

BANJO FEST is Best for Banjo Lovers!

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John McEuen

Once again, the attention of the music and entertainment world was focused on Oklahoma City during the 2017 American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame weekend was re-branded this year as BANJO FEST. And, it was the best!

This year's BANJO FEST kicked off with a Welcome Reception at the American Banjo Museum. BBQ, drinks and a live musical performance by Grammy-winning artist John McEuen set the tone for the evening. Awards of Excellence were presented to Ronnie & Myra Bales, the Peninsula Banjo Band and Glenn Peisker.

That following Friday night, the best of the best were honored during the American Banjo Museum Hall of Fame ceremony, held at the breathtaking VAST on the 50th floor of Devon Tower. This formal

event, which included a reception, dinner and induction ceremonies was a star-studded affair. This year's inductees included; Tony Trischka, Instruction & Education; Paul Erickson, Four-string Performance; Roy Clark, Promotion; Joel Walker Sweeney, Historical; and John McEuen, Five-string Performance. Musical performances by honorees John McEuen, Paul Erickson and Tony Trischka along with Gary "Biscuit" Davis and Bob Carlin highlighted the evening.

Also during the Hall of Fame, prolific collector and archiver James Bollman received this year's prestigious Jack Canine Award for his dedication to preserving banjo history.

On Saturday, the American Banjo Museum was again full of music, laughter and fun as Johnny Baier, Gary "Biscuit" Davis, Paul Erickson and Bob Carlin took to the stage for informal performances.

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Tony Trischka



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www.AmericanBanjoMuseum.com

MISSION

The mission of the American Banjo Museum is to preserve and promote the banjo while expanding appreciation and understanding of its history and music.

STAFF

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Margie Smith-Robbins, Assistant Administrator
Dustin Pyeatt, Development & Outreach Manager
Janet Raines, Sales & Marketing
Sherril Mitchell, Reception
Ellie Mowery, Administrative Assistant

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"A banjo is a banjo, right?" To the majority of visitors to the American Banjo Museum, that's the prevailing mindset – and rightly so. The banjo's identity in popular culture has always been based on its relevance to the music associated with it any given time during its colorful evolution. While today's banjo is best known as a vehicle of bluegrass and world folk music, at different times in history it has been tied to jazz, pop and even classical music. Interestingly enough, each of those playing styles are still an active part of the worldwide banjo subculture. Proponents of any one of these particular playing styles or eras of banjo popularity will exert copious opinions and arguments explaining why *their* favorite style is "the best," often dismissing the existence of other banjo players and their music. While such dedication and passion is admirable, our museum has the responsibility of telling – chapter by chapter – *the entire* story of the banjo's incredible journey. This task has, to say the least, some built-in challenges, not the least of which has been our goal of the intermingling of seemingly very different banjo preferences and playing styles into one harmonious musical community. While many purists contend it can't be done, we beg to differ. During our recent BANJO FEST weekend – which included the annual American Banjo

Museum Hall of Fame inductions, playing styles and enthusiasts from the banjo's role in minstrel to classic to jazz to country to folk to bluegrass all came together for a very unique banjo gathering. For several wonderful days, personal preferences were generally set aside, overcome by a spirit of banjo unity – all for the common good and promotion of the banjo. With individual preferences understood and respected, to see the likes of five-string banjo gurus such as Tony Trischka, Gary "Biscuit" Davis and John McEuen seamlessly interacting musically with four-string banjo artists such as Paul Erickson and Lance Dieckow was proof positive that such banjo cross-pollination can be accomplished with delightful results. In this setting, should someone have commented, *"A banjo is a banjo, right?"* I would have enthusiastically replied, *"Why not!"*

Johnny Baier, Executive Director

ABM Membership

The American Banjo Museum wishes to recognize and thank new members and those that have renewed their membership the third quarter of 2017.

