



Bluegrass Express

a publication of the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

Summer 2025

BILL SMITH INDUCTED INTO MAINE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME

By Stan Keach

On May 18, Bill Smith was inducted into the Maine Country Music Hall of Fame. In this writer's opinion, no one has ever deserved that honor more. Bill was one of the very finest bluegrass instrumentalists, singers, and bandleaders in Maine from his professional debut at the age of 18 until his untimely passing at the age of 44 in 2007.



Bill's first musical job was as a standup bass player, banjoist and vocalist with a country band, Mo & the Renegades. He was 17 years old; his parents had to accompany him to the VFW where they played, as Bill was underage.

Bill is known primarily from his 10-year career with the Bluegrass Supply Company (1982-1994) and the remarkable run he had with North Star, a band he founded in 1994 and led until his passing in 2007. He also had brief stints with Sam Tidwell and the Kennebec Valley Folks (1981); the Unpaid Bills, a duet act with Bluegrass Supply Company bandmate Bill Thibodeau (around 1998-99); and the Sandy River Ramblers (1992-94). In 1997, he toured Europe with Stan Tyminski & Rustic Blue.

Bill was best-known for his brilliant and innovative banjo playing. In the liner notes to North Star's first album, MCMHOF pioneer Bob French said: "I'm a long-time fan of Bill Smith. He's got one of the best right hands in the business, and there's nothing wrong with his left either." French, Fred Pike, Jimmy Cox, Al Hawkes (all MCHOF inductees) were all enthusiastic admirers of Bill's banjo playing.

Bill could actually play all of the bluegrass instruments at a top-tier professional level. North Star always featured Bill on Dobro for a few numbers, and there's little doubt that he was Maine's top Dobroist for 20 years or so. On gospel numbers, North Star often featured "Bill's stunning Scruggs-style guitar" (Dick Bowden, in the liner notes to The Old Railroad, North Star's second album). During his tenure with the Sandy River Ramblers, Bill quickly established himself as one of the finest mandolinists around. Bill played upright bass in his first professional gig as well as in the orchestra at the University of Maine at Orono, and he studied bass at the prestigious Berklee College of Music.

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Q&A WITH GRAHAM SHARP OF THE STEEP CANYON RANGERS

By Taylor Smith



Photo courtesy of the Steep Canyon Rangers.

(l. to r.) Mike Guggino, Aaron Burdett, Mike Ashworth, Nicky Sanders, Graham Sharp, Barrett Smith.

The Steep Canyon Rangers are returning to Maine on July 18 for a performance at the Opera House at Boothbay Harbor and on July 19 at the Stone Mountain Arts Center in Brownfield. We caught up with banjo player Graham Sharp to discuss the band's evolution, their favorite Maine venues, and what's next for the Grammy-winning bluegrass outfit.

TAYLOR SMITH: It's been about 20 years since we last spoke, back when the Steep Canyon Rangers were just starting out. Could you have imagined where the band would be today?

GRAHAM SHARP: No, I mean, all the things that have happened and just being able to raise and support families doing this professionally and build longevity—that part took me totally by surprise. We didn't get into this with any sort of plan besides let's just learn how to play this music and be the best band we can be. For me it's always been like the donkey chasing the carrot, you know, trying to find that inspiration. The carrot isn't the financial thing—the carrot is the music and to just keep finding it.

TAYLOR SMITH: How has the band's approach to performing evolved over the years?

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BILL SMITH INDUCTED

Continued from front page*From l to r: Bill Smith, Jeff Budge, Dave Dalton*

From 1982 until 1994, Bluegrass Supply Company was known as one of the leading progressive bluegrass bands in New England. They played most of the top regional bluegrass festivals and venues, and recorded five albums.

After a brief stint with the Sandy River Ramblers, Bill founded North Star, and the band became an instant success, playing all the top festivals and venues in New England, and many gigs throughout the eastern U.S. and eastern Canada. North Star recorded three albums — all very well-received by the bluegrass community.

Bill was an outstanding bluegrass singer; he usually held down the baritone part, but also sang lead, tenor and bass on gospel quartets. He often directed the vocal arrangements of the bands he performed with.

Bill was a wizard in the recording studio in both the analog era and the digital age. His mixing and arranging skills were major contributions to the recordings projects he took part in, and he often generously helped other musicians with their studio projects. He worked on studio albums by the Sandy River Ramblers, the Mueller Family and Anna Mae Mitchell & Rising Tide.

In 1997, Bill started producing an album for Green Mountain Bluegrass, featuring Dan Tyminski, who went on to fame with Alison Krauss and in the movie *O Brother Where Art Thou?* Dan left for Nashville to be a national bluegrass star, and the album was never released.

