

BLUEGRASS BEACON



WINTER 2011



The Earl Brothers

They borrow from the same traditions as any other bluegrass band, but the sound that emerges is theirs alone.
Catch them at St. James Hall on March 13.

**Pacific Bluegrass
& Heritage Society**

PO Box 95087
370 East Broadway
Vancouver BC V5T 1W0
www.pacificbluegrass.ca

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:

Fran Schiffner
franschiffner@dccnet.com
604-943-0522

Vice President &

Volunteer Coordinator:

Rick Ford
fordrik@telus.net
604-873-3438

Treasurer:

Jeff McKay
jeffjo@shaw.ca

Director:

Peter Krivel-Zacks
pkz@shaw.ca
604-737-1218

Secretary & Open Stage:

Dave Zaruba
davidzaruba@hotmail.com
778-888-1530

Membership & Workshops:

Jeremy Freeman
botulizer@hotmail.com
778-858-7245

Concert Bookings,

Promotion and Publicity:

Fred Schiffner
fschiffner@dccnet.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Keeping the club vibrant in the new year

Welcome to 2011!

We are looking forward to a great year of more bluegrass, starting off with the RiverCity Music Festival in Portland Jan 7-9, then Wintergrass in Bellevue Feb. 25-27.



We are planning some great concerts for the rest of the year, starting with Vancouver's own Viper Central in January, followed by the Earl Brothers on Saturday, March 12, and Chris Jones and the Night Drivers on April 25, with more to come.

We have started holding beginner-intermediate structured jams on the main floor, which have been well received. Thank you Bob Underhill and

Garry Stevenson for your expertise in facilitating our first sessions. We plan to continue this format from 7:30 to 9 p.m. on the main floor during regular jam nights. If you would like to volunteer your services as a jam wrangler, please contact me.

Once again we are offering a bursary to a budding musician to hone his or her skills at the B.C. Bluegrass Workshop in Sorrento, held every August (see Page 8). We recommend applying early as classes tend to fill up quickly.

Your board continues to work diligently to make the PBHS a vibrant and active place. I wish to thank all of you who have volunteered your services. Of course we continue to need the help from all of you, our members.

Happy picking!

-- Fran Schiffner

The *Bluegrass Beacon* is the official newsletter of the Pacific Bluegrass and Heritage Society. PBHS meets every Monday night at 7:30 p.m. at the ANZA Club, 3 W. 8th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. (corner of 8th and Ontario). Entry fee on regular jam nights is \$4 for members and \$6 for non-members; on slow pitch jam nights it's \$6 for members and \$8 for non-members. **Contact *Beacon* editor Erik Rolfsen at erikrolfsen@gmail.com.**

Forging the familiar into something unique

THE EARL BROTHERS BRING THEIR ONE-OF-A-KIND SOUND TO ST. JAMES

A reviewer has called them "the most mysterious band in America."

The Earl Brothers, from San Francisco, will bring their sparse, atmospheric and totally distinctive style of bluegrass to St. James Hall on March 12. The four-piece is led by banjo player and vocalist Robert Earl Davis, who does most of the songwriting. Danny Morris plays guitar and sings lead. James Touzel plays bass, and fiddler Tom Lucas was brought on board for last year's album, *The Earl Brothers*. They sing songs about Satan, drink, death, trouble and tragedy, always keeping it deliberately rough around the edges.

"What is so astounding about the originality of the band," wrote online publication *The Anvil*, "is that they never sound like they're trying to be original; they are never afraid to recycle ideas, both other people's and their own."

So, in true Earl Brothers spirit, we preview the March 12 concert by recycling a few ideas that others have put forth about the band. We hope it all adds up to something original:

"Truly, theirs is Twilight Zone bluegrass, a style with one foot in the music's deepest traditions, the other in a forbidding world only the Earls know. If you're looking for something that sounds familiar but isn't quite like anything else either in roots music, The Earl Brothers await and welcome you."