Individual Membership

Sue Kern
Ken Marler
Nancy Mielke
Ellie Mowery
Richard Velazquez

Couple Membership

William Phillips & Elaine Howard
Denny & Kathy Overstreet
George Peabody

Lifetime Membership

Jim Bollman
Ann Hough
Bill Lowery

To become a member, gift a membership, or upgrade your current membership call 405-604-2793.



Jams on it!

This year the American Banjo Museum tried a little experiment – jam sessions. And like Frankenstein’s monster, the jams have taken on a life of their own!

A Ukulele Jam, led by ukulele instructor and performer Jeff Howard. An Old Time Jam, led by ABM volunteer Bill Bond, a Bluegrass Jam led by Deana Rotramel and a Four-String Jam



led by ABM Executive Director Johnny Baier.

“We’ve had people from as far away as Stillwater and even Tulsa come to participate in these jams,” said Howard. “It’s been a blast playing and meeting new people.”

According to Howard, the jams are also a great way to get introduced to a new instrument.

Added Howard, “we’ve had a lot of new people attend as opposed to established musicians. Which is great because music is like learning a foreign language. It’s a struggle sometimes, but, don’t give up on it.”

To learn more about the Jam Session and to find an upcoming session to attend, follow us on Facebook, or, go to our web page: americanbanjomuseum.com



Banjo Farm Album Release



A harvest of banjos, puppets, bored cows and ninja dogs filled the American Banjo Museum during the Aug. 26th official release party for the new album, *Banjo Farm*, by Lucas Ross.

Families packed the “Your Father’s Mustache” room to hear Ross perform new original material like the title track, *Banjo Farm*, a fast-paced toe-tapper about visiting a farm where baby banjos grow. There’s also the original song, *Faked Sick*, about a boy who wants

to stay home and watch the Price is Right after an embarrassing incident at school the previous day.

Ross also performed covers of the Steve Martin song, *Late for School*, as well as the Kermit the Frog classic, *Rainbow Connection*.

Families decorated their own “banjos” made from paper plates and paint stirrers, got autographs from Ross and spent time exploring the museum and its exhibits.

Ross is a four-time Emmy winner. He recorded his new album with his father-in-law, Bob Lashley, and frequent collaborator Ryan Bellgardt and the Oklahoma Community Orchestra.

The new album is available on iTunes, Amazon, or, at the American Banjo Museum gift shop where you can also find Ross’ other albums like *Son of a Beekeeper*. To find out where Ross is playing next, go to lucasross.tv.



BANJO FEST 2017

BANJO FEST is Best for Banjo Lovers!

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That Saturday night the weekend came to a crescendo with the second annual BANJO FEST Concert at the beautiful Hudiburg Chevrolet Performing Arts Center at Rose State College in Midwest City.

This year's BANJO FEST concert was headlined by the amazing Kruger Brothers. Internationally revered as purveyors of new American folk music, the Kruger Brothers took the audience on a musical journey through the

genres of bluegrass, folk, jazz, and classical music, all melded together into their own unique mix via virtuosic instrumental abilities and soulful vocals. Other BANJO FEST concert performers included Gary "Biscuit" Davis and the jazz Banjo Summit of Paul Erickson, Lance Dieckow and Johnny Baier. Following the concert, the BANJO FEST weekend was capped off with a post-concert afterglow party of pizza and jam sessions at the American Banjo Museum with the weekend wrapping up at midnight.

Like a family reunion set to music, BANJO FEST is truly the highlight of the year for the museum!

The American Banjo Museum would like to thank the following sponsors for their gracious support of this year's BANJO FEST: Gayle & Devin Tower; PBS Services; Shubb Capos; LeeAnn & Lester Cowden, Jr.; Phillips Murrah P.C.; Deering Banjo Company; Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau; BancFirst; Graftec Communications; Lila Singleton and Bob & Jean Hadley.

Mark your calendars for next year's BANJO FEST, September 6-8, 2018.