Bill won the banjo contest at the Ossipee Valley Music Festival in 2006; there were many top-notch banjoists from all over New England and beyond, but Bill prevailed.

In 1997, one nationally-famous bluegrass band offered Bill a full-time job with them, but he declined.

He wrote a number of instrumental tunes and song swith lyrics penned by himself and with co-writers Bill Thibodeau,

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GRAHAM SHARP Q&A

Continued from front page

GRAHAM SHARP: Twenty years ago, every time you got on stage, you just wanted to absolutely destroy it and wow the audience. I think that's still the case to some degree, but we've also matured. We can create a feeling or a space where everybody can maybe just relax into it a little bit more and experience a wider range of emotions than just the shock and awe of a super high energy bluegrass show. We've learned that not everything has to be rehearsed to a tee and airtight like we did 20 years ago. We can trust each other more and lean into a little more spontaneity.

TAYLOR SMITH: *You're on what I'd call Steep Canyon Rangers 4.0 in terms of lineup changes. How do you feel about the current configuration?*

GRAHAM SHARP: The band is more dynamic than it's ever felt. We have three lead singers, and things get passed around a lot. There's not one sort of center of gravity like when Woody was in the band—he was the anchor. Now it's freed up the stage and the whole dynamic to shift throughout the show. It creates more opportunity to figure out how you're going to support each person when they're taking the lead, and I've been asked to step up into more of a lead role myself at times. Growth is the goal.

TAYLOR SMITH: *Aaron Burdett joining the band a few years ago was a nice surprise. How did that come about?*

GRAHAM SHARP: Aaron was late to our process when we were auditioning people. One of the DJs at WNCW radio station suggested him when we asked who we were missing. We sent him a handful of our songs to sing little demos of, and he did it in like two days. We were just like, "Yeah, this is no doubt this is the guy." The fact that he brings his own songs and songwriting is huge. We're still growing into his whole collection of songs and what he brings there.

TAYLOR SMITH: *Where have been your favorite places to play in Maine?*

GRAHAM SHARP: The first thing that comes to mind is Thomas Point. We had just some great experiences there, both on stage and off and around the campground jamming. The hospitality was incredible. It was one of the really good, classic bluegrass festivals. We also love playing at Stone Mountain Arts Center and the Boothbay Opera House. Stone Mountain takes such great care of artists, and we always end up writing songs or working stuff up there. Boothbay is special to be in a room like that—it's all wood, and it's almost like you don't even need to amplify.

TAYLOR SMITH: *What's next for the Steep Canyon Rangers?*

GRAHAM SHARP: We just wrapped up recording another record. Nobody really saw it coming, but it's more bluegrass than anything we've done in a long time. We got a whole new batch of songs that sort of went that way. It's always fun to feel like you're still moving forward with the music.

The Steep Canyon Rangers will perform at the Opera House at Boothbay Harbor (www.boothbayoperahouse.com) on Friday, July 18, and Saturday, July 19, at the Stone Mountain Arts Center (www.stonemountainartscenter.com). Learn more about the band at www.steepcanyon.com.

BILL SMITH INDUCTED

Continued from page 2.

Stan Keach, and Fred Pike. Bill's compositions have been recorded by Bluegrass Supply Company, North Star, and, recently, by Rock Hearts.

Bill was a very effective teacher, and he served as the second president and a board member of the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine.

Bill Smith, a brilliant musician and performer, had a spectacular career in bluegrass, and will be long-remembered as one of the finest bluegrass musicians Maine has ever produced.



Clockwise from l to r: Lori Smith, Ted DeMille, Bobby St. Pierre, Bill Smith, Don Smith

BILL SMITH DISCOGRAPHY

BLUEGRASS SUPPLY COMPANY

Bluegrass Supply Company - Live at the Waterville Opera House, 1981

Bluegrass Supply Company, Ma's Records 001, 1983
Wake Up and Smell the Coffee, Bluegrass Supply Company(LP) - Ma's Records 002, 1986

Open For Business, Ma's Records 003, 1990

Any Old Stretch of Blacktop - Bluegrass Supply Company (LP) Ma's Records, 1993

Prime Cuts of Bluegrass, Vol. 9., 1994. (Prime Cuts of Bluegrass was a national series of CDs featuring cuts from various bluegrass bands for national distribution to DJs, programmers, and media. Bluegrass had 3 songs on this issue.)

