



THE SMYTH COUNTY JAM—IT'S GROWING!

The Smyth County Jam has really grown over the years and is almost solely responsible for exposing our area to the many great talents and people who have adorned our stages and audiences. It's like everywhere we've stepped, a new jam has sprung up. This is a testament to our success. As the old saying goes; "imitation is the most sincere form of flattery".

The level of talent that now visits the jam on a regular basis is mind boggling! We never know from week-to-week who will show up. If

you attend the jam on a weekly basis, you know what I'm talking about.

To find more information on the jam, you can visit www.scjam.com or join the Smyth County Jam Group on Facebook. Facebook has quickly become our local hangout.

If you don't already have a facebook account, they are free and easy to setup. Just got to www.facebook.com and create an account. Be sure to add me as a friend and to join the Smyth County Jam Group.

We are excited to announce that as of August 29, we will be an affiliate of the Crooked Road. See excerpts of the press release below.

We will soon be celebrating our 6th year at the Chilhowie Lions Club Building, thus making it 9 years that we've had a weekly jam. The Lions Club has really bent over backwards to help us grow our jam, but, we are rapidly outgrowing the building.

By Larry Hogston

CROOKED ROAD PRESS RELEASE

"The Smyth County Jam is one of the most popular and well-run jam sessions in the entire 19 county Crooked Road region and features a great mix of pickers playing a wonderful variety - bluegrass, old-time, guitar music, you name it." notes Jack Hinshelwood, Executive Director of The Crooked Road. "The Smyth County Jam has something for everyone – a stage show in the main room but lots of back rooms filled with pickers going at it full bore. We

are proud to recognize this event as a Crooked Road Affiliated Venue. The Smyth County Jam does a great job of presenting very authentic heritage music which is what The Crooked Road is all about. If someone comes to visit the Smyth County Jam we know they are going to get a quality experience and a wonderful sense of community spirit which is very important to us."

The Smyth County Jam is in

its 5th year at the current location but its history is much deeper than that. The last Monday of the month is cake night, and the locals bring dozens of mouthwatering treats for all to share. Admission is free but be sure and do your part at the donation box to help support this real gem among jam sessions (and their worthy sponsor, the Lions Club). The Jam Session starts at 6:00 pm every Monday.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ The Annual Smyth County Jam Festival will not be held Labor Day Weekend. See our website for more information.
- ◆ We will have the jam Labor Day, so be sure to join us at the Lions Club Building.
- ◆ If you have any ideas or suggestions that would help us improve the jam, please let us know.

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Our goal is to provide a musical event that will showcase the various musicians and singers in the surrounding area while teaching the aspects of musicianship as well as encouraging the development of new talents while at the same time providing entertainment as a service to the community and the county.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE SMYTH COUNTY JAM?

The Smyth County Jam was created to honor the many great musicians and their friends from the surrounding areas and to give them a place to play and hone their skills.

Thus, the jam was built by musicians for musicians; the open-mic or stage show was an accident. It came about solely as a way to handle the ever-increasing fans and to help support the jam.

We believe that a jam should be judged on the quality of the music, not on the size of the crowd. Please be aware, that the Smyth County Jam is intended to be a music event, not a social gathering.

One of the hardest things associated with a music event of this nature is to try to keep the politics and favoritism out of the equation. We strive to treat everyone the same, and

to be fair to both the “old-timers” as well as the newcomers. It takes a special kind of person to relinquish their spot on stage to newcomers to the jam, but most of our “old-timers” do exactly that. We hear this a lot; “if you need us, we will play”. This is a testament to the great musicians we have at the Smyth County Jam. This is also a balancing act for Deane and Sandy to make sure we have a great show every week. Please try to work with them and be understanding of what they are trying to accomplish.

Respect for the musician is of utmost importance. When anyone is on the stage or jamming in the backrooms, you (the listener), needs to give them your full attention. It's so easy to get in a habit of carrying on a conversation while the music is going on, we've

all done it, but it is very disrespectful to the performers and a big distraction to others who are trying to enjoy the music. The most complaints we get are centered around “to much talking”. Let's all try to work together to make the Smyth County Jam an enjoyable “music” event for everyone.

There is a lot of very hard work by a lot of people going on in the background to make our jam the success that it is, so please help us by making all the musician and singers feel welcome.

There is no set format for a jam of this nature, so we are learning as we go.

If you have any ideas or suggestions that would help us improve the Smyth County Jam, please let us know.

“We believe that a jam should be judged on the quality of the music, not on the size of the crowd.”

The Smyth County Jam is a smoke and alcohol free site.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

The Jam is a smoke and alcohol free site. Please be conscious to help keep the building and grounds clean and easy to reset at the end of the evening. Volunteers help make this jam possible. You can help make their job easier by placing trash in the garbage and restoring chairs and tables that had been set up. If you bring children, please be aware of their activities and help them get settled in to enjoy the evening.

Some food and beverages are available with proceeds going to help keep the jam alive.

If you are a listener, you can help musicians by keeping conversation at a quiet level. Conversations near players can be a distraction. Even sounds that are loud at a distance can be problematic. Players need to hear subtle harmonies, breaks and changes to be able to follow along.

If you are a player who loves good acoustic music and you want to be a part of the jam, you will be more than welcome. Music at the jam is rooted in the bluegrass and old time genre. Bluegrass

instrumentation is made up of guitar, banjo, fiddle, mandolin, bass and dobro. If you play a different instrument, check with the folks you want to sit in with to see if it's ok.

When you are in the jamming areas or open-mic area, keep all conversations to a minimum and as quietly as possible to keep from disturbing the players on or off the stage. Also, don't be playing another song in the background while someone is performing. Tune quietly.

