



INTERNATIONAL BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION

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By Taylor Coughlin

It happened at a bluegrass festival when he was 9 or 10.

He was struggling with a capo that just wouldn't work. It broke. So he went over to a merch tent where another musician realized his problem, and gave him a new capo. And that was it.

The simple act of helping another on their musical journey is what musician (and music teacher, producer, recording engineer, songwriter, label owner, dad, and husband) Stephen 'Mojo' Mouglin learned that day, and what he continually strives for. It's why he rushes from music lesson, to coaching a band, to engineering, and off on tour with The Sam Bush Band.

'I love when I can help someone get to a new place musically,' he says. He wants to help musicians in meaningful ways, like how the stranger helped him by gifting a new capo. He has found this through teaching (he holds a degree in Vocal Music Education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst), and then some: Dark Shadow Recording, his studio and label.

Dark Shadow Recording got its start around 12 years ago. Mojo had been playing in bands and teaching, and got into recording because he wanted to be a better studio player. Fast forward a few years, and it has turned into more than he had originally planned in the best way.

In 2009, Mojo started the Bluegrass Harmony Training Series with lessons highlighting tenor and baritone vocal harmonies. Russell Moore and Ronnie Bowman were featured, respectively, in the instructional recordings. He got together with friend and banjoist Ned Luberecki (together as Nedski & Mojo) and recorded *Nothing More* and thus was born Dark Shadows Recording as a label, with those three releases under its belt.

Success has continued for DSR. Dynamic family band The Rigneys recorded their album with Mojo in 2011 and then signed on to the label. Mojo was captured by the family's individual and collective talents, and invested in their development and success as their recording engineer, producer, and band coach. They will have a new album out later this summer.

As an all-around task master, Stephen works with bands that have a desire to learn and grow musically, work hard, and of course, make great music. "If you create the best music you can make, you'll find your audience," he says.

As a musician himself, Mojo says he is able to help artists so much because he has been in their shoes (and still is). The artists are able to trust his suggestions because they know they are coming from a wealth of talent and experience.

At the end of the day for Mojo and Dark Shadow Recording, the work is all about paying it forward and working for the common goal, which is rooted in bluegrass music's deepest values. The bluegrass community is different by their desire to work together to make great music and help each other as much as they can along the way. This common goal is what keeps Mojo inspired to teach, record, mix, coach, write, and simply *do*.

Just like getting a capo from a stranger in a merch tent at a bluegrass festival, Mojo is paying it forward for bluegrass music in his own way; through his teaching, coaching, playing, writing, recording, and everything else involved that makes him thoroughly well-rounded, the family of bluegrass is growing, developing, and remaining inspired to play on.

Dark Shadow Recording can be found [online](#) [2] and on [Facebook](#) [3] and [Twitter](#) [4].

Watch an exclusive video of [The Rigneys and Dark Shadow here](#) [5].

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