THE UNPAID BILLS (BILL SMITH & BILL THIBODEAU)

Blue Billy — The Unpaid Bills — Ma's Records, 1992

SANDY RIVER RAMBLERS

What's New with the Sandy River Ramblers — The Sandy River Ramblers — 1992

BLISTERED FINGERS

Come On Down the Mountain — Blistered Fingers — 1997 (Dobro on 1 cut)

BOBBI LANE

Suspended — Bobbi Lane — 1998 (played on several cuts)

NORTH STAR

Indian Summer, 2000, Liner Notes by Bob French
The Old Railroad, 2002, Liner notes by Dick Bowden & Pati Crooker

Goin' Up on the Mountain, 2005

THE ADRIANS

I'll Take the Blame — The Adrians — 2007

EVERGREEN

4 — Evergreen — 2007 — (Dobro on "Try Love")

AS PRODUCER:

Green Mountain Bluegrass — Green Mountain Bluegrass — 1987 (never released because Dan Tyminski moved to Nashville)

AS ENGINEER:

(In addition to each of the albums listed above)

Welcome to Maine — The Sandy River Ramblers — Cassette — 1989

Also worked on one album by the Mueller Family, and one album by Anna Mae Mitchell & Rising Tide

Fiddle Workshop

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18, 2025
1-3PM

"Austin Scelzo hosts an in person workshop designed to explore his "Roadmap to Bluegrass and Country Fiddle Mastery" - a sequential guide to breaking down the skills necessary to thrive in settings that involve improvisation, harmony, chords, back-up, and rhythm playing on the fiddle. Austin was nominated by the International Bluegrass Music Association as "Mentor of the Year" for his work in Education" Don't miss this great opportunity!

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 - Fee for workshop \$30

Location: Center Theater, 20 E Main St, Dover-Foxcroft, Maine

*Please note that this is NOT an accessible space. Stairs only.



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CELEBRATING EDITOR STAN KEACH

For more than eight years, Stan Keach has done a remarkable job as editor of the Bluegrass Express. And I'm so glad I've had the opportunity to join him as co-editor for more than a year. Stan's bluegrass IQ is higher than mine will ever be, and he's an encyclopedia of Maine's storied bluegrass history. Stan has decided to take a well-deserved break as the newsletter's editor, and I—and the entire BMAM board—would like to thank him for all those years of writing, editing, interviewing, and sharing the bluegrass stories in Maine and beyond with the BMAM community. Fortunately, he's not bowing out completely, as he's planning to continue contributing stories to the Bluegrass Express. We're grateful for you, Stan!

-Taylor Smith

RICHIE DeLISLE WINS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT GUITAR COMPETITION

Fifteen-year-old Richie DeLisle, a freshman at Lincoln Academy in Newcastle, placed first in the 4th Annual Maine High School Student Guitar Competition, sponsored by the Maine Country Music Hall of Fame.

DeLisle, who lives in Whitefield, is a self-taught guitarist who has never taken a formal lesson. He plays a lot of classic rock on electric guitar, but learned some country songs for the contest. As the winner of the competition, he received a Martin Guitar, donated by Northern Kingdom Music in Bangor, and got to perform at the Maine Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum's 48th Annual Induction Ceremony and Show on May 18.



JEFF BUDGE WELCOMED INTO MAINE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME

By Stan Keach

On May 18, Jeff Budge shared the honors of the day with his old Bluegrass Supply Company bandmate Bill Smith (see the article on Bill on page 1) as both were inducted into the Maine Country Music Hall of Fame. Much of Jeff's reputation as a music instrumentalist, singer, booking agent, publicist, sound man, songwriter and recording engineer has been achieved through his work with country acts. For the past 30-some years, he's been performing and recording with bands such as The New Society Band, Allison Ames & the Flames, The Alison Ames Band, and Bullseye. Mainers who followed bluegrass music in the 1980s and early 1990s, though, will remember Jeff as the outstanding bass player and tenor singer with Bluegrass Supply Company.

The son of original BSC guitarist Dave Dalton, Jeff was asked by his dad to join the band when he was 22. Jeff toured with Bluegrass Supply for 10 years, playing in venues from Maine to Kentucky, Tennessee and Florida, as well as Canada. They played the world-renowned Station Inn in Nashville, and recorded four albums during Jeff's stint with them. (See the Bill Smith Discography on page 3; Jeff was part of the first four Bluegrass Supply Company albums on that list.)

Besides the four bluegrass albums, Jeff has appeared over the years on eight country albums. He's still very active on the country music circuit. His induction into the MCMHOF is certainly a well-deserved honor. His dad preceded him as an inductee. In fact, there are now seven members of Bluegrass Supply Company in the hall: Perley Curtis, Dave Dalton, Ken Brooks, Joe Kennedy, Bill Thibodeau, and now Jeff Budge and Bill Smith. I'm quite sure that's the record for the number of Maine Country Music Hall of Fame inductees from one band — a remarkable achievement, for sure!