Terri and Paul Erickson



Johnny Baier



Gary "Biscuit" Davis



Dr. Bob Alexius and Mike Gentry



Jens Kruger, Joel Landsburg, and Ewe Kruger



Betty and Byron Berline



Bob Carlin



Paul Erickson



Dr. Ron McLawhon and Glenn Peisker



Glenn Parks



John McEuen and Jens Kruger



James Bollman and Ann Hough

Better know a board member



Doug Parsons

This is a series where we will introduce you to members of the American Banjo Museum's Board of Directors. In this column, we get to know Board President Doug Parsons!

Q: Easy question first, four-string or five-string?

A: I actually play both. Last year I purchased a five-string from our friends at Deering Banjo and have been plucking on it in my spare time.

Q: You also play the ukulele, is that correct?

A: Yes. I started playing a few years ago. The ukulele has really gained in popularity with the younger generation. It is fun to break out my tenor banjo from time to time and let them hear the difference. They are fascinated with the sound and the fact that they can tune a banjo to ukulele tuning and play a different instrument. Back in the 20's it was the same phenomenon people played the ukulele, then they went to the banjo so they could be heard in larger bands. I hope this happens again.

Q: How long have you played the banjo?

A: I started playing the tenor banjo when I was 14, my dad (Larry Parsons) was a great banjo

and piano player and played at Shakey's Pizza Parlors and other banjo venues. He taught me a few chords and I played banjo during the week and drums on weekends. Then life happened girls, cars, oh and school and I stopped playing until I was in my 40's and my dad was diagnosed with cancer. I would go over and play some with him. After Dad passed, my wife, Phyllis took my old banjos and had them refurbished and gave them to me for Christmas and I started playing again. After that I started playing with the Kettering Banjo Society and took lessons from HOF member Don Stevison.

Q: What made you want to serve on the American Banjo Museum's Board of Directors?

A: Don Stevison asked me to join the board. This was just before the new building project. It was exciting to be a part of that project when you see where we are today.

Q: Where do you see the museum going in the future? What do you think the museum, it's programming and exhibits will look like ten years from now?

A: I see the museum continuing to grow beyond what we have today. Since I have been president we have accomplished quite a few things, we have walked the fine line integrating all types of banjos into the Museum and Hall of Fame to become a true American Banjo Museum. We have added staff and started a culture of fund raising that includes the guest as part of the Museum family. None if this could happen without our passion of the staff, volunteers and board members. It pleases me to see a professional banjo player come in and act like a five-year old at Christmas when they walk through the exhibits.

Another project that has been successful is the Banjo Players

Directory that was gifted by Paul and Theresa Poirier. This project allows all banjo players to be recognized and archived for future generations.

I would imagine ten years from now the BANJO FEST and HOF event will be a huge banjo Mecca gathering event. Hopefully with enough support from our donors we will be able to expand our facility to encompass a larger performance venue and additional exhibit space.

Q: What's your go-to song to play?

A: I would say *Five Foot Two* this is my go-to song for both the banjo and ukulele it is surprising how many 20 year-olds know this song.

Q: What musician has influenced you the most?

A: There are quite a few. Johnny Baier for his professionalism on the stage. Johnny takes this very serious about how to entertain an audience, and what works best down to song choice where to be on stage and appearance. John Weber that I sing with has also made me a better performer. Don Stevison's teaching has helped me along, as well as watching HOF Member Glenn Parks, and Richard Allen of KBS.

Q: What's something you wish people who have never visited the museum knew about it?

A: I wish they would come visit us and see how serious we take this legacy we were gifted. Jack Canine had a vision and it is up to us and future generations to keep it going. We have a lot of passionate people that work tirelessly to bring new programming and exhibits to the museum, but as with all museums we need to keep replenishing the donor base so I hope everyone will keep us in their thoughts for estate planning, annual appeal, or membership, every dime adds up and helps us to keep our mission alive for the future generations.

What if...?