**-- David McGee,
The Bluegrass Special**

"Unlike most bluegrass music, which is usually a highly concentrated dose of energy even on the slow songs, the Earl Brothers sound is slinky and trance-like. Although the banjo and mandolin are recognizably lead instruments playing in the bluegrass idiom, there's nothing on an Earl Brothers album that I would feel comfortable calling a solo."

-- The Anvil

"They make no overt displays of virtuosity; instead,



IN CONCERT

Who: The Earl Brothers

When: Sunday, March 13, 8 p.m.

Where: St. James Hall, 3214 W. 10th Ave., Vancouver

Tickets: \$20 for PBHS members, \$25 for non-members

-- Erik Rolfsen

the Earls' is a tight, ensemble sound designed to serve the mood and enhance key lyrical phrases..."

-- McGee

"If such categorization is required, think Dwight Yoakam and Hank Williams hooking up with Ralph Stanley and the Johnson Mountain Boys. Their sound is carefully unpolished, cultivating the illusion that these Earl boys haven't heard a piece of recorded music since the 1950s."

**-- John Lawless,
The Bluegrass Blog**

"Davis knows his audience expects things to be harshly lonesome. His protagonists remain rounders, ramblers, and broken-hearted fools fessin' up to messin' up with hard women and raw whiskey."

**-- Aaron Keith Harris,
The Lonesome Road Review**

"The music of the Earl Brothers is just spooky, and I dig it."

-- Stuart Mason, Fiddlefreak

FALL CONCERT REVIEWS

Looking back at a busy concert season

Highrise Lonesome, Sept. 20 at the Anza Club

The Pacific Bluegrass and Heritage Society kicked off its new season with the Highrise Lonesome CD Release concert. Sue Malcolm and her band of “junior seniors,” including Don Fraser, Jay Buckwold, Vic Smyth and Stu Macdonald, were celebrating the release of their first CD, *One Way Street*.

The tune selection ranged far and wide and included originals, Bill Monroe covers, instrumentals and blues. Highlights included an upbeat “Underhill Road” (superb tenor vocal by Sue), Don Fraser’s “The Salish Sea” and a ripping version of “Road to Columbus” to end the show.

The band dedicated the evening to two good friends who have parted too soon: Bob Tardiff and Rob Fowler. Note of interest: when special guests Linda Bull and Garry Stevenson joined Highrise Lonesome on stage, a new PBHS records was set: 38 strings on seven instruments on stage at the same time!

Kathy Kallick Band, Oct. 18 at the Anza Club

Kathy Kallick and her fine band treated a full house to a great concert. A California bluegrass legend, Kallick was a founding member of the Good Ole Persons, a leading bluegrass outfit from the 70s that



Trish Gagnon (centre) is supported by guitarist Shaun Cromwell (left) and fellow Jaybird Jim Nunally at her CD release party in October at St. James Hall. Photo: John Whitworth Photography.

at one time featured PBHS member John Reischman. Backup musicians included a father/son team Dan and Greg Booth, 14-year band member Tom Beckany on mandolin, and virtuoso fiddle player Annie Staninec. The band brought great energy and gave two long sets of music to an appreciative crowd. My favourites were “Born in a Whistle Stop Town” and “Between the Holler and the Highrise.”

Kathy sang, played rhythm guitar, and entertained the crowd with warm and relaxed between-song banter. Thanks, Kathy!

Trish Gagnon and Friends, Oct. 24, St. James Hall

West Coast bluegrass stalwart

Trish Gagnon (Tumbleweed, the Jaybirds) has recorded her first solo album titled *A Story About You and Me*. The 60 souls who braved the cold and rainy weather on this Sunday night were treated to a fine show.

Drawing heavily from tunes on the new CD, Trish displayed the outstanding voice, solid bass playing and charming smile we have all come to know and love. Expert backup was provided by Jaybird bandmates John Reischman and Jim Nunally and newcomer Shaun Cromwell. Shaun displayed a deft touch on both banjo and guitar and sang some gorgeous harmonies with Trish. A satisfying night!

-- Dave Zaruba

EVENTS CALENDAR

JANUARY
31



Viper Central return to the Anza Club for a Monday night concert, followed by a regular jam.