T.E.A.M.-TOGETHER, EACH ACHIEVES MORE

I would like to take this time to thank just a few of the people who make our weekly jam possible.

First of all, I would like to thank Ersel & Deane Fletcher and my wife Sandy. Ersel does most of the MC work, and performs on a regular basis. Deane keeps the jam organized by lining up the open-mic portion of the show. She also plays bass when she gets time. Sandy takes the photos (nearly 28,000 thus far) and helps Deane with the organizing. The sad part is, she rarely gets her photo taken.

Second, I'd like to thank all of

the following: Jay and Hilda Schwartz, our links to the Lions Club. They keep us fed and keep things going smoothly with the Lions Club. Ron Brickey for his great videos. Anne Gilbert for all her hard work in interviewing the musicians and visitors and compiling their bios. Herman Barrett who helps out in too many ways to count. Pauline & Emery Horn who have helped out from day one. Space does not permit listing all the many, many others. This jam belongs to all of us, so I thank everyone who has ever been a part of this ongoing saga. This includes all the great cooks with their mouth

-watering delights on cake night.

Third, I would like to thank all the musicians and the audience. You have put up with a lot and you have hung in there.

Fourth, I would like to thank my mom for encouraging me and believing in me all my life.

Fifth, I would like to again thank my wife, Sandy. She has supported me and worked very hard since the very first jam.

Last but not most important, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for without him all is lost.

Larry Hogston

“I would like to thank all the musicians and the audience. You have put up with a lot and you have hung in there.”

JAMMING ETIQUETTE

Here's a few thing to consider if you are at a jam.....

Good music is often like good conversation. This means one person speaks at a time while the other participants listen. Give room for the soloist to speak their thoughts. Also, pay attention to the soloist and if you can't hear what they are doing, turn down or play at a softer level. Many times I have heard the backup players at local jams being completely unaware of the fact that they are drowning out the lead instrument.

Here's a simple rule to follow... if you can't hear the soloist, you are too loud. Many musicians think this is the sound man's job, to adjust the player's volume levels. Wrong!! The sound man's job is simply to reproduce what is

happening on stage as honestly as he can. In a perfect world, it is the musicians on stage who set the dynamic level.

If you walk into a jam session and there is magic happening, be sensitive to whether or not you can add anything to this magic. If the playing is way above your level, respect that and learn from it. Likewise, always try to play material aimed at the group of people you are jamming with so you don't alienate anyone with obscure or hard to play material. This is like trying to start a conversation at a party on brain surgery. You are not there to lecture ... you are there to jam and share a musical experience with those around you.

Tune, Tune, Tune your instrument....

Be aware who is leading the song. If it's you, be sure to call solos and include everyone who is jamming

Don't be a jam hog. Share the circle and let everyone have a chance at leading.

Never, never enter a jam uninvited or in the middle of a song. It's just like butting in on a conversation.

In closing, might I suggest that if you are at a jam and someone is being rude or bullying those around them, gently tell them. We will all benefit from teaching each other how to participate.

*by Doug Cox
Cosmic Debris Musicians Magazine
Feb '98*

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PICKERS CORNER—BASIC RULES

1. Keep in tune. If you don't have a tuner ask to borrow one.
2. Typically the person who picks the song will lead the song. They will signal who takes a break through eye contact or verbally. Otherwise try and take a break where you can but allow others to share in the breaks too.
3. Try not to drown out the lead singer. Holding back on the volume helps the singer be heard without them having to strain their voice.
4. Try to work with the other instruments so that everyone is heard and that your playing compliments theirs.
5. If you are unsure of a song, step back and play along quietly. This way you can learn the song without distracting from it by playing wrong chords etc. Some jams are more advanced than others. It's ok to challenge your abilities but be mindful of how you fit into the jam.
6. Watch your timing. Listen closely for the bass and guitar for your timing. If you can't hear them you're playing too loud!
7. If there is already someone in a jam that is playing the same instrument as yourself, try playing along at a distance quietly. You could also approach the other player and ask to step in later.
8. If you know the lyrics of a song then try singing harmony. If you're unsure of your voice start by singing quietly until your comfortable with singing along louder. Harmony vocals are very important to Bluegrass music!
9. The jams are typically not a sing-a-long, so if you don't know a part, make sure it is ok with the lead singer before you add another lead part to his/hers.
10. If you know a song that you think others would enjoy, or be able to play along with, then please share it. Just be sure to let others pick songs as well.
11. Don't hog the jam. It's ok to do a couple of songs and then step back and let someone else have their turn. Be fair and give everybody a chance. Make sure you are not jumping in front of somebody.
12. Use the other rooms to jam and teach each other licks, etc. This is actually the most important part of the jam.
13. Understand that these rules/suggestions are not set in concrete, we're still experimenting.
14. Most important have fun! Don't be discouraged if someone reminds you of one of these rules while jamming. If we all follow these simple guidelines then everyone will benefit from an organized jam.

LOCATION / DIRECTIONS

**CHILHOWIE LIONS CLUB
116 INDUSTRIAL PARK RD
CHILHOWIE, VA 24319**



TAKE EXIT 35 OFF I-81 TO CHILHOWIE. TURN LEFT AT THE TRAFFIC LIGHT ON TO HWY 11 SOUTH. GO APPROXIMATELY 1 MILE. THE LIONS CLUB IS JUST ACROSS THE BRIDGE ON THE LEFT. CONVENIENTLY LOCATED BETWEEN HWY 11 AND I-81.

Smyth County Jam
"Play it Forward"
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*In Memory of Ken Collins
(May 23, 1934 – Feb 1, 1998)*