

THE SALTVILLE JAM

JAM BRIEFINGS

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SALTVILLE JAM

The Saltville Jam started about 30 years ago when a few of us would get together to pick and share licks in front of the old Griffin Motors building. The Jam was later moved to the picnic shelter behind the old Piggly Wiggly building.

The official name came about in 1997 when we held our first Annual Saltville Jam on the Food Country parking lot. We later moved to the Lions Club Carnival Grounds where we have been for the past 6 years. This Jam is held Sat, Sun & Mon each labor day weekend. The jam is made up entirely of local musicians and their friends who do a great job of entertaining. The talent in this and

the surrounding area is incredible. The crowds have been growing every year and the music seems to keep getting better. And best of all, it's FREE!

The weekly jams started in November 2002 at the Saltville Rescue Squad Building but was later moved to the Holston River Coon Club building due to scheduling conflicts. The jams are held every Monday night from around 6:30– 11:00 pm rain or shine.

Due to the ever increasing size of the audience, the jams have been switched from a lick swapping session to an open mic format to allow everyone a chance to be heard.

We have been receiving many suggestions on ways to improve the jam, and we want to let everyone know that we are working hard to make some necessary changes for the betterment of all. Please be patient as we go through some growing pains.

We do have to pay for the use of the building, so any donations will be appreciated. All concession money and donations go toward the Holston River Coon Club for the use of the building and to repair and replace equipment, etc. Any money left will go into a fund for another big Christmas Party or to help with the annual jam.

WXMY RADIO (1600AM) CONNECTION

How would you like to hear some of The Saltville Jam on the radio? Well, it's in the works. A lot of folks don't have the chance to join us on Monday nights, so we are trying to get the jam to them. All of the jams are recorded for historical purposes and select sessions

will be played on the air at a later date. We are trying to work out a weekly program and a time slot devoted strictly to The Saltville Jam.

WXMY is a big part of our Annual Saltville Jams and has to be one of the best radio stations on the planet

when it comes to good Bluegrass, Country and Western Music.

If you've not been listening to WXMY, you've been missing some great music. So turn your radio on to 1600AM and have a listen, you just might like it!

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *We would like to wish Spencer Moore a happy birthday on Feb 7th. He will be 85 years young.*
- *We would like to thank everybody who helps with this jam both the pickers and listeners.*
- *If you have any ideas or suggestions that would help us improve the jam, please let us know.*

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WHAT IS BLUEGRASS MUSIC?

“It's a great way to learn to play an instrument and sing, for kids and adults alike.”

Bluegrass is a style of acoustic music that originated in the 1940s when Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs combined elements of country/western, gospel and blues music with the British, Irish, and Scottish music of their Appalachian mountain heritage. It is played most commonly on the mandolin, fiddle, five-string banjo, six-string guitar, and upright bass, but the resonator guitar ("Dobro"), harmonica, and electric bass are also found in bluegrass. Percussion is not generally used, with the insistant rhythm being a result of the interplay of the stringed instruments. Bluegrass music is often

called "that high lonesome sound" but it includes a wide range of lively instrumentals, sweet ballads in three-part harmony, soulful a cappella gospel quartets and up-tempo love songs.

The unique, driving sound of the original Blue Grass Boys was built upon by many musicians, including the Stanley Brothers, Reno & Smiley, Jim & Jesse, and Jimmy Martin. Bluegrass blossomed with artists like the Osborne Brothers, the Dillards, the Seldom Scene, the New Grass Revival, and Hot Rize. Today bluegrass is popular worldwide, and its stars include Ricky Skaggs, Alison

Krauss & Union Station, the Del McCoury Band, Laurie Lewis, the Lonesome River Band, Blue Highway, and the Nashville Bluegrass Band.

Bluegrass is a very inclusive music, with friendly and informal jam sessions springing up around almost every event. It's a great way to learn to play an instrument and sing, for kids and adults alike. Almost all bluegrass events have a family atmosphere, and performers and listeners are equally welcome. We hope to see you soon at a bluegrass event!

ELISABETH BURKETT

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

The Saltville Jam is a smoke and alcohol free site.

The Saltville 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 all 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, and want to join the jam, you are welcome to do so. Music at the jam is acoustic (electric bass is

an exception) and rooted in the bluegrass 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 area, keep all conversations to a minimum and as quietly as possible to keep from disturbing the players around the mic. Also, don't be playing another song in the background while someone is performing. Tune quietly.

BLUEGRASS AS I SEE IT

Bluegrass is a very unique musical form where each person gets his turn to perform just as each baseball player gets his turn to bat.

The driving force behind bluegrass, is the harmony singing. The instruments are used to help the singers sound better and to stay in time. When one instrument is taking a break, it is the job of the other instruments to accompany him in a manner that adds to the overall sound.

When a musician is taking a break, unless he/she signals you to pick with them, let them have the break solo. It's their turn at bat.

Bluegrass music is movement. When the Bluegrass bands of long ago played, due to the technology of the times, they performed around a central mic which forced them to mix their own music. This added life to the show. When the individual mics were used, each musician had his

own little space from which to perform and the movement was gone. Many of today's bands are trying to recapture that life as we are with this open mic style jam.

Bluegrass jams are often very spontaneous and most picker don't know what they are going to pick until they get to the mic—talk about excitement.

It's true music, no gimmicks.

Larry Hogston

“The driving force behind bluegrass, is the harmony singing.”

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 of your level of intoxication in relation to the others you are jamming with.

One drunk or stoned musician can really wreck a jam unless the sentiment is shared by all. Then again....one sober musician can really wreck things! Just joking here....

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 budding 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

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

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 after awhile.
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. The carpet is used to represent the singing/picking area and should be used only by the person or persons singing or taking a break. It is ok to occasionally step on the carpet to play backup.
12. The mic is very sensitive and works best if you stay back further than you would with a normal mic. Don't play form the front of the mic or too far to the side as it works best when you are behind it.
13. Don't hog the mic. It's ok to do 3 or 4 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 who's getting ready to play.
14. Understand that these rules/suggestions are not set in concrete, we're still experimenting.
15. Most important have fun! Don't be discouraged if someone reminds you about one of these rules while jamming. If we all follow these simple guidelines then everyone will benefit from a better organized jam.

OTHER JAMS IN THE AREA

Monday—Morrell Music—Marion, VA.

Tuesday—Iron Horse—Damascus, VA

Wednesday—

Thursday—Senior Citizen Building—Glade Spring, VA

Friday—Mountain City, TN not sure of location.

Friday & Saturday—Moorefield's Store—Sugar Creek, TN

Saturday—Community Center—Ceres, VA

Saturday—Weavers Store—Konnarock, VA

I'm sure there are many more jams in the area. Please let me know and I'll try to update this list before the next newsletter.



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