Monday, Jan. 3: Anza Club closed. No jam.

Friday, Jan. 7-Sunday, Jan. 9: RiverCity Music Festival, Portland, Ore.

Saturday, Jan. 8: Workshops with Foghorn Trio (fiddle, guitar and mandolin), 3-5 p.m. To register: linda_parke@hotmail.com.

Saturday, Jan. 8: Foghorn Trio concert, 8 p.m., St. James Hall

Monday, Jan. 10: Slow Pitch Jam with Sue Malcolm, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 17: Regular jam, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 24: Flatpicking workshop with Garry Stevenson, 7:30 p.m., regular jam to follow.

Monday, Jan. 31: Viper Central concert, 8 p.m., Anza Club; \$10/members, \$12/non.

FEBRUARY
4



Friday, Feb. 4: Oliver Swain's Big Machine concert, 8 p.m., St. James Hall

Monday, Feb. 7: Slow Pitch Jam with Sue Malcolm, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 14: Regular jam, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 21: Old-time jam, 7:30 p.m., regular jam to follow.

Friday, Feb. 25-Sunday, Feb. 27: Wintergrass, Bellevue, Wash.

Monday, Feb. 28: Regular jam, 7:30 p.m.

MARCH
13



Monday, March 7: Slow Pitch Jam with Sue Malcolm, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 13: Earl Brothers concert, 8 p.m., St. James Hall; \$20/members, \$25/non.

Monday, March 14: Regular jam, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, March 21: Open stage, 7:30 p.m., followed by jamming.

Monday, March 28: Regular Jam, 7:30 p.m.

BLUEGRASS BRIEFS

Learn how to jam

Sue Malcolm's Slow Pitch Jam classes start Jan. 26 at Britannia Community Centre. Beginner/intermediate players of acoustic instruments can learn how to participate in a bluegrass jam. The format is similar to the ANZA jams, with a smaller group and more individual instruction.

You must be able to play basic chords or some melody; speed not necessary. Everything is done by ear; no music reading necessary.

Learn the essentials to playing bluegrass:

- communication in a group
- beginning and ending songs
- play in any key using the Nashville Number System and the capo
- soloing, backup, and accompanying singers
- role of bluegrass instruments
- jam etiquette

Wednesdays 7 to 9 p.m., Jan. 26 to March 16. Cost: \$100 (plus \$20 for Slow Pitch Jam Volume 3 book and CD, available from instructor)

Register beginning Dec. 7 online at www.britanniacentre.org, by phone at 604-718-5800, or at Britannia Info Centre, 1661 Napier St. Credit cards accepted. For details visit: www.slowpitchjam.com.

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The Lighthouse Community Hall grounds in Qualicum Bay will host the first Lighthouse Bluegrass Festival on Canada Day weekend.

VANCOUVER ISLAND

Fledgling bluegrass society puts new festival on summer calendar

It's a long way from Qualicum Beach to Victoria.

Sure, you can manage the drive in a couple of hours, but who wants to do that for a regular jam? Certainly not Linda Thorburn, who along with some fellow 'grassers is trying to fill a gap in the B.C. bluegrass scene by forming the Mid-Island Bluegrass Society.

The group brought a few acts to the Coombs Community Hall last spring, and this Canada Day long weekend will launch B.C.'s newest festival: The Lighthouse Bluegrass Festival in Qualicum Bay. They're also working to formalize their organization by applying to the B.C. government for registered society status.

"It's really working. It's working great," says Thorburn, a long-distance Victoria Bluegrass Association member and former PBHS regular from the early days before she moved to the Island.

Thorburn attended the first-ever

Coombs Bluegrass Festival and has been involved in plenty of them since. In recent years she's noticed a much younger crowd flocking to the event, and figures those newcomers to the music need a place where they can learn more about it.

The group intends to start with a monthly meeting and jam, and is eyeing the Lighthouse Community Hall in Qualicum Bay -- on the grounds of the new

summer festival -- as the venue.

