

VICTORIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

Bringing people together for the preservation, enjoyment and advancement of bluegrass and related acoustic music.

Message From the VBA Board

*"The daffs are up and the rhubarb is showing
The flower count's on, and our horn is blowing
Winter's soon over, and all the birds know it
Put on your new stuff, and get out and show it"*

Well, on March 20th, Spring officially arrives and we can say goodbye to another West Coast Winter. Hopefully that dust up of white we had late last month was just a show of sympathy for the rest of Canada, and we can get on with pickin' and grinnin' in the more polite weather we're accustomed to having around here.

If you didn't manage to make last month's feature night, you missed a very full and energetic open stage and a great show by our feature act the Moonshiners. It was darn near standing room only, and the best bang anyone could get for 5 bucks.....unless of course you were playing, and then it was even a better deal! This month we will be featuring the "Top Secret Bluegrass Band", all the way from Alberta. This is a family band with a couple of young brothers that are sure to impress. Those of you that have aspiring young musicians in your household, make sure you bring them to this one.

A reminder that VBA Memberships expire at the end of this month, so plan on renewing your card carrying status in the next little while. We'll be drawing a paid up member's name at the April feature night, and you could just be lucky enough to get all your money back!

Many of you probably noticed our new VBA Banner that was on the back wall of the hall last month. It now shows the new VBA logo that is so popular on our T shirts and stickers. Thanks to Victoria Pang for doing the layout and getting it printed.

If you read the February newsletter, you would have seen an article on the relatively new President of the VBA. This is a new "get to know your fellow members" initiative for the 3rd page, where we plan to feature someone of interest for your reading pleasure each issue. This month's profile on the illustrious Doug VanDine should have you hungering for more!

Thanks to all who contribute to the VBA.

See you out there, and remember.....**Keep on the Sunny Side!**



Top Secret Bluegrass Band

March Feature Act



Victoria Bluegrass Association

c/o Old Town Strings Repair
Shop

1034 Hillside Avenue
Victoria, BC V8T 2A5

VICTORIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION EVENTS

VBA Tuesday Night Bluegrass Jams

Tuesday Orange Hall Jams are: Mar. 8, 15, 22 at 7:30pm. Slow Pitch, Moderated Circle and Festival Bluegrass Jams at the Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood Road. Players of all levels welcome. Players: \$2 for members, \$3 dollars for non-members. Listeners by donation. Contact Al Planiden at president@victoriabluegrass.ca

VBA Board of Directors 2010/2011

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VBA Membership

\$ 25 single
\$ 40 couple

Feature Act: Top Secret Bluegrass Band

Tuesday, March 29, 2011, Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood Road. Doors open at 7:30pm Members \$5, Non-members \$7. Contact Larry Stevens at larrystevens@shaw.ca for info.

Open Stage first half of evening (8:00 - 9:00 pm) with the feature act after a short intermission. To sign up for the Open Stage, contact Jeb Gordon at 778.678-4570 or vicbluegrass@yahoo.ca. Open Stage performers are exempt from the admission fee.

Top Secret is a family bluegrass band that is originally from southern Ontario but now makes their home in Okotoks, Alberta, on the outskirts of Calgary. Formed in 2006, they play a mix of traditional tunes as well as other songs you'll recognize with a bluegrass feel. Fourteen year old Morgan Caswell plays solid rhythm and lead guitar. He also sings lead and harmony throughout the set. Eleven year old Andrew Caswell delights the crowd with his fiddle breaks and annoys his brother. Once in a while he can be talked into singing a few tunes. Jackie Caswell is a second generation bluegrass who plays the stand-up bass. Her lead and harmony vocals add a welcome ladies touch to the band. Steve Caswell plays the banjo, mandolin, guitar, sings and tries to keep the boys from fighting.

Top Secret enjoys playing bluegrass for anyone who wants to listen and looks forward to meeting you this summer.

www.TopSecretBluegrassBand.com



Fingerstyle Bluegrass Guitar Workshop: Chris Herbst

Saturday, March 19, 12 noon to 2pm at the Orange Hall (corner of Fernwood and Balmoral) \$15 Members, \$20 Non Members.

For registration contact larrystevens@shaw.ca, please indicate member or non-member.

Known mostly as the dobro player in local bands the Moonshiners, Flash in the Pan and the Stowaways, Chris Herbst is also an avid acoustic guitar fanatic and experienced teacher. He has a deep love for Bluegrass flatpicking but has also spent a considerable amount of time working on fingerstyle guitar in the styles of artists such as Blind Blake, Blind boy Fuller, Mississippi John Hurt, Doc Watson and Merle Travis. This fingerstyle workshop will concentrate on ways of playing standard Bluegrass melodies while keeping a steady "Boom chuck" accompaniment with the thumb. No previous fingerpicking experience is required! We will cover some basic right hand picking patterns, some tricks for picking out the melody, learn a tune or two and discuss how to arrange a piece so that it can be played comfortably out of open chord positions. Don't miss out on what is sure to be a fun and informative afternoon of pickin'!



Old Time Fiddle Workshop Continued!: Miriam Sonstenes

Miriam Sonstenes will lead a 4 week intensive, bi-monthly fiddle workshop in March and April, focusing on southern old time tunes and lots of technique to get you ready for summer pickin'! Classes will be every other Saturday afternoon. Come join the fun! For more info and to register call 250-385-5579 or e-mail miriamsonstenes@hotmail.com.



