



INTERNATIONAL BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION

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IBMA Membership Increases 18%, New Staff Welcomed

By Taylor Coughlin

When Nancy Cardwell informed the IBMA staff of 20+ Japanese guests visiting in June, unsurprisingly, we were all excited. I personally couldn't help but look forward to seeing the ?I? in IBMA (International) being put into action. I couldn't wait to see first-hand how the affinity for bluegrass music is felt universally, across physical borders and linguistic ones.

A regular Wednesday was turned into an epic jam session as we welcomed Sab Watanabe Inoue and Akira Otsuka from Japan's Bluegrass 45 and their 20 guests. Sab and Akira were giving their friends a "bluegrass special" tour of the U.S. Sab thought it would be fun to invite some local friends who have toured Japan in the past, so we welcomed **Tim O'Brien, David Grier, Mike Compton, Roland White & Diane Bouska, Billy & Marilyn Smith, Jeff White, Missy Raines, Todd Phillips, and Barry Crabtree** to come jam. The IBMA staff (Nancy, Jill, Taylor, Katherine, and newcomer Joe Lurgio) was just slack-jawed to be along for the ride.

The communal friendship of bluegrass musicians, both amateur and pro, organically transcended language and cultural barriers as cameras flashed, videos rolled, and looks of "can you believe this is happening?" were shared. It was truly the first big jam the new IBMA office has seen! We were so glad to welcome our new Japanese friends, and hope they enjoyed their time in the United States.

As if that wasn't enough to cleanse our international bluegrass palette, we also were happy to welcome Swedish bluegrass band **G2** to record a Backyard Bluegrass Session for Bluegrass

Nation. Again, we were all reminded that music has no borders, and we honestly wouldn't mind being reminded more often (so, international bands: Can we hop over for a visit?)

Other tidbits:

-We welcomed new staff member Joe Lurgio, who was stunned to see a legend like Roland White come in to our office his first week on the job, just to say hi and chat.

-Membership jumped up 18% since our reports in May! If you want to help keep spreading the IBMA message, contact us to send you promotional materials.

-Please mark your calendars for **Wednesday, August 14**, when IBMA will host a press conference live from the Loveless Café Barn. We will announce our Hall of Fame Honorees as well as the nominees for the IBMA awards. Following the press conference, there will be a live broadcast of an all-bluegrass Music City Roots. Stay tuned for more info!

-Look for the second IBMA Awards ballot, to be mailed Tuesday, July 9.

-Look for WOB registration materials to be emailed/mailed to members this month! Call 1-888-GET-IBMA or go to [IBMA.org](https://ibma.org) ^[2] for more info.

Stay fresh this July, IBMA!

- Taylor Coughlin
IB Editor

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