Bluegrass Supply Company

*From l to r: Bill Thibodeau, Bill Smith,
Ken Brooks, Jeff Budge*

SOME PERSONAL REMEMBRANCES ABOUT BILL SMITH

Bill Smith was the best banjo player that Maine ever produced, and his clean and hard driving style continues today through the banjo playing of his student Jesse Langlais who played for years nationally with Town Mountain. Bill respected and learned from Bob French, Sam Tidwell, and Fred Pike and built on the legacy of the founding fathers of Maine Bluegrass. Bill had supreme respect for our music.

He always did something surprising instrumentally at every single gig – something subtle on the banjo, dobro, or on the finger-style guitar. He knew just when to put an extra note in, or leave a note out or create some kind of dynamic move that made an impact.

Bill always played to serve the song. His backup banjo was impeccable. He was a uniquely generous bandmate, always responding to the vocal line or seamlessly linking with other soloists. His work with Bobby St. Pierre was a defining element in the North Star sound.

I'm indebted to Bill and the other members of North Star for their commitment to my original material. They helped me become the songwriter I am today and I'm grateful for every moment we shared together. I was proud to be his bandmate and carry with me all that I learned from such a generous and trusted friend.

— Ted DeMille

Bill was so easy to play with. He made you feel comfortable. He's the easiest musician to play with I've ever been involved with. He knew how the music was supposed to sound and he helped us to all do our part. We all knew our parts — what we were supposed to do. And of course he could play all the instruments, so he could sit down and show us how he thought our parts should go. I learned a lot playing with him.

Besides that, the level that he played at was very high, and we would all try to rise up to that level. You'd be driven to play your best and learn what you had to learn to play at the level he was always playing at.

I got to back up Mac Wiseman about 3 times, including once with North Star. Those were good examples of how you can be driven to play at a higher level, playing with a world-famous singer like Mac Wiseman. But when it was just North Star, playing our gigs, it would be basically the same — trying to play at the highest level we could because that's what Bill was doing.

— Bobby St. Pierre

When I worked at the paper mill in Bucksport I was tasked to make a training video on the new State "Right to Know" law about all the chemicals used in the mill. We hired a video production company and when the video was ready the Director said "this is pretty dry material, it would benefit from some background music". It only took about one minute of thought to realize Billy Smith was the perfect guy to compose some tunes and jingles and record them on banjo for the video.

I asked if he was interested and he accepted right away. Of course he couldn't use any copyrighted songs because we would have had to pay for their use. I didn't even feel the necessity to attend Bill's recording session — I knew he'd be "just right." So Bill just sat in the studio and made up lines of banjo music which were sprinkled throughout the video. We had a little premier party in Bucksport and Bill attended, along with our hired narrator, good old Al Rawley who used to work for WLBZ TVtv. I think we celebrated with coffee and donuts!

Some of the most consistent feedback we got from our employees on that video was that they really liked the banjo music!

— Dick Bowden

He is missed; a great guy, and a great musician.

— Bill Thibodeau

Over a period of about 20 years, I had the (mega) good fortune to play music with Bill Smith in several configurations. They were all relatively short-lived, but they were very rich experiences for me, and I always knew I would remember them as such. He was a brilliant musician; I learned so much from him.

In 1981, Bill, then 17 or 18, was briefly a part of the Kennebec Valley Folks with Sam Tidwell, Liz and me. Even then, it was obvious that Bill was something special. Soon after that, Bill joined the Bluegrass Supply Company; Liz and I really liked Bill from the start, and we stayed in close contact over the years. I subbed for Dave Dalton at a Bluegrass Supply Company gig, which was a great experience; the two Bills (Smith and Thibodeau) and Jeff Budge were so gifted and so tight.

In between Bluegrass Supply Company and North Star, Bill spent about three years with us in the Sandy River Ramblers — first on mandolin, and then on banjo. I think that was his only ongoing job on mandolin. His mandolin playing on the album we recorded during that period *What's New with the Sandy River Ramblers* is fantastic!

At around this same time, Bill and I worked up a short-lived, but very fun, duet act, which highlighted his diverse skills on banjo, mandolin, Travis-picked guitar, and Dobro. I loved his take on "Johnny B. Good," with Chuck Berry guitar licks played almost note-for-note on banjo.

Bill was brilliant in the (analog) recording studio, too. He was our chief engineer on the *What's New* album, and had also pitched in to help us on our previous albums, just out of generosity and also because he was always eager to learn everything he could about music. Bill and I wrote five original songs together as well; naturally, he was really good at that, too.

I always felt that it was an extraordinary honor to work on musical projects with Bill, and I always loved being around the man, too. He had a deep and subtle sense of humor, and he and Lori were always great company. I miss him, and am grateful to have had the opportunity to play music and hang out with him.

