

Tangled up in bluegrass

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Chances are you've heard Alison Krauss' name before. She and her band, Union Station, are perhaps the only bluegrass group that could sell out the St. Augustine Amphitheatre weeks before their appearance, which is what happened with tonight's show there. If you don't have tickets yet, that's tough luck.

Krauss has been a musical force for many years, crossing over from her bluegrass roots to country. It was a move that introduced a new crowd of listeners to the specialized and highly regionalized genre of bluegrass music.

So when the majority thinks of bluegrass, it's likely Krauss is the first (or only) musician who comes to mind. And at some point, the "Dueling Banjos" and "Squeal like a pig" jokes about the movie "Deliverance" start rolling.

But there's so much more to bluegrass than that. Here's a Bluegrass 101 primer with tidbits on more than a dozen other players, past and present. There are many others, but this should allow for a good start. Krauss fits somewhere in the middle of the genre's history; influenced by and having learned from the legends, she has gone on to influence younger players.

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Bluegrass Events

Bluegrass Music Convention. Thursday, Sept. 8, to Saturday, Sept. 10, 401 Twin Oaks Drive, Twin Oaks Park, Hoboken, Ga. With Marty Raybon, The Little Roy and Lizzie Long Show, A Deeper Shade of Blue and more. \$8-\$25. (912) 458-2365, twinoakspark.com.

Ralph Stanley. 7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 8, at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, 1050 A1A N., Ponte Vedra Beach, \$39-\$44. (904) 209-0367, pvconcerthall.com.

Fall Palatka Bluegrass Festival. Thursday, Oct. 6, to Saturday, Oct. 8, Rodehaver Boys' Ranch, 380 Boys Ranch Road, Palatka. With Jimmy Martin Jr., The Travelin' McCourys featuring Del McCoury's sons Rob and Ronnie McCoury, The Lewis Tradition and more. \$15-\$85. (706) 864-7203, aandabluegrass.com.

Fall Bluegrass Festival. Thursday, Nov. 3, to Saturday, Nov. 5, Dixieland Music Park, 17500 NE U.S. 301, Waldo. \$10-\$55. (904) 886-8378, nfbgrass.org.

North Florida Bluegrass Association's Bluegrass Music Expo. Friday, Nov. 18, and Saturday, Nov. 19, Dixieland Music Park, 17500 NE U.S. 301, Waldo. With 14 bands, plus instrument workshops. \$10, including both days. (904) 304-3834, nfbgrass.org.

New Year's Bluegrass Festival. Thursday, Dec. 29, to Saturday, Dec. 31, Historic District Convention Complex, Jekyll Island, Ga. With Dailey and Vincent, Rhonda Vincent and The Rage, and more. \$20-\$95. (706) 864-7203, aandabluegrass.com.

HEAR THE MUSIC

Check out the interactive version of this graphic and hear excerpts of 14 bluegrass songs from 1947 to 2011. jacksonville.com/entertainment

The Grascals

Since 2004, The Grascals have become one of the biggest bluegrass buzz bands of today.



Several members of the Grascals have played with the Osborne Brothers.

Del McCoury

McCoury started out on banjo, but moved to guitar and lead vocals before starting his own group, Del McCoury and the Dixie Pals, in the late 1960s. His latest group is the Del McCoury Band, featuring his sons, Ronnie and Rob; they started winning awards left and right in the mid-1990s.



Del McCoury sang and played guitar for a year-long apprenticeship in Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys.

Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys

As the founding father of bluegrass, he set the standard for the genre in the early to mid-1940s. Without the late Monroe, a Kentucky native and mandolin master, traditional bluegrass as we know it wouldn't be around.



Sonny Osborne played in Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys.



The Osborne Brothers
Sonny and Bobby Osborne of Kentucky were big in the 1960s and 1970s, when bluegrass enjoyed a strong revival in popularity. Their song "Rocky Top" is one of the genre's best known and most requested tunes. They managed to be crossoverers with more mainstream country music.

The Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys

In the mid-1940s, Carter and Ralph Stanley of Virginia brought in an old-time mountain music sound, and Ralph's high tenor added the "lonesome" sound. They founded the Live Oak-based radio show, "Savannah River Jamboree," in the late 1950s. Carter died in 1966, but Grammy winner Ralph hasn't stopped performing.



Ralph Stanley briefly played in Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys.

