Published on *International Bluegrass Music Association* (https://ibma.org)

Behind The Scenes at International Bluegrass

A Note From The Editor

Today is Sunday, the Lord?s Day for some, a day of rest and play for others, and a workday for a group that currently includes... *me*, on a beautiful Hawaiian day, slaving over a hot newsletter -- the very issue you?re reading right now.

After writing and editing for a couple of hours I peek at Google News for diversion. Something in the little custom bluegrass news feed section catches my eye -- an article from NPR called ?Fresh Bluegrass For A Sultry Summer [1].? It talks about group of jammers from the Capitol Area Bluegrass and Old-time Music Association, who gather every couple weeks to pick bluegrass at a park in Virginia.

I click PLAY to listen to the accompanying clip. It?s a fun if slightly uneven rendition of ?Gold Rush,? played by a group of enthusiastic musicians of varying abilities. As I listen, I think of my own local society, Bluegrass Hawai?i, which will gather this afternoon for one of several monthly jams. Today, it?s at lovely Waimea Valley on the North Shore.

I already know I don?t have time to attend the jam. This newsletter?s an important one for IBMA and I want it to be great, and I must keep at it. But I take a moment and reflect. All around the world today, enthusiastic musicians of varying abilities will be gathering together, in parks, VFW halls, church rectories, pastures, taverns, backyards, cafes, parking lots, and kitchens, taking much-loved old mandolins and guitars out of their cases, rosining up bows gently or impatiently, tuning banjos with varying degrees of success, trying to remember all the chords and words of the tunes they want to share with others.

All around the world, people will gather today to make a little bluegrass music together, ignoring, for at least a few hours, every single social obstacle that might prevent their paths from crossing.

I accepted this job at IBMA -- one of the most tremendously challenging jobs I?ve ever had --

to support that simple phenomenon: *I wanted to help make bluegrass music happen in the world, wherever and whenever possible.* I?ve seen the deep, pure uncomplicated joy people experience when they hear and play it, the way they open up to the music, and to each other. It might seem a little idealistic to some, but I know how good *I* feel when I hear it and play it, and I?d simply like to help bring that experience to others.

Bluegrass provides otherwise incompatible humans with a simple common language and a simple shared goal: *Let?s pick a song and try to make it work.* I?ve seen it happen time and again. Those of us who are fortunate enough to have roots deep in bluegrass may not realize that for some people, it is a fragile young shoot that must be nurtured, tended and encouraged to grow in our communities. But grow it does?in unlikely places like Poland, Denmark, Greece, the Czech Republic, Japan? and Hawai?i.

Which naturally makes me think about my new Facebook friendish* Diptanshu Roy, a mandolin player in Calcutta, India. Diptanshu has fallen in love with the music of Sam Bush, Bill Monroe, David Grisman, Mike Compton, John Hartford, Mike Marshall, Chris Thile, and Tim O?Brien. He gigs with some fine local folk musicians, but his secret dream is to play in a classic bluegrass configuration: mandolin, fiddle, banjo. He believes he might be the only bluegrass musician in India. As unlikely as it seems, my secret dream is to prove him wrong.

As unlikely as it seems, this is the thought, on a perfectly glorious Hawai?i morning, that propels me back to work? with a smile.

Caroline Wright

** A friendish is a friend you haven?t met yet.*

Source URL: https://ibma.org/node/403

Links:
[1] http://www.npr.org/2012/06/24/155454031/fresh-bluegrass-for-a-sultry-summer