— Stan Keach

I met Bill Smith shortly after meeting Dave Dalton & Bob Denoncourt at Al Saunders picking party in 1980. We got together later at Dave's house to pick and I was introduced to Bill. He was tall and thin with a full head of hair and a friendly smile. My god, could that kid pick! Bill was only 18 or 19 years old but he played better than most older, seasoned pickers. We played a lot and I was struck by their timing and great singing, especially the the-part harmonies.

We continued our picking sessions to the point of admitting we had a band. Trouble was, Bill Smith was being courted by Fred Pike and Sam Tidwell for their bands, the Kennebec Valley Boys! Lucky for us, Bill decided to go with Supply. Bob was moving out of state and Jeff Budge joined as our bass player. I got our first gig and asked Dave what we should call ourselves. Bluegrass Supply Company was his answer.

Billy, Dave and Bob taught me the basics of performing with a band. Good, solid advice on many levels of being a performing musician. Later, Bill recorded with Evergreen; he played some great dobro on Steve Chiason's song, "Try Love," on the 4/Evergreen CD. I'm lucky to have known Bill and work with him. I'm also proud of his recent inclusion into the Maine Country Music Hall of Fame.

— Joe Kennedy

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF THE BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

By Taylor Smith

On Saturday, August 16, bluegrass will be ringing out in Westbrook, Maine. Lenny's at Hawkes Plaza is hosting a full-day event to kick off celebrations for the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine's 30th anniversary. We spoke with Lenny's owner Bill Umbel, who was one of the founding members of BMAM, about the event, and about how Maine's bluegrass scene has evolved over the last three decades.

TAYLOR SMITH: *Tell us more about the event on August 16.*

BILL UMBEL: We've got a band called Pythagoras coming to play from Tennessee. [editor's note: Pythagoras guitarist Grant Dresnok hails from Cumberland, Maine.] We'll also have the Katahdin Valley Boys, and I'm planning to call Stan Keach to see if the Sandy River Ramblers want to come down and do a set. It's going to be afternoon festival with door prizes and hopefully BMAM membership specials. Weather permitting, we'll do it outside with tents and awnings, but if it rains we can set up inside.

TAYLOR SMITH: *You were one of the founding members of BMAM 30 years ago. Who else was involved in getting the organization started?*

BILL UMBEL: I founded it with Joe Kennedy and Al Hawkes—we're on the corporate papers filed in Augusta. The organization was actually founded at Al Hawkes' house, and I have a picture of that original group somewhere around here. The founding group included myself, Mama Beth Revels, Al Doane, Greg and Sandy Cormier, and Nancy Record.

TAYLOR SMITH: *Looking back 30 years, where would you say the bluegrass world is in Maine today?*

BILL UMBEL: It's been kind of ups and downs. I think you've seen a lot of festivals come and go. Thomas Point is no longer with us, and that was a stalwart for many people for many years. Greg and Sandy are still doing great work—they're still carrying the torch up there in central Maine with the Blistered Fingers festival. It's evolved and changed. People have come onto the scene, people have left the scene. You still have Ossepee Valley, but festivals like White Beach, the Record Family Festival and Hebron Pines have all gone away.

TAYLOR SMITH: *What role do you think BMAM has played in Maine's bluegrass scene?*

BILL UMBEL: I think the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine has done a lot to keep people involved. Patty Crocker was always supportive of what we were trying to do, and Greg and Sandy were always very supportive with the kids' academy because they recognize that these traditions need to be passed along.

Music is something that I think everybody should have as a piece of their life. It can either get you into trouble or get you out of trouble—it can go either way, but generally it's a good thing to have in your wheelhouse. If you can pick up a guitar or sit at a piano or pick up a fiddle and start knocking out a few tunes, your stature in front of people you don't know will change. That's the power of music—it opens doors and builds bridges.

EVENT DETAILS:
BMAM 30TH ANNIVERSARY
MINI-FESTIVAL,
 August 16 at Lenny's at Hawkes Plaza
 (1274 Bridgton Rd., Westbrook, ME).
 For more information,
 visit www.lennyspub.com.



63rd Blistered Fingers 63rd Family Bluegrass Music Festival August 21, 22, 23 & 24, 2025 Litchfield Fairgrounds - Litchfield, Maine

Rhonda Vincent & The Rage (MO) F

The Gibson Brothers (NY) S Nothin' Fancy (VA) F, S

The Kody Norris Show (TN) T Dave Adkins Band (KY) F

Katahdin Valley Boys (ME) T, S Back Woods Road (ME) S

The Seth Sawyer Band (VT) F, S Beartracks (NY) F

Robinson's Gospel (MA) Sun Blistered Fingers (ME) T

Emcee - Sandy Cormier
 Sound - Blistered Fingers

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YOU'RE UP NEXT! HOW TO LEAD A SONG IN A BLUEGRASS JAM LIKE A PRO

By Tony Watt

We've all been there: You're in a bluegrass jam and the next tune comes to you. Once you've figured out what song to call, how do you make sure it doesn't crash and burn after the first verse? As with most things in life, the answer is good communication. Share what's unusual, assume what's standard, and keep everyone in the loop so the music flows naturally.

