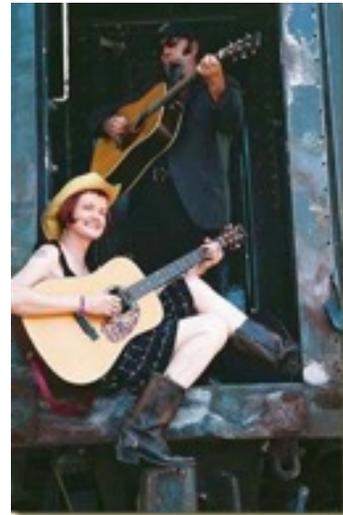
## BASC Night at the Braemar

### Braemar Country Club

4001 Reseda Bl. Tarzana 91356  
6:00 to 9:30 PM

### Fur Dixon & Steve Werner plus a showcase with Tony Griffin

Hailing from Van Nuys, California, but equally at home anywhere under the western sky, well-traveled California folk favorites Fur and Steve will take you on a rollicking musical joyride through the back roads and highways of the American West. Known for their dazzling two-part harmonies, their spectacular yodeling, awesome guitar picking, wise-cracking humor all serve to compliment their old and new-timey



Fur Dixon and Steve Werner

traveling songs. Fur Dixon is a foot-stomping, sassy cowgirl with musical influences from June and Mother Maybelle Carter, Hazel Dickens and Johnny

Cash. Fur's voice is the voice of a dear friend heard across a campfire on a starry night. Steve Werner is an unrepentant, motorcycle-riding, story-telling, hard-traveling, flat-picking, son of a gun and his original folk songs have the timeless quality of classics. of Doc Watson, Norman Blake and Merle Travis.

Together, they're a combination that can't be beat, with a show that's fun, heartfelt and drenched in the rich traditions of Bluegrass, Western and good old American folk music.

## The Festival Watch

[Old Town Temecula Bluegrass Festival](#)

March 20-21 2010

[Parkfield Bluegrass Festival](#)

May 6-9 2010

[Topanga Banjo Fiddle Contest](#)

May 16, 2010

[Huck Finn Jubilee](#)

June 18-20, 2010

## SoCal Bluegrass Resources

[Southwest Bluegrass Association](#)

[California Traditional Music Society](#)

[San Diego Bluegrass Association](#)

[California Bluegrass Association](#)

[Folkworks](#)

[Alive and Picking](#)

[Blue Ridge Pickin' Parlor](#)

[Boulevard Music](#)

[McCabe's Guitar Shop](#)

# Why Bluegrass Jams Work

By Jeff Fleck

Four or five experienced Bluegrass jammers meet for the first time at a local jam. They are not professional musicians, in fact their skill level is decidedly moderate. After a few minutes of tuning up, one of them calls out the name of a song, a key to sing it in, and counts out a tempo. Pretty soon they're picking and singing, solo instruments taking breaks at the right time, three-part harmony coming in on the chorus. When it's all over, they end the song with flourish, and *all at the same time*. How is this possible?

Part of the answer stems from the nature of the music they are playing and where that music came from. Last month in this column, I wrote that Bluegrass music was invented by Bill Monroe in 1946. While this is more or less accurate, I was hoping that someone would send me an irate email pointing out that Monroe didn't just make it up out of thin air and that there were plenty of people playing something similar to Bluegrass music before him. This, of course, is also accurate. The 2008 movie, *A Flash of Genius*, made the point that all innovators have no choice but to use the materials on hand to create their new inventions. Bill Monroe used the materials on hand.

We have enough biographical information to know that during his childhood days in Rosine, Monroe was strongly influenced by the traditional songs and ballads he heard from his family, friends, and neighbors, the fiddle tunes of his uncle Pen Vandiver, the hymns and camp meeting songs of the rural church, as well as the blues he picked up from an Afro-American guitarist, Arnold Schultz, whom he often accompanied at barn dances.

Between 1936 and 1938, the Monroe Brothers (Bill and Charlie) recorded sixty songs for RCA Victor's Bluebird label. Looking at the sources of these songs, many of which eventually became Bluegrass standards, we have to add to the list of influences minstrel songs, sentimental songs from tin pan alley, as well as songs the brothers picked up from string bands that recorded in the 1920s and 1930s. After Bill and Charlie broke up, the first performance of the Bluegrass Boys at the Grand Ole Opry in 1939 featured songs originally recorded by Jimmy Rodgers and the Carter Family.