Jim & Jesse and the Virginia Boys

The McReynolds brothers from Virginia hit it big in the 1950s. They starred on the Live Oak-based radio show, "Savannah River Jamboree," in the early 1960s.



The Stanley Brothers and Jim & Jesse have ties through the "Savannah River Jamboree" radio show.

Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver

Mandolinist and singer Doyle Lawson has released more than 30 studio albums since the late 1970s. He is known for touring extensively, and for his love of gospel music. For many years prior to forming his own band, he played in the group Country Gentlemen.



Jamie Dailey played with Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver.

Nickel Creek

During a stint of about 7 years in the 2000s, the trio Nickel Creek led a music trend dubbed "newgrass." Their contemporary, progressive spin on bluegrass attracted a new crowd of listeners to the genre. They broke up in 2007, but newgrass lives on.



Lending much guidance, Alison Krauss produced Nickel Creek's first two albums.

Flatt & Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys

Lester and Earl, respectively. Three-finger, "Scruggs-style" banjo picking is a defining characteristic of the genre. They wrote the theme song for "The Beverly Hillbillies" TV show. After breaking up in 1969, they had lengthy solo careers.



Doug Dillard says that, as a teen, he got so excited the first time he heard Earl Scruggs' banjo that he drove into a ditch; soon after, he went to Tennessee with his banjo and knocked on Scruggs' door.



Alison Krauss

Krauss, an Illinois native, joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1993. A fiddler since young childhood, she has won 26 Grammys and earned a spot in history alongside bluegrass giants of yore. With her band, Union Station, and after performing on several Hollywood movie soundtracks, she reached celebrity status in the 1990s. She has received accolades not only as a fiddler, but also as a vocalist, songwriter and producer.



The Dillards

Brothers Rodney and Douglas Dillard of Missouri were bluegrass progressives who came to fame in the 1960s and 1970s on the festival and college campus tour circuits. Known for comedic antics, they are perhaps better known as The Darlins on "The Andy Griffith Show." Much to the disdain of traditionalists, they sometimes electrified and added drums to bluegrass.

When Skaggs was 6, Bill Monroe played in his Kentucky town and invited him to play mandolin on stage.

Krauss is often called a protegee of Bill Monroe.

During a show honoring Ralph Stanley's 80th birthday she said, "I'd fight anybody who doesn't love Ralph Stanley."

Krauss has recorded with and co-hosted the International Bluegrass Music Association Awards show with Ricky Skaggs.

In 2003, Ricky Skaggs recorded "The Three Pickers" with Earl Scruggs (and Doc Watson).

Both Flatt and Scruggs played... Alison Krauss has recorded with Earl Scruggs.

In Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys from 1945 to 1948.

Rodney Dillard has worked with Ricky Skaggs.

Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder

A 14-time Grammy winner, Skaggs started his career in the 1970s. He has been highly successful, especially since forming his own record label in 1997. He's considered an innovator in bluegrass, but has also been a key player in contemporary country music.



Darrin Vincent played in Ricky Skaggs' Kentucky Thunder for 10 years.



Dailey and Vincent

Jamie Dailey and Darrin Vincent (Rhonda Vincent's brother) took bluegrass by storm together in the 2000s. They had both been in the business for years, but didn't gain so much attention until teaming up.



Steep Canyon Rangers

This North Carolina band just signed with Rounder Records, also home to Alison Krauss and Union Station. Most recently, they've been joined by Steve Martin, the actor, comedian, producer, writer – and banjo player and singer. Their new album, "Rare Bird Alert," also features Paul McCartney.

PLAYLIST

Download these tunes to make a mix that tracks the history of bluegrass to the present.

1947: Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys, "Blue Moon of Kentucky"

1951: Flatt & Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys, "My Cabin in Caroline"

1951: The Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys, "The Lonesome River"

1962: Jim & Jesse, "She Left Me Standing on the Mountain"

1968: The Osborne Brothers, "Rocky Top"

1968: The Dillards, "Hey Boys"

1971: Del McCoury, "Rain and Snow"

1981: Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver, "I'll Have a New Life"

1997: Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, "Ridin' That Midnight Train"

2001: Alison Krauss and Union Station, "Daylight"

2005: Nickel Creek, "When in Rome"

2010: The Grascals, "The Famous Lefty Flynn's"

2010: Dailey and Vincent, "When I Reach That Home Up There"

2011: Steve Martin and the Steep Canyon Rangers, "Women Like to Slow Dance"