More than 100 people showed up to one of the spring shows in Coombs, which were followed by jams. Those numbers and the long stretch of highway between Duncan and Campbell River give Thorburn's group all the encouragement they need to embark on a membership drive.

After all, if you want to make music close to home, sometimes you have to teach a few people the tunes first.

-- Erik Rolfsen





Charmaine Slaven does the calling while Shout!WhiteDragon backs up at the inaugural Cultch Community Square Dance in 2009.

OLD-TIME REPORT

Cultch hosts second square dance

In September a “big time” was had at the second annual Cultch Community Square Dance at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre. The dance floor was packed with happy people of all ages dancing away to the expert calling of Seattle’s Charmaine Slaven. Backup band Shout!WhiteDragon kept the music lively and fun. Vancouver needs more of this kind of music!

On Nov. 22 the PBHS hosted Old Time Jam night at the Anza Club. Fiddles, guitars, mandolins and banjos were all put through their paces in the keys of D and A by Kori Neil, Chris Suen and friends. A nice old-time jam followed on the main floor. The next Old Time

Jam at the Anza Club is scheduled for Monday Feb. 21, 2011. See you all there for more great old-time music and jamming.

Upcoming events: The Foghorn Trio concert and workshops on Jan. 8. Please contact Linda Parke at linda_parke@hotmail.com to register for the old-time guitar, fiddle or mandolin workshops. The concert at St. James Hall that night should be awesome! Tickets available through hosts the Rogue Folk Club. PBHS members get in for member price. Good deal!

“Keep yer banjo tuned, your bow rosined and the whisky bottle empty!”

-- Enumclaw Hammer

BLUEGRASS BRIEFS

Two-day bluegrass workshop in Medicine Hat, Alta.

Two-plus fun-filled days of instruction and practice! Each class is a combination of instruction and practical application in a group and solo environment, not to mention a healthy dose of pickin’ and grinnin’. It all starts Friday, Feb. 25, 2011, in the evening with a meet-and-greet to get everyone acquainted and jamming a little. The teachers this year are Chris Quinn, who will be both the banjo and the guitar instructor, and James Whittall who will be teaching mandolin. For more information please contact Kelly McLaughlin at mcmuck@telusplanet.com, Leah Clark at leahclark52@hotmail.com or check out Thursday Night Bluegrass’s website at www.thursdaynitebluegrass.ca. Hope to see you there!

Alaska bluegrass cruise

It’s not often a bluegrass cruise hits these parts, but the folks behind the Brumley MusicFest are organizing one from Seattle to Alaska in August.

The cruise aboard the Norwegian Pearl sets sail from Seattle on Aug. 21 and stops in Juneau, Skagway, Ketchikan and Victoria before returning to the Emerald City on Aug. 28.

Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver are the featured entertainers, along with Ronnie Reno and the Reno Tradition, Little Roy and Lizzy, Christy Sutherland, High Road and more.

Prices start at \$1379 US for rooms aboard a ship that boasts a bowling alley, rock-climbing wall and casino. For info visit biscuitsandbluegrass.com.

McCoury shines in a staggering lineup

A ROAD TRIP TO SAN FRANCISCO'S HARDLY STRICTLY BLUEGRASS FEST

Hardly Strictly Bluegrass, the festival started by philanthropist Warren Hellman in 2001, has grown from two to six stages and draws close to a million people over three days.

This year things got rolling Oct. 1 in Golden Gate Park, deep in the heart of San Francisco. The lineup included bluegrass greats such as Peter Rowan and Earl Scruggs, as well as popular artists like Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Emmylou Harris, Randy Newman and Patti Smith. The list is truly staggering. To top it all off, the entire event is absolutely free.