What all this music has in common is that it is based upon *folk music*. I don't mean the commercial "folk music" that became popular with urban audiences in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By folk music I mean music written by and for just plain folks as opposed to music written by and for professional musicians. Bluegrass musicians in the early days tried (mostly not very successfully) to make a living from their music, so in that sense they were professionals. But the music itself was based upon the folk music of Southern Appalachia. It was Alan Lomax back in 1959 who called Bluegrass music "folk music in overdrive."

Now one of the outstanding features of folk music is that it's built out of simple forms. By simple, I don't mean easy or inferior. I mean simple as opposed to complex. Thus the harmonic structure sticks close to the three favored chords of conventional tonal music, the tonic, sub-dominant, and dominant (often referred to in Bluegrass jams as the I, IV, and V). The melodic phrases are generally short and conjunct (few large leaps along the diatonic scale). The form of the songs is typically strophic, often with an alternating verse and chorus that aid memorization. The language does not try to be "poetical" with fancy metaphors and complex phrases; its more like just plain talk (but poetic in its own way).

All of these factors tend to make songs written in the Bluegrass idiom quite accessible both for the enjoyment of listeners and the efforts of pickers and singers in a Bluegrass jam. Whether it's a song written by Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt, or Carter Stanley in the 1950s, or the latest Bluegrass "hit" from the Lonesome River Band or IIIrd Tyme Out, the typical Bluegrass song keeps it simple by sticking to the basic forms of folk music. This doesn't necessarily make it easy to do the music right (that's gonna take some practice), but it puts it within reach of a lot of us who will never find our way to Carnegie Hall.

*Have a comment, opinion, objection, or gripe about this article? Email me at [jeffreyfleck@mac.com](mailto:jeffreyfleck@mac.com) and I'll try to include it in next month's issue.*

## Jam Tips

- *Go with the flow. If you're a hot picker, don't use a beginner's jam to show off your chops. If you're a beginner, don't jump into the middle of a jam full of hot pickers. Stay on the edge of the circle; watch, listen, learn.*
- *Don't play so loud that you drown out the singers or the person taking a break.*
- *Don't play at all (or at least play real softly) until you're sure of the chord changes*
- *Don't play a break when someone else is taking their break. Tone down your instrument, listen, and check out what he or she has to offer.*
- *In some jams people sit in a circle and each person is given a chance to lead a song in order. In other jams, people just suggest songs when the time seems right. Follow the norm of the jam you're at.*
- *If you're leading the song, let everybody know the name and the key you're gonna do it in. Count off a tempo so everyone can start at the same time. And don't start until everyone's had a chance to tune up.*
- *At some jams, everybody takes a break in every song. That can be a problem in a large jam. In other jams, the leader of the song is expected to hand out breaks, and no one expects to get a break on every song. If you're the leader of the song, don't shirk your responsibility. If you do, chaos usually ensues.*
- *Don't take any rule too seriously. Just use common sense, be friendly, and have a good time.*

## Editor's Comment

The **Special Consensus** played to a sold-out audience at the January 28th concert that BASC sponsored at the CTMS Center for Folk Music in Encino Park. A group of superior instrumental and vocal artists anchored by great banjo player and IBMA president, Greg Cahill, the band offered up to the enthusiastic crowd a wide range of Bluegrass music, from traditional (*I'd Like to Go Back to the Old Home Town*), contemporary (their own current hit, *Signs*), to the, well, kind of out-there (a jazzy instrumental of Irving Berlin's *Blue Skys*). Look for more concerts of this caliber from BASC in the future.

Earlier in January, I attended **The Great 48-Hour Jam** in Bakersfield which is put on by the [California Bluegrass Association](#). This is the third year for this event which I believe evolved from a mid-winter Bluegrass festival with paid bands (and jamming), to just a jam. Did I say just a jam? How about 200 plus pickers given reign over a corner of the Doubletree Hotel in Bakersfield for two days and nights of literally non-stop jamming. While folks came from all over California, there were plenty of familiar faces from the Southern California Bluegrass jam scene. So it was a great opportunity to re-connect with old friends, make some new ones, and hang out with the regular gang as well.

