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May is IBMA Membership Month

By Nancy Cardwell

With a new office, two new staff members, a slew of newly-appointed committees, and a thrilling, new venue for World of Bluegrass in Raleigh, NC, IBMA members have a lot to look forward to. The membership of IBMA, reaching all 50 states and 30 countries, is the trade association for bluegrass music?or more simply put: the team working together for the future of bluegrass music.

What, you?re not a member of IBMA? Or maybe you were, but your membership has lapsed. Well folks, now is the time to do something about it! You?ll be just in time for first round ballots for the 2013 IBMA Awards *and* for a members-only ticket purchase week this spring for IBMA?s ?Wide Open Bluegrass? festival (formerly Bluegrass Fan Fest) in Raleigh, NC, Friday-Saturday, Sept. 27-28. We?re almost ready to announce the first names in the staggeringly impressive line-up for Wide Open Bluegrass. Keep an eye on your inbox, and if you?re not on our mailing list already give us a call at 1-888-438-4262 or email info@ibma.org [1] and check our sites www.ibma.org [2] and www.bluegrassnation.org [3] regularly.

The members of IBMA?s newly-appointed Membership Committee, led by the San Diego Bluegrass Society?s Dwight Worden as chair, with Charles Humphrey III (The Steep Canyon Rangers), Tim Surrett (Balsam Range), Matt Munsey (Monroeville), Ted Lehmann (Ted?s Bluegrass, Blogs & Brainstorms), Ohio educator and longtime Bluegrass in the Schools committee chair Dr. Tom Kopp, Elizabeth Wightman (SteelBridge Insurance), Danny Clark (The Bluegrass Bus Museum) and IBMA Executive Director Nancy Cardwell, are excited about reaching out to more musicians, industry folks, local associations, and dedicated fans in the bluegrass music community to offer the opportunity to get involved with a trade association for the music that belongs to all of us.

What does IBMA membership offer?
In addition to World of Bluegrass, Wide Open Bluegrass and IBMA Awards ticket discounts and voting privileges for professional members, IBMA membership offers opportunities for showcasing, year-round professional development, and networking. We have a critically acclaimed monthly online newsletter (IB), a number of industry-focused databases and a membership directory that may be emailed upon request. We offer rental car discounts and group insurance plans for health, instruments, and event liability (for festival and concert producers).

What has IBMA done?
IBMA is responsible for the Bluegrass Album Grammy Award, and we were involved in the beginnings of the International Bluegrass Music Museum. IBMA started the Bluegrass in the Schools program and the Foundation for Bluegrass Music. The annual International Bluegrass Music Awards shine a spotlight on the genre in mainstream press, while also recognizing some of the best music of the year. Our Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and Distinguished Achievement Awards honor significant contributions to the music; a slate of IBMA Special

Awards honor broadcasters, event producers, writers, graphic designers and songwriters. IBMA?s Leadership Bluegrass program is going strong in its 14th year, with a new class announced in an article elsewhere in this publication. The Bluegrass Trust Fund continues to quietly and effectively help individuals in the bluegrass community in times of emergency need. This program is funded with part of the proceeds from our annual festival, and was started by Sonny Osborne and several other founding members of IBMA.

What?s new?
Check out www.worldofbluegrass.org [4] and ibma.org for news about the incredible week we?re planning for you in Raleigh, NC?including a streamlined schedule (less expensive, shorter week) with new events for youth, arts presenters, talent buyers, and emerging bands. Resuming in May, we?ll feature our monthly webinars on topics suggested by members (maybe you?). The IBMA Youth Council has elected Andrew Rigney as Chair and they have new projects to be announced soon. IBMA?s new Momentum Awards, with a committee headed up by Dan Keen (Belmont Univ.) and Echo Propp (WAMU/ Nashville Opera), will continue in 2013, with the goal of recognizing notable emerging talent and industry mentors. The World of Bluegrass Street Team, led by Danny Clark and Katherine Coe, will kick into gear this month, right in time for festival season. IBMA continues to expand our social networking community with Bluegrass Nation [3], Facebook, Twitter, Spotify, YouTube and Instagram. Bluegrass Nation?s Backyard Bluegrass Sessions is a new series featuring exclusive artist videos. We produced a live stream broadcast of the IBMA Awards for the first time in 2012 with help from our pals at Music City Roots and BluegrassToday.com, and we?re investigating the possibility of doing it again this year. Stay tuned in a couple of months for news from Kentucky Educational Television about when and where their ?Jubilee? series will air this summer?with several shows filmed live at IBMA?s Bluegrass Fan Fest in Nashville, Sept. 2012. Finally, look for info soon about a newly constituted International Committee and International Advisory Council.

How do you get involved?

Artists and merchandisers who have booths at festivals and other events can contact IBMA to get some ?Ask Me About IBMA? and ?Bluegrass Nation? stickers, along with small cardstock membership fliers to stick on your table. Feel free to go to www.ibma.org [5] to click on a link to print off your own tri-fold membership brochures. We?ll also have downloadable ads and a special Facebook icon you?ll easily be able to share.

Artists and industry leaders are encouraged to record 30- and 60-second audio clips that say what you find valuable and important about belonging to IBMA. Please email those to danny.clark.bluegrass@gmail.com [6]. If you need help making one, let us know. We?re also asking for short (funny or serious) video clips from members with similar messages?why you?re an IBMA member, and also telling viewers that you?ll see them at World of Bluegrass Sept. 24-28, in Raleigh. Video clips may be posted to IBMA?s YouTube Channel or Facebook page, BluegrassNation.org, or emailed to Katherine@ibma.org [7]. Here?s a great example of a video we?ve already received from the Steep Canyon Rangers. *VIDEO.*

Radio broadcasters can keep an eye (or ear) for IBMA membership public service announcements to be posted on AirPlay Direct in May (or sooner, as we get them from artists)!

Association leaders and event producers, and bands can encourage your members,

attendees and fans to call 1-888-GET-IBMA or go to www.ibma.org [2] to join IBMA. Websites, liner notes, onstage emcee announcements and Facebook are all great places to help us get the word out.

Bloggers, journalists, educators, publicists, songwriters, luthiers and fans please mention IBMA where you can, and help support the trade association of your friends and peers who are working to keep bluegrass music growing strong.

Everyone mention IBMA membership and tweet (#ibmamember, #ibmamembershipmonth, #bluegrassnation) in May, to help us network around the globe and get the message out.

Got a better idea? Let us know what you?re doing so we can share it with the rest of the membership! (Email all brilliant ideas to nancyc@ibma.org [8] or dworden@roadrunner.com [9]) We know you?re a creative thinking bunch of folks!

What will the future of bluegrass and IBMA look like?

That?s up to you. Join, get involved, talk to your friends and business associates. There?s a membership category for everyone, with options for professional individuals, organizations (bands/clubs/businesses), youth and fans. Together, we can work to make things better for bluegrass music?introducing great artists to new audiences, and helping to support those out there making a living in this music?onstage and behind the scenes.

The possibilities and potential are endlessly exciting for our music community. But the first thing we?re asking you to do is to decide to get involved and make a difference. Join IBMA!

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