Getting to the park can be tricky, traffic and parking challenging. Thousands of people rode bikes and it was neat to see all the creative ways they found to lock them (in some cases halfway up a tree). We got in on foot Sunday afternoon and made our way to the Banjo Stage where Doc Watson was setting up to play. David Holt backed him up on banjo and guitar. Towards the end of the set his grandson Richard Watson joined in, laying down some hot leads on guitar. Watson, whose playing is still sharp at 87, entertained the huge crowd with a lively set of flatpicking tunes, ending with Mississippi John Hurt's "Can't Be Satisfied" blues. The guy is a real historical treasure. The awe and



The crowd is several hundred thousand strong, but Del McCoury doesn't have a hair out of place at the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival in October. The annual event in Golden Gate Park is free.

respect shown him by the crowd was palpable.

The Del McCoury Band -- for me the real headliner of the festival -- followed Watson. These guys have it all: wicked instrumental breaks, five-part harmonies, a true acoustic delivery and Del's high lonesome voice. The band features a hot fiddler in Jason Carter, but even he couldn't keep up with Ronnie McCoury on mandolin. Ronnie plays fast but with feeling, and his solos drive hard. I bet Bill Monroe was smiling in his grave when Ronnie sang "Body and Soul" on Sunday.

Del's set included his hit "Vincent Black Lightning," and things wrapped up with an all-star cast

joining the band to sing Monroe's classic, "Blue Moon Of Kentucky": Steve Earle, his wife, their baby, Elvis Costello, Buddy Miller, Jimmy Dale Gilmour and others.

Then God, I mean Peter Rowan, resplendent in a white 10-gallon Stetson and blue leisure suit, sang a verse and the skies opened up around Golden Gate Park. What he did with the few words he sang was really something to witness. The song ended with Warren Hellman singing and playing a few notes on his ancient banjo. Next year he might want to sing before Rowan.

See you there.

-- Tim Bemister

If you can help, your club wants to hear from you

The board of directors needs your help! Our club now has more than 200 members we need your assistance to keep it vibrant, particularly in the following areas:

- Manning the door on Monday jam nights. (Irene is away for an indeterminate time).
- Helping with the sale of PBHS

attire at concerts and open stages. Controlling orders and tracking inventory.

- Jam “wrangling” main floor jams (7:30-9 p.m.).
- Arranging chairs, etc. for event evenings and cleaning up.
- Assisting with setup and take-down of sound equipment on

concert nights.

- Distribution of flyers and posters for concerts.
- Phone tree for special events.
- Other duties as needed.

If you are available to assist, please contact Fran at 604-943-0522 or email franschiffner@dccnet.com.

Join the PBHS Facebook group to stay in touch

We sat down for an online Q&A with Jeremy Freeman, administrator of the PBHS Bluegrass Facebook group.

What motivated you to set up a Facebook group for PBHS?

Well actually I didn't set it up, it was already there. I believe it was Steve Quattrocchi that set it up. I noticed that nothing had been posted on the group for several months and decided to ask Steve if I could take it over. I think its a very useful tool for getting information such as concerts and other events to the members of our club who use Facebook. My motivation was seeing other groups using it to their advantage with success, I figured it was time the PBHS used it too.

How active has it been since you resurrected it, and where would you like to see it get to?

There were approximately 50 members on there when I got it going again, within a few days we hit 100. I'd like to see it hit 200 soon.



Jeremy Freeman

Its a great way for PBHS members (former and current) to get in touch with each other and keep up to date with the events of the club.

If I'm not on Facebook, how hard is it to get started and how do I find the group?

Facebook is incredibly easy to get started on, just a few basic facts and it practically does the rest for you. The group is easy to find, just search for PBHS Bluegrass and it should be right there.

-- Erik Rolfsen

WHERE TO LISTEN

In The Pines

COOP Radio CFRO 102.7 Vancouver, 102.9 Cable; StarChoice Satellite Ch. 845, 2:30-4 p.m. Sundays.

Pacific Pickin'

With Arthur and Andrea Berman: CITR 101.9FM Vancouver, 6:30-8 a.m. Tuesdays or streamed at: www.citr.ca.

Uptown Bluegrass

With George McKnight: www.uptownbluegrass.com (archived version available 24/7); CJSF Radio (SFU Radio Station in Burnaby) at 90.1 FM, Tuesday mornings from 8-10 a.m.; CIGV FM Penticton, 6:30-7:30 Saturdays; CJFW FM Terrace, 9-10 p.m. Wednesdays.