What if the American Banjo Museum closed its doors forever? Museums don't close very often, but, they do go away. According to the American Alliance of Museums, about one percent of museums in America close their doors each year. There are many reasons a museum could close; poor economy, decrease in donors or just lack of interest in the museum's subject matter.

Museums are not turn-key operations. They're complex and built over time. And, there's no easy way, no blueprint for shutting one down. Collections are either transferred to other museums, or, auctioned off. Such was the case for the Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art and Science in California when it closed in 2010. Some 3,218 artifacts from that museum

are now scattered throughout other museums and private collections.

But, when a museum closes, we lose more than just collections, programs and education; we lose the memories that were made when visiting them. A museum is more than just a collection of glass cases, it's a place where our imagination can truly run free. When a museum ceases operation, the art and history it displayed still exists, but, it's less tangible and accessible – more, spirit-like.

It's easy to take these institutions for granted. Many have existed for generations. Though they show a snapshot of history, for

the museum itself, history is still happening. Museums themselves must weather time, economic changes and societal shifts.

Museums preserve history, but, it's the public that must preserve the museum. A lesson learned the hard way when the New York Museum of Biblical Art closed its doors in 2015. The former director tells the story of a family who, upon hearing that the museum was closing said that they wished they'd known sooner, they assumed there would be more time to give. The museum's former director concluded, "we mustn't take for granted these essential cultural institutions because, sometimes, they slip away."

MAKE A STATEMENT
Support YOUR Museum
Donate Today!

Learning Lounge Comes into Focus



Last year the American Banjo Museum was honored to receive a generous grant from the Kirkpatrick Family Fund to establish a Banjo Learning Lounge at the museum. Now, after months of planning, research and work, it's finally coming into focus...literally.

The Museum plans to refurbish the current front west side area of the building to become a fully developed "hands on" interactive educational exhibit called the

Learning Lounge. Interactive videos will include banjo history as well as short video lessons designed for visitors to ultimately play a song on various banjo types including tenor, five-string, guitar banjo and ukulele banjo. The *Learning Lounge* will give museum goers a chance to hold, play and experience the instruments that are on display.

During the recent BANJO FEST weekend, ABM staff took full advantage of having access to some of the best musicians in the world and filmed footage that will be edited into the interactive videos featured in the Learning Lounge.

Footage was shot on the museum floor with the likes of Tony Trischka and John McEuen, adding some star power to the final exhibit.

Furniture has already been purchased for the Lounge, the interactive touch display is being programmed and construction is under way with hopes of having the exhibit open in the coming months!



9 East Sheridan Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73104

Upcoming Events

October

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1 PM Bluegrass Open Jam

Join other bluegrass players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate in the Jam Session.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2 PM Historical Presentation & Performance

Learn the history behind a selected banjo maker in the museum's collection. Then hear American Banjo Museum's Executive Director, Johnny Baier play a historically significant instrument from that maker. Performance included with paid museum admission.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2 PM Education

For those that have never played the banjo and wanted to try, come "Learn to Pick a Tune with Lucas". Limited seating, by reservation only!

November

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1 PM Four-String Open Jam

Join other Four-String players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate in the Jam Session.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2 PM Education

For those that have never played the banjo and wanted to try, come "Learn to Pick a Tune with Lucas". Limited seating, by reservation only!

December

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1 PM Old Style Open Jam

Join other Old Style players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate in the Jam Session.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2 PM Education

For those that have never played the banjo and wanted to try, come "Learn to Pick a Tune with Lucas". Limited seating, by reservation only!

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2 PM Christmas Performance

Enjoy an afternoon of Christmas music and visit with Santa. Admission is FREE when you bring a new unwrapped toy to support the Red Andrews Christmas Dinner.

January

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1 PM Ukulele Open Jam

Join other Ukulele players for an Open Jam Session. Free admission when you bring an instrument and participate in the Jam Session.

**For more information on events
call 405-604-2793 or visit
www.americanbanjomuseum.com**