Whether it's the arrangement, the kick-off, or the harmonies, you can spend hours leaning into the intricacies of every element of a tune you're leading. But here are a few key tips to keep in mind the next time a song comes your way at a jam:

THE BASICS

Title: Let them know what the song or tune is, and mention any alternate titles it might be known by.

Key: G, C, A, and D are easiest for most players; E, F, Bb, and B are more challenging. For beginner/intermediate jams, the easy keys will help keep everyone involved and having fun.

Time signature: Only mention if it's a waltz (3/4 time) instead of standard "boom-chick" time.

Chords: Mention any unusual chords beyond the standard 1, 4, and 5 chords (but don't bother mentioning 7th chords!). Also let people know if the verse or chorus starts on something other than the 1 chord.

STRUCTURE

Arrangement: Is it a standard verse-chorus-solo pattern? Great! Proceed with the tune. But if the arrangement varies from that standard pattern, let folks know.

Kick off: Which instrument would you like to kick off the tune? Should they play through the whole form (either the verse or the chorus) or just play a quick turnaround?

Solos: Specify whether solos go over the verse, chorus, or another section

Solo arrangement: In larger jams, mention if you're planning to double-up solos instead of one per verse/chorus.

SINGING

First singing: Only mention if the song starts with a chorus instead of a verse, and clarify the arrangement (chorus-verse-chorus or solo-after-first-chorus).

Choruses: In beginner/intermediate jams, everyone typically sings choruses; in advanced jams, specify if you want only a particular duo or trio to sing.

ENDING THE SONG

Standard tag: Singer repeats the last line or two of the chorus, followed by the short instrumental "shave and a haircut, two bits" ending (everyone can play this part).

Complex tags: Do you want it to slow down and fade out the ending? Or should the banjo burst into a final break before the tune ends? These more complex tags are best suited for an advanced jam. In beginner/intermediate jams, stick with a standard tag and end strong!



2024 IBMA Momentum Mentor of the Year award winner Tony Watt has performed throughout the United States, Europe, and on the Grand Ole Opry. His performance, jamming, and teaching videos on YouTube have over 1.5 million views, and he is an Associate Professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston.

Tony helps organize the Joe Val Bluegrass Festival in February, as well as JamVember, a weekend-long bluegrass jamming "non-festival" in November. He is the weekly host of Bluegrass Tuesdays in Cambridge, MA, and presents his own NE Flatpicking Camp in Hadley, Mass.

Tony's most recent project is www.PickersGuide.com a website that offers accurate lyrics and chords for over 1,250 bluegrass songs.



The Source for Accurate Bluegrass Lyrics, Chords and More

www.pickersguide.com

OFFICIAL NOTICE: BMAM 2025 ANNUAL ELECTIONS AND ANNUAL MEETING

ANNUAL ELECTION

The Bluegrass Music Association of Maine Annual Election to fill vacant Board seats and elect a President will be held this fall. This year, we will be using an online voting platform. Email ballots will be sent out in mid-September. For those who did not provide us with an email address, we will send a paper ballot. To save mailing costs, we would like to have email address of all the members. Please let us know your email address if you have not yet done so.

This year BMAM members will be voting to elect up to (5) Board seats and (1) President. Note that the results of the Annual Election of the newly elected President and Board Members will be announced at the Annual Meeting. The results will also be published in the 2025 Winter Newsletter, and posted on BMAM's website and Facebook page.

Want to get involved with BMAM? Please consider running for open Board seats and for BMAM President. If you're interested, please email secretary@mainebluegrass.org, or contact BMAM Chairman Hideaki Mizuno (hmizuno@mainebluegrass.org) or any BMAM officer/board member to express your interest.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Bluegrass Music Association of Maine's Annual Meeting will be held virtually this year on the Zoom platform on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at 6:00 P.M. We offer our members the opportunity to safely and easily attend the Annual Meeting by using the virtual option.

If you would like to attend the Annual Meeting via Zoom, please email secretary@mainebluegrass.org to request the login information and link at least 48 hours before the meeting to assure you receive the link in time.

THE CALIFORNIA HONEYDROPS
SIERRA HULL | SHADOWGRASS
AJ LEE AND BLUE SUMMIT
TOMMY EMMANUEL | FABIOLA MÉNDEZ
ROB ICKES & TREY HENSLEY | RAINBOW
GIRLS | SAMUEL NALANGIRA | LONE PIÑON
TWISTED PINE | THOMPSON THE FOX
THE ALUM RIDGE BOYS AND ASHLEE
FARAYI MALEK | COLD CHOCOLATE
| SPRINGTIDE | SPENCER & THE WALRUS
THE HAZEL PROJECT | BREAKING STRINGS
THE BAGBOYS | TRICKY BRITCHES & MORE!

