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STEVE MARTIN & THE STEEP CANYON RANGERS NAMED IBMA ENTERTAINERS OF THE YEAR [1]

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STEVE MARTIN & THE STEEP CANYON RANGERS NAMED IBMA ENTERTAINERS OF THE YEAR

On the strength of a busy touring schedule, a string of national television appearances and the release of a new album, *Rare Bird Alert* on Rounder Records, Steve Martin & The Steep Canyon Rangers took home the Entertainer of the Year award at the 22nd annual International Bluegrass Music Awards Thursday night, September 29 at Nashville?s Ryman Auditorium. Martin, who always included banjo picking in his early stand-up comedy routines, has become more serious about recording and performing bluegrass music during the past two years, with the release of two albums of original music.

Martin and The Steep Canyon Rangers, a young group based in North Carolina named IBMA?s Emerging Artist of the Year in 2007, played ?Me and Paul Revere? during the Awards Show?a song Martin wrote from the perspective of Revere?s horse and performed on national television at the Capitol 4th Concert in Washington, D.C. July 4. There?s always been something a little magic about fiddle and banjo music, and Martin?s deft clawhammer style underscored by Nicky Sanders? exuberant fiddling and soaring three-part vocal harmony from the Rangers definitely did the trick.

Martin appeared at the microphone to receive the bluegrass music industry?s highest music award, leapt a few times into the air, congratulated the other Entertainer of the Year nominees

and jokingly thanked them for losing. He went on to thank producers John McEuen and Tony Trischka as well as his band mates, and then he talked about how hard they?ve been working on their music, as well as the humor and entertainment aspects of their show, while trying to never denigrate the music. Martin said that while half of their audience usually comes to see him, not knowing anything about bluegrass, ?They all leave loving it, and maybe they seek out other musicians. We?re really, really honored to win this award tonight.?

Steep Canyon Rangers lead singer, Woody Platt quipped, ?Working with Steve, we might be the most entertained of all. Most of all we thank Steve for giving us this most amazing ride.?

It was an exciting night for the upstate New York-based band, The Gibson Brothers, who took home awards for Vocal Group of the Year and Album of the Year for *Help My Brother,* on Compass Records.

The Boxcars, a new combination of veteran musicians, were named Emerging Artists of the Year and Instrumental Group of the Year. Band member Ron Stewart tied for Banjo Player of the Year with The Grascals? Kristin Scott Benson, who received the award for the fourth consecutive year. The Boxcars' Adam Steffey was named Mandolin Player of the Year for the eighth time.

Hosted by legendary mandolin player and band leader Sam Bush, the 2011 IBMA Award Show was a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Bill Monroe, recognized as the Father of Bluegrass.

Balsam Range received top honors for Song of the Year for ?Trains I Missed,? written by Walt Wilkins, Gilles Godard & Nicole Witt. ?There are a lot of folks out there?myself included?who are thankful for some of those trains missed and how things turned out,? commented Tim Surrett with Balsam Range.

Legendary artists Doyle Lawson, J.D. Crowe and Paul Williams took home two trophies for Recorded Event of the Year and Gospel Recorded Performance, for ?Prayer Bells from Heaven.? The three announced their plans to record a second *Old Friends* album, much to the delight of fans in attendance at the Awards Show.

Russell Moore of IIIrd Tyme Out and Dale Ann Bradley took home awards for Male Vocalist and Female Vocalist of the Year?the fourth time for each. Rob Ickes, of Blue Highway was awarded his 13th Dobro Player of the Year award, the most trophies any individual instrumentalist has received in the history of the IBMA Awards.

Michael Cleveland was named Fiddle Player of the Year for the ninth time, and his band received the award for Instrumental Recorded Performance of the Year for ?Goin? Up Dry Branch,? a song written by Buddy Spicher and Jimmy Martin. Marshall Wilborn was named Bass Player of the Year for the third time, Bryan Sutton received the Guitar Player of the Year award for the sixth time, and Adam Steffey dedicated his eighth Mandolin Player of the Year to his twin sons, who he expects to be born in the next two weeks.

Sam Bush told a story about how a young musician once approached Bill Monroe and played a tune he?d written squarely in the Monroe style. The older mandolinist listened carefully and said, ?That?s real good. What can you do on your own now?? The question was answered at the IBMA Awards, as band after talented band hit the stage.

