



30th Joe Val Bluegrass Festival February 13 - 15, 2015

Sheraton Framingham, Framingham, MA
Presented by the Boston Bluegrass Union

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BOSTON BLUEGRASS UNION ANNOUNCES 2015 BBU HERITAGE AWARD WINNERS

BOSTON – The Boston Bluegrass Union (BBU) is proud to announce the recipients of the 2015 BBU Heritage Awards. These awards are presented each year by the BBU to honor artists and those working behind the scenes that have made substantial contributions to furthering bluegrass music in New England and beyond. The awards will be presented during the 30th annual Joe Val Bluegrass Festival, Presidents Day Weekend, February 13-15, 2015, at the Sheraton Framingham, Framingham, MA.

The 2015 BBU Heritage Award Industry Winner is Berklee College of Music

Since the 1950's, Boston has been a northern hub for bluegrass music, a city where transplanted Southerners, as well as locals fascinated with the musical style, studied at the feet of the Lilly Brothers and Don Stover. Boston's golden age of bluegrass spawned such artists as Bill Keith, Jim Rooney, Peter Rowan, and Joe Val plus local radio shows and a host of presenters showcasing the music at area venues.

Today, the Boston area is enjoying another golden age for bluegrass and old time music nurtured by the presence of **Berklee College of Music**. The accredited four year college, has drawn new influx of young roots music musicians, and has become an epicenter for another generation of creative bluegrass artists.

Under President Roger Brown's leadership, Berklee College of Music has expanded campus-wide resources to provide all Berklee students with greater access to roots music education. With these efforts, students now have a curriculum that firmly embraces bluegrass, old time and early country music,

The bluegrass music you hear coming out of Berklee today started in 2002 when Professor David Hollender developed curriculum to include bluegrass music in Ensemble Department course offerings. It started with just one section. The success was immediate. In the summer of 2003 bluegrass was added to the Summer 5-week Program. By 2004 when Roger Brown arrived there were 3 Bluegrass Ensembles offered each semester and he specifically requested that bluegrass be included in the inaugural concerts given in his honor.

The next step occurred in 2005 when the college approved adding banjo and mandolin to the list of principal instruments that students could study. John McGann was hired to teach mandolin in the String Department, and a curriculum was developed for banjo. That same year, *The Boston Globe* ran a front-page story about bluegrass at Berklee. The following year, Mark Simos was in the Songwriting Department.

In 2009 Matt Glaser became director the newly formed American Roots Music Program. That program has put on concerts, held a symposium and hosted visiting artists representing old time, bluegrass, acoustic blues and other styles. Last year the college started offering students the chance to augment their degrees in Majors such as Performance, Songwriting, Music Business, Composition, Music Production and Engineering, Music Therapy, etc. with a "Roots Music Minor."

As the interest in roots music has grown, so has the String Department faculty, which now includes the first student to graduate as a mandolin player, Joe Walsh, along with Darol Anger - violin, Wes Corbett - banjo, Jason Anick – mandolin and violin, and Maeve Gilchrest – Celtic harp.

Berklee built its reputation on teaching jazz, and later rock, pop, R&B and other contemporary styles. The goal of bringing bluegrass players to Berklee has been to give them access to information, techniques, concepts, and approaches generally only being taught to players and composers involved with other styles of music. What has also happened though, is bluegrass and old time music have added an exciting and meaningful dimension to Berklee, and by extension the community in Boston.

The 2015 BBU Heritage Award Artist Winners are the White Brothers

With roots in New Brunswick Canada and rural Maine, the **White Brothers** were highly influential bluegrass artists during the folk music boom of the early 60's, creating a sensation among coffeehouse, festival and college audiences with their instrumental virtuosity, traditional brother vocal harmonies and rhythmic innovations.

Roland (b. 1938), Eric Jr. (1942-2012), and Clarence (1944-1973) White (originally LeBlanc) were introduced to traditional and country music by their father, spending their early years in Lewiston and then in Bath, Maine. In the early 1950's, the family relocated to Southern California. They started a family band with Roland on mandolin and guitar, Eric, Jr. on bass, along with their father and sister Joanne. The youngest, Clarence, joined in on guitar in 1954 at age 10. Eventually the three boys formed a group, and won a talent show as the Three Little Country Boys. They appeared on local television shows and even landed appearances on The Andy Griffith Show.

As the Country Boys, and then the Kentucky Colonels, they were among the best urban bluegrass group of the early 1960's. During this period, Roland was drafted into the Army. At the same time, Doc Watson made his West Coast debut at the Ash Grove, and this had a profound effect on Clarence, listening intently in the audience. Already an accomplished guitarist himself, Clarence incorporated Watson's use of

open strings and syncopation into his own rapidly developing flat-picking technique. More importantly, Clarence began thinking in terms of the guitar being a lead instrument.

In 1963, following Roland's return, the band released the landmark recording *Appalachian Swing*. By this time, the Colonels began to gather a following through their US tours, including appearances at both the UCLA and Newport Folk Festivals in 1964. However, with the burgeoning rock music scene, work for a full time bluegrass band was getting harder and harder to find. This, coupled with Clarence' interest in other forms of music, resulted in the band breaking up in November of 1965. The Kentucky Colonels' influence far exceeded the band's short tenure as an active band. Their *Appalachian Swing* album remains one of the most important albums of that era, a landmark in the history of bluegrass.

Moving from The Kentucky Colonels into a position as guitarist for Bill Monroe in the late 60's. Roland absorbed the traditional feel and repertoire from the Father of Bluegrass, and this remains a core element in his music today. Roland then went on to play mandolin with Lester Flatt as a member of the Nashville Grass.

Meanwhile, Clarence established himself as a session artist in Los Angeles studio circles and then formed what many consider to be the first country-rock group, Nashville West in 1966. The same year, he began his legendary association with the Byrds, initially as a session musician before joining full time, rejuvenating the group as a live performing band in the process.

A short-lived reunion of the White Brothers was brought to an untimely end due to Clarence White's tragic death in November of 1973. Of this brief reunion came two concert recordings that capture the excitement of the White Brothers' sound fully matured, after Clarence's excursions in country rock with the Byrds and Roland's studies with the Monroe and Flatt.

After Clarence's death Roland continued his own musical explorations, first with Country Gazette, then with Nashville Bluegrass Band, and finally forming his own band in 2000. He continues to perform, and the BBU is honored that he and his band will be with us for this year's Joe Val Bluegrass Festival.

The Boston Bluegrass Union is a 501(c)3 non-profit, all volunteer organization, dedicated to preserving and promoting this original American music genre. Celebrating our 39th season, the BBU is the premier source for events, education, and information on bluegrass music in the Northeast.

Additional Media Information: Contact Gerry Katz at gkatz@bbu.org or (617) 515-8383 for additional information, images, or interview requests. Visit www.bbu.org for details the BBU and the 30th Joe Val Bluegrass Festival, including Main Stage and Workshop schedules, artist biographies, and more.