Fire On The Mountain

Hosted by Craig Korth: www.ckua.ord, 5-6 p.m. Thursdays.

Online

Go to itunes.com/bluegrass or in www.live365.com, search one of the many bluegrass channels, especially www.bluegrass-country.org.

GRASSIFIEDS

BANDS FOR HIRE

Five on a String

604-931-3765
five_on_a_string@hotmail.com
http://home.lynx/net/foas/

Highrise Lonesome

Sue Malcolm: 604-215-2760
sue@buddy-system.org
www.suemalcolm.com

John Reischman & the Jaybirds

John: 604-251-7655
johnreischman@shaw.ca
www.thejaybirds.com

Mountain Ridge

Fred Schiffner
fschiffner@dccnet.com

Plough

Linda Bull
bull.linda@gmail.com

Redgrass

barefootsound@hotmail.com

Still Blue

Colin Goldie
coling@radiant.com

Viper Central

Mark Vaughan: 604-723-0164
vipercentral@gmail.com

Blu Hopkins and Silvercreek
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FOR SALE

Vintage **1945 Gibson Southern Jumbo** acoustic guitar for sale. Excellent condition, no cracks, great sound, great player. Asking \$7995 obo.
Contact Jobst at diane4music@shaw.ca or call 604-728-1061

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INSTRUCTION

Beginner guitar, vocal coaching, jamming with Sue Malcolm, an experienced teacher, performer, recording artist and senior instructor at BC Bluegrass Workshops (Sorrento). Individual or small group lessons. 604-215-2760
sue@buddy-system.org
www.suemalcolm.com

Mandolin: All levels
John Reischman at 604-251-7655
johnreischman@shaw.ca

Mandolin, guitar and clawhammer/old-time banjo lessons

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Steve Quattrocchi at: 604-523-1739
arbutusq@yahoo.ca

Mandolin, accordion and theory lessons

Diane Bode at: 604-684-9479
diane4music@shaw.ca

Mandolin lessons (beg/int)

Learn tunes and techniques to get the most out of your bluegrass experience!
Mark at: 604-723-0164
old.jawbone@gmail.com

Banjo lessons

(beginner to advanced)
5-string bluegrass banjo, individual private lessons given at my studio in Surrey.
Sheldon Friesen at 778-868-6837
http://banjoredhead.blogspot.com
shfriesen@gmail.com

Guitar, mandolin, dobro and bass lessons (beg)

Taught at home
Bob Underhill at: 604-872-2452

Guitar, singing and songwriting lessons for children or adults. Bluegrass, old-time, folk, country, blues or rock and roll! Contact new Vancouver resident Lee Watson: 604-943-4708, www.leewatsonmusic.com, leegregorywatson@gmail.com

INSTRUMENT REPAIRS AND BUILDING

Instrument setup and repair of your banjo, bass, mandolin or guitar by the only authorized Santa Cruz Guitar Company warranty repairman in the area. Contact Jake De Villiers at www.crescentbeachguitar.com or call 604-535-7271

For up to date acoustic music information in the Lower Mainland, ask Garry Stevenson to put you on his email list. Contact Garry at: garrystevenson@shaw.ca

If you are a PBHS member in good standing, you can list for free in the Grassifieds. Email submissions to erolfsen@theprovince.com.

REGISTER AS A PBHS MEMBER

Mail this form to: P.O. Box 95087, 370 E. Broadway, Vancouver BC V5T 1W0

Name: _____ Email Address: _____
Address: _____ Phone No: _____

Street Name + No.

City

Province Postal Code

Membership (Please Check One):

One year Single membership (New) _____ \$20 or Renewal of membership _____ \$20

One year Family membership (New) _____ \$30 or Renewal of membership _____ \$30

____ Please mail me a hard copy of the monthly newsletter. (The Beacon)

____ Please sign me up for email service. (You will get the latest updates throughout the month, with reminders last minute changes, notice of PHBS members' gigs, and an email of the monthly newsletter,

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