As bluegrass music heads into the second hundred years after its founder?s birth, the genre is stronger than ever?as evidenced by a number of virtuoso level, high energy performances from The Sam Bush Band, The Grascals, Balsam Range, The Del McCoury Band, Russell Moore & IIIrd Tyme Out, Sierra Hull & Highway 111, Lonesome River Band, The Boxcars, The Gibson Brothers, Dailey & Vincent, Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver?later joined by J.D. Crowe and Paul Williams, George Shuffler, Hall of Famer Tom Gray and new Distinguished Award recipient Roland White.

The moment that probably would have made Bill Monroe smile was when White kicked into ?Wheel Hoss,? with the next break played in twin harmony by Sam Bush and Ronnie McCoury on their mandolins. Dailey & Vincent thrilled the crowd with triple fiddles added to their usual line-up for ?Close By,? and The Grascals brought two young girls from St. Jude Children?s Research Hospital and Vanderbilt Children?s Hospital who are battling cancer onstage with them to sing ?I Am Strong,? a song inspired by the band?s trip to St. Jude.

Ronnie and Rob McCoury inducted their father into the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame, and guitarist James Alan Shelton inducted George Shuffler, the bass and cross-picked guitar stylist known as ?the third Stanley Brother.? The evening ended with a guitar rendition of ?Life is Like a Mountain Railway? from Shuffler and Shelton, backed by Gray, and a medley of Del McCoury songs delivered in his trademark, scalding tenor range.

The International Bluegrass Music Awards are voted on by the professional membership of the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA), which serves as the trade association for the bluegrass music industry. The IBMA Awards Show is the centerpiece of the World of Bluegrass Week September 26 ? October 2 in Nashville, Tenn., which also includes the IBMA Business Conference and Bluegrass Fan Fest.

The IBMA Awards Show was broadcast live on Sirius XM Satellite Radio (Bluegrass Junction, Channel 61), and also will be syndicated to more than 300 U.S. markets and 14 foreign networks thanks to the sponsorship of Martha White, Deering Banjos, the International Bluegrass Music Museum, *Bluegrass, Moonshine & The Birth of NASCAR ? The Movie*, Compass Records and the Academy of Bluegrass. Program directors and station managers may sign up to be affiliates by calling (615) 256-3222 or emailing jill@ibma.org[3]

A complete list of nominees, this year?s Hall of Fame inductees and the recipients of the Distinguished Achievement Award are listed below.

The 2011 International Bluegrass Awards:

Hall of Fame Inductees - Del McCoury, George Shuffler

Entertainer of the Year - Steve Martin & The Steep Canyon Rangers

Vocal Group of the Year - The Gibson Brothers

Instrumental Group of the Year - The Boxcars

Male Vocalist of the Year - Russell Moore

Female Vocalist of the Year - Dale Ann Bradley

Emerging Artist of the Year - The Boxcars

Album of the Year - *Help My Brother* by The Gibson Brothers (artists), Eric & Leigh Gibson and Mike Barber (producers), Compass (label)

Instrumental Recorded Performance of the Year - "Goin' Up Dry Branch," Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper (artist), Buddy Spicher & Jimmy Martin (songwriters), Jeff White & Michael Cleveland (producers), Rounder (label)

Gospel Recorded Performance of the Year - "Prayer Bells of Heaven" by J.D. Crowe, Doyle Lawson, & Paul Williams (artists), Ben Isaacs (producer), Mountain Home (label)

Song of the Year - "Trains I Missed;" Balsam Range (artists); Walt Wilkins, Gilles Godard & Nicole Witt (songwriters)

Recorded Event of the Year - "Prayer Bells of Heaven" by J.D. Crowe, Doyle Lawson & Paul Williams (artists); Ben Isaacs (producer); Mountain Home (label)

Banjo Player of the Year - Kristin Scott Benson and Ron Stewart (tie)

Guitar Player of the Year - Bryan Sutton

Fiddle Player of the Year - Michael Cleveland

Bass Player of the Year - Marshall Wilborn

Mandolin Player of the Year - Adam Steffey

Dobro Player of the Year - Rob Ickes

Distinguished Achievement Award Recipients - Greg Cahill, Bill Knowlton, Lilly Pavlak, Geoff Stelling, Roland White

Broadcaster of the Year - Katy Daley, WAMU Bluegrass Country

Print Media Person of the Year - Juli Thanki, Engine145.com

Bluegrass Event of the Year - Silver Dollar City's Bluegrass & BBQ Festival; Branson, Mo.

Best Graphic Design - *Ricardo Alessio & Erica Harris (designer & artist), City of Refuge,* Abigail Washburn (artist), Rounder (label)

Best Liner Notes - Colin Escott (writer), *A Mother's Prayer*, Ralph Stanley (artist), Rebel (label)

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