7.24-27 | HIRAM MAINE
OSSIPPEE VALLEY
MUSIC FESTIVAL

THE CROOKED RIVER GATHERING

As spring turns to summer, many of us start to think about enjoying world class bluegrass music and coming together with the absolute best community. The Crooked River Gathering is a new bluegrass festival in 2025 featuring camping, music, and homesteading/DIY skillshares and demonstrations.

The festival is run and organized by the executive directors of the North Atlantic Arts Alliance, a non-profit organization which also runs the Ossipee Valley Music Festival and String Camp in July, as well as former organizers and community members of the Thomas Point Beach Bluegrass Festival. It's also sponsored by the Boston Bluegrass Union, the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine, and Bourgeois Guitars.

More than a festival, the Crooked River Gathering is a celebration of the community built around bluegrass and old time music, farming, homesteading, and artisan creativity. One of the organizers of the event, Molly Griffin McKenna, explains how the unique combination of offerings came together for the Gathering: "Maine in particular has a strong history of what I would call 'Do It Yourself'—we have more backyard homestead gardens than any other state, for example," she says. "We wanted to build excitement around all the things that folks can do in their own communities at home when this party is over."

The event takes place over four days at the Crooked River Woodlands, located along the border of the Ossipee Valley Fairgrounds. Camping will be offered both at Crooked River Woodlands, with woodland campsites near the river, stage, and vending areas, as well as up on the Ossipee Valley Fairgrounds where RV sites, hot showers and bathrooms are available.

The Crooked River Gathering has announced headliners Michael Cleveland & Jason Carter. A dynamic duo of Grammy winning fiddlers, with a combined 18 IBMA Fiddle Player of the Year awards between them, these two master musicians have joined forces with a new project highlighting their twin fiddle friendship. In addition to Carter & Cleveland, the event will feature Two Runner, a duo of songwriter Paige Anderson and fiddler Emilie Rose hailing from the hills of Northern California.

The homesteading and skillsharing portion of the event will feature a wide variety of workshops, from sourdough fermentation and mushroom foraging to a guitar building demonstration and lessons on repairing common household items. Additionally, there will be meetups where folks can come craft and sew together, or jam on tunes and share songs. Kids activities will be available through the afternoon.

The line-up will have a strong focus on the local and regional talents throughout New England, including the New Grown-ups, winners of the 2024 Thomas Point Beach Showcase. The New England Bluegrass Band will kick off the show Thursday and the stage will be filled with bluegrass and old-time music throughout the weekend. "New England has a really strong community in bluegrass and old time music," Molly says. "And a regionally curated lineup where many of the audience members are friends with the performers really shows the full circle of how that community comes together."

The Crooked River Gathering

Crooked River Woodlands,
351 South Hiram Rd.

Hiram, ME 04041

August 28-31, 2025

Tickets range from

\$30-\$120;

children 17 and under are free.

www.crookedriverarts.org

THE CROOKED RIVER GATHERING
 BLUEGRASS & OLD TIMEY MUSIC | CAMPING
 FARM & ARTISAN MARKET | KIDS FUN
 HOMESTEAD & SKILL SHARING DEMONSTRATIONS
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THE NEW ENGLAND BLUEGRASS BAND
HAZEL PROJECT BREAKIN' STRINGS
ERICA BROWN & THE BLUEGRASS CONNECTION
YARD SAUCE THE NEW GROWN UPS OLD ELEVEN
WHITE MOUNTAIN RAMBLERS WIDE OPEN SPACES
KATAHDIN VALLEY BOYS RUTH & BEN STRINGBAND
WITH MORE TO COME!

AUGUST 28-31ST
HIRAM, ME

THANKS, COLLEEN THERIAULT!

I'd been working for several years with Colleen Theriault on The Bluegrass Express, but we'd never met in person until she introduced herself to me at the Maine Country Music Hall of Fame "Unplugged" show this past April.

I've really appreciated the great job Colleen and Kelly Smith Printing have done on the newsletter! They've been so easy to work with, and Colleen has had some great ideas that have added a lot to the publication.