One of the organizers of the event told me that based upon the turn-out and enthusiasm this year, they might try to bring back the paid bands next year. I told her I didn't see the point. I thought **The Great 48-Hour Jam** was great just the way it was.

**Yes, I would like to join BASC and support Bluegrass in Southern California.**

**One-Year Membership**

Individual \$20.00 - Family \$25.00 - Band \$30.00

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I would like to volunteer to \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this coupon and your check payable to  
 BASC to:  
 Ben Weinberg  
 16799 Schoenborn St  
 North Hills CA 91343



## A Year of Jams

The BASC Jam in the Park takes place on the fourth Sunday of each month. Here are the remaining dates for 2010.

- February 28th
- March 28th
- April 25th
- May 23rd
- June 27th
- July 25th
- August 22nd
- September 26th
- October 24th
- November 28th
- December 26th

**SPECIAL GUEST  
SUNDAY!  
FOR UPDATES  
huckfinn.com**

**FATHER'S DAY WEEKEND • JUNE 18, 19, 20, 2010**

# **HUCK FINN JUBILEE** *Country & Bluegrass*

CAMP in a meadow • EAT lots of vittles • SHOP a crafts village • RIDE in a hot air balloon • ENJOY 3 days of music

*Run Away with Huck Finn... Close to Home!*

Mark Twain Live

Rhonda Vincent & The Rage

Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper

Russell Moore & Illrd Tyme Out

Chris Jones & The Night Drivers

The Traveling McCourys

Nathan McEuen & Scott Gates

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Waddie Mitchell

The Hey Boyz

Sierra Hull

Julie Wingfield

SWBA Showcase Band

Riley's Mountaineers

Bon Family Cloggers

Line Dancing with KC Douglas

Chapel with Wayne Rice

Sunday Gospel Sing

The National Bluegrass Playoffs &  
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Friday Night Barn Dance with Riley's Mountaineers

Route 66 Car Show • Russell Bros. Circus

California State Arm Wrestling Championships



**SIRIUS XM RADIO'S "BLUEGRASS JUNCTION" WILL BE THERE!**

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**huckfinn.com • 1-951-780-8810**

MOJAVE NARROWS REGIONAL PARK • VICTORVILLE, CALIFORNIA



Sponsored by BMSCC – The Bluegrass Music Society of the Central Coast

# PARKFIELD Bluegrass Festival



MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND, May 6-9, 2010

Featuring  
**Don  
Rigsby**  
& Midnight Call



Also :

The Rarely Herd, The Brombies,  
Whiskey Chimp, Bean Creek,  
Dalton Mtn. Gang, Kitchen Help,  
Black Crown Stringband,  
Virtual Strangers & more !  
(to be announced—check the website!)

4 DAYS OF BLUEGRASS MUSIC IN  
CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST  
WINE COUNTRY.

12 wonderful national, regional & local  
bluegrass bands. Non-stop jamming.  
Mother's Day gift for Moms.

KIDS PROGRAMS—Kids bluegrass music camp  
with lessons & performance onstage.

Plenty of camping space –RV's & tents in  
4 different camping areas. Electric hookups by  
reservation ONLY (sign up early to get on list).

BBQ's/raised firepits OK. Dogs OK!

Many wonderful festival vendors &

The Parkfield Café for good eats & great gifts.  
NEW! RV rentals available –see the website link.

For complete information & ticket orders,  
please check out our Website:

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

TICKETS: Adults (age 20-59)

All 4 days \$90 Gate \$80 Advance

3 consecutive days \$80 Gate \$70 Advance

Single Day: Thu \$20 Fri \$30 Sat \$35 Sun \$25

Seniors (age 60+), Students w/ ID, Military,

Or BMSCC members \$5 off Adult price

Kids & Teens (up to age 19) FREE

Advance Discount only on 3 & 4-day tickets.

ADVANCE TICKET DEADLINE April 1, 2010

CAMPING FEE: (per unit: RV, camper or tent)

4-day, Thurs-Sun \$30 3 consecutive days, \$25

Single Night: \$10 Pre-Festival Night \$12

Electrical Hookup flat fee: \$45 per unit/flat fee.

Limited Qty hookups—reserve soon to get on the list!

MAIL ORDER TICKETS: Checks payable to  
BMSCC, PO Box 332, Grover Beach, CA 93483.

Please include a stamped self-address legal size envelope.

(TICKET INFORMATION SUBJECT TO CHANGE)