Pickin' Interview: Who is Doug VanDine?

By Victoria Pang

Banjoes aren't at the top of everyone's list as a jazz instrument, unless you're Doug VanDine. He's been expanding his banjo horizons to include swing and jazz, and enjoying the challenges these genres bring. He tells me that this has been a self taught road as he can't find a local banjo teacher that can help him with jazz banjo techniques (go figure...). Given this dedication to furthering the art of the banjo, it probably won't surprise you to learn that he's the only banjo player who attends the BC Swing workshop in Sorrento held the week before the Bluegrass workshops.

Doug has been a Professional Engineer and Geologist for almost 40 years and he continues to be involved in the industry even though he's been trying to retire. He has worked for Natural Resources Canada, been a professor at Queen's University and was a consulting engineer with a local firm before starting his own practice in the mid-eighties. Although he's doing less field work than before, his plan of cutting back isn't going as fast as he had envisioned. Turns out, he's a recognized expert in landslides and debris flows and continues to be sought after in these areas. He says it's harder to cut back when you're self employed and that is particularly true if you have a unique expertise. Although he informs me that he's divested about a quarter of his library of technical journals and resources, his home office is still full of reference materials. That's because he has replaced his geotechnical journals with his music-related materials: books, binders full of music, CDs and instruments. The goal, he says, is to replace it all. When not working or playing music, Doug can be found traveling the world, hiking, kayaking, or sailing; often combining these activities together.

His spouse, Donna, has supported Doug's musical journey all these years. Donna is a dedicated triathlete and her training regimen gets her out of the house for as much as 25 hours a week (my guess is that it conveniently coincides with banjo practice...).



Doug VanDine
Bluegrass, Swing and Jazz Banjo



Doug started out on guitar in his early teen years and that was his instrument of choice for 30+ years. During a leave of absence from work around 15 years ago, Doug purchased a new guitar "to get serious". At the same time, he remembered he had an old banjo that had been lying around the house, dug that out, started plucking away, and the rest is history. That new guitar he purchased is long gone. Now he has a collection of banjos including: a Gibson Mastertone as his "go to" choice, a no-longer-in-production 1940s "Regal Banjo", his back-up Leo (Fender) banjo and a travel banjo. His musical tastes range from traditional bluegrass to jazz (no bebop though).

Doug is a charter member of the Victoria Bluegrass Association and continues to be active in the community. Behind the scenes, he's been stealthily recruiting board members (no, he's not a Moonie), and in the front of the house he leads slow pitch and moderates intermediate circle jams. Despite having many, many circle jams under his belt, he continues to enjoy moderating them and sharing that enjoyment with circle jam participants. Don't be surprised if one day you find Doug mixing in a little Duke Ellington with your Bill Monroe – he's just expanding those horizons.

Bluegrass Happenings

in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest
(all events in Victoria BC, unless otherwise indicated)

Ongoing

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THU	FRI	SAT
<p>Sooke Legion Bluegrass and Acoustic Jam 6726 Eustace Rd., Sooke 1st & 3rd Sunday, 2-5:30pm Contact: Al Planiden, 250.642-3395</p>	<p>Old-Time String Music Jam at <i>Spiral Cafe</i> 418 Craigflower Rd., 7-9:30pm Tune List and Samples: spiraloldtime.googlepages.com</p>	<p>VBA Bluegrass Jam at the <i>Orange Hall</i>, 1620 Fernwood Rd., 7:30-10pm Slow Pitch, Intermediate & Advanced Circle Jams. Players of all levels welcome. Admission: players \$2 (non-members \$3), listeners by donation. More info: Al Planiden, apache@shaw.ca</p>	<p>Cornerstone Bluegrass Jam at <i>Cornerstone Cafe & Resource Centre</i> Fernwood at Gladstone 7:30-10pm Featuring premier acoustic string band musicians. Enjoy some hot coffee or chocolate while listening [for free] to local top acoustic roots musicians jam it out with each other, organized by the Fernwood Bluegrass Coalition [FBC], a group of local business/promoters/musicians. More info: Larry Stevens at larrystevens@shaw.ca</p>			
<p>Afternoon Hootenanny at <i>Logan's Tavern</i> 1821 Cook St., 4:00pm Hosted by Carolyn Mark. Free admission More info: 250-360-1832</p>		<p>The Sweet Lowdown at <i>The Fernwood Inn</i> 302 Gladstone Ave., 8-11pm. More info: www.myspace.com/the.sweet.lowdown</p>				
<p>Bluegrass Night at <i>Spinnaker's Pub</i> 308 Catherine St., 8-10:30pm. Performers: Dan Weisenberger and Oliver Swain</p>						

Other Happenings

Eric Day and his Bluegrass Band

Sat., Mar 5 Royal Canadian Legion, 6726 Eustace Rd, Sooke 8:00pm, Tickets \$10 at the door

Bowker Creek

Sat., Mar 13 Highlands Folk Club, 1589 Millstream Road, 7:30pm, Tickets \$5, under 16 free

Clover Point Drifters

Sat., Mar 19 The Dancing Bean Cafe, Chemainus, Tickets \$15. www.dancingbean.ca for info

Sun., Mar 20 The Victoria Folk Music Society @ Norway House after open stage

Seen Around VBA - Send your submissions to Victoria Pang @ vice_president@victoriabluegrass.ca