-Stan Keach



BMAM NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS

2/1/25 - 5/03/25

NEW MEMBERS

Bennet Geis
Donalds Wilbur
John Williamson
Carlton McPhee
Linda Hannigan
Everett Carson
Alvin Orne
Mark Lutian & Miranda Lemire
Dave Moretti

MEMBER RENEWALS

Emily Adams
Jake & Liam Henning
Sue Reeder
Richard & Mimi Nangle
Douglass Powell
David & Abbie Jo Estes
Shari Elder
George Spencer-Green
Richard Spofford
Paul Anderson
Guy Thivierge
Larry Corbett
Darwin Davidson
Franklin & Karen Holcomb
Kip Kilponen
George (Tom) Donovan
Chris Grittani
Patricia Laramee
Beth Revels
Dave Suito
Bobby St. Pierre
Bud Godsoe
Bev Johnson
Lonnie Blood
Dean Henderson

Bluegrass Music Association of Maine proudly presents

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Dover-Foxcroft, Maine
7 PM **October 18, 2025**

Bonus!
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AustinScelzo.com/fiddle

Tickets \$20-\$24

www.centertheatre.org 207.564.8943

CENTER THEATRE
for the Performing Arts

BMAM OFFICERS

President: Beth Revels
 brevels@mainebluegrass.org
 Vice President: Joe Kennedy
 jkennedy@mainebluegrass.org
 Secretary: Pat Laramée
 plaramée@mainebluegrass.org
 Treasurer: Nellie Kennedy
 nkennedy@mainebluegrass.org

BMAM BOARD MEMBERS

Board Chair: Hideaki Mizuno
 hmizuno@mainebluegrass.org
 Vice Chair: Taylor Smith
 tsmith@mainebluegrass.org
 Brewster Bassett
 bbassett@mainebluegrass.org
 Robert Bergesch
 rbergesch@mainebluegrass.org
 Shari Elder
 selder@mainebluegrass.org
 Stan Keach
 skeach@mainebluegrass.org
 Pat Laramée
 Plaramée@mainebluegrass.org
 Todd Ketcham
 tketcham@mainebluegrass.org
 John McKusick
 jmkusick@mainebluegrass.org
 John "Roc" Philibert
 jphilibert@mainebluegrass.org

NEWSLETTER CO-EDITORS

Stan Keach
 skeach@mainebluegrass.org
 Taylor Smith
 tsmith@mainebluegrass.org

RECORDING SECRETARY

Vacant

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Lucinda McGinn
 membership@mainebluegrass.org

BMAM WEBMASTER

Cyndi Longo
 webmaster@mainebluegrass.org

BMAM ARCHIVES

Joe Kennedy
 jkennedy@mainebluegrass.org
 Nellie Kennedy
 nkennedy@mainebluegrass.org

**The Bluegrass Music Association of Maine is...**

an organization of people, listeners and players, who enjoy Bluegrass music. It was formed in March of 1995, and incorporated on July 8, 1996 as a Maine 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. The BMAM, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, welcomes all Bluegrass friends, fans, and pickers to become active members.

Functions of the organization include the following:

- To educate the public about Bluegrass music, in order to foster an appreciation of its history and cultural heritage;
- To further the enjoyment of Bluegrass music, for ourselves and others, through teaching, sharing, and playing;
- To encourage participation in Bluegrass music events;
- To promote Bluegrass music as a family entertainment;
- To support area workshops, festivals, and concerts;
- To support area musicians and bands that play Bluegrass music;
- To inform members about Bluegrass and related events around the state;
- To cooperate with other organizations to promote Bluegrass and related music;
- To preserve the memories of those who have preceded us in this field of endeavor.

COPY DEADLINE

Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication date. Ad rates are for camera-ready copy. Ads to be made up from scratch have an additional cost and must be sent by the 5th of the month. Payments must accompany ads when they are submitted.

SEND ALL ADVERTISING TO:

Bluegrass Express
 Re: Advertising
 PO Box 9
 Dexter, Maine 04930

The Bluegrass Express is...

a quarterly publication of the Newsletter Committee.

For more information on how you can become involved, contact any committee member.

Please email any news, photos, article information, or anything you find pertaining to bluegrass in Maine to skeach@mainebluegrass.com or mail to this address:

BMAM

Re: Newsletter
 P.O. Box 9
 Dexter, Maine 04930

Advertising Rates

25 Words _____ \$5.00
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*Your source for
Bluegrass information!!!*

*Please check your membership status!
Thanks!*

JOIN THE BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

A one year membership includes:
Quarterly Newsletter
Discounts to BMAM sponsored events

DATE: _____ EVENT: _____

I am a: ___ Fan ___ Musician ___ Band Member

Primary Instrument:: _____

Band Name: _____

Volunteer Opportunities: (check if interested)

☐ S. Jam (Yarmouth) ☐ E. Jam (Brewer)

☐ Teaching ☐ Newsletter ☐ Festivals

Other things I can help with: _____



www.mainebluegrass.org
P.O. Box 9, Dexter, ME 04930

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Address _____

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