

# BLUEGRASS

From page 1

10 groups scheduled to perform at The Bluegrass Invasion, a marathon concert in the North Park at Ave Maria Township from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday, June 6. While Frontline Bluegrass is locally based, many of the entertainers in the lineup are Grammy winners or nominees, or winners of various awards from the International Bluegrass Music Association.

"It's the biggest thing that's going to happen to bluegrass around here," Mr. Morrison says about the Invasion. "It'll bring a lot of good, positive attention to bluegrass in this area."

The Bluegrass Invasion line-up includes Crossfire with Clay Hess, a three-time Grammy winner; the legendary gospel group, The Lewis Family; Ronnie Reno and The Reno Tradition; the Grascals and Blue Highway. "We haven't had a festival of this magnitude or close to it since '86." Usually, Mr. Morrison says, bluegrass fans have to travel to Tampa or over to the east coast to see performers of this caliber. Highlights of some of The Bluegrass Invasion bands:

- Blue Highway's eighth and latest release, "Through the Window of a Train," debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard Bluegrass Charts and has been critically acclaimed. The band is described as "artfully balanced between tradition and innovation" and "in the forefront of contemporary bluegrass music."

- Clay Hess, who performs with Crossfire, is a Grammy-winning guitar player who has played with the likes of Ricky Skaggs, Travis Tritt and Bruce Hornsby.

- The Lewis Family, "America's First Family of Bluegrass Gospel Music," has performed together for 60 years and won the 2009 Dove Award for their "We Are Family" album. The Bluegrass Invasion will be the group's final Florida appearance, as they are retiring in September.

- The Grascals recorded their debut album in 2004, the same year they were invited by Dolly Parton to open her fall tour. They were named Entertainers of the Year in 2006 and 2007 by the International Bluegrass Music Association.

- Singer and guitarist Ronnie Reno of The Reno Tradition has toured as an opening act and band member for Merle Haggard, toured with Mel Tillis, done studio work for Johnny Cash, Conway Twitty and Willie Nelson, and written hits for both Haggard and Twitty. On the bluegrass side, he spent several years providing part of the trademark harmonies of the Osborne Brothers.

## That high, lonesome sound

A unique form of acoustic music, bluegrass is known for its vocal harmonies, which have been described as a "high, lonesome sound," akin to a train whistle in the dead of night or a coyote howling at the moon. Even so, Mr. Morrison says, you can't help but tap your feet or want to get up and dance to the tunes.

"But it's a clogging type of dance," he clarifies. Dancing to bluegrass is also called "buck dancing" or "flat footing."

The banjo, a staple in bluegrass bands, was originally an African instrument that was made from a gourd, he says. In the late 1940s and early '50s, he adds, Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass, and early pioneers invented the combination of instruments in a typical bluegrass band: In addition to the banjo, there's guitar, mandolin, fiddle, bass and dobro.



COURTESY PHOTOS  
Blue Highway, top, The Lewis Family, above, and Frontline Bluegrass, left, will be playing at the Bluegrass Invasion June 6 at North Park, Ave Maria.

describes the genre as a mixture of old-time mountain music, folk music, Celtic music and fiddle tunes from Ireland. When Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs played Carnegie Hall in 1962, he says, "It was dubbed 'folk music on overdrive.'"

Mr. Morrison, who used to perform in a group called Beargrass Bluegrass, plays guitar and sings lead with Frontline Bluegrass. He jokes that the group is also known as Ghinko Biloba, as "we all have white hair, naturally."

At Saturday's Bluegrass Invasion, they're scheduled to perform second in line, from 10:50 to 11:35 a.m.

Whether you're a newcomer or a die-hard bluegrass fan, here's a list of things you might be interested in:

## Monthly Pick-in

The Acoustic Music Society of Southwest Florida holds a pick-in the first Sunday of each month from 2 to 5 p.m. behind the Lee Civic Center on Highway 78 in North Fort Myers. Each session features three to four bands playing acoustic music, bluegrass, folk and blues. The cost is \$6 per month or \$25 per family a year. Look for signs posted along the road for exact location.

"It became bluegrass because Bill Monroe was from Kentucky" (the Blue Grass State), Mr. Morrison says. He

## performers

- >>>What: The Bluegrass Invasion schedule of performers
- >>>10-10:45 a.m., Palms Bluegrass
- >>>10:50-11:35 a.m., Frontline Bluegrass
- >>>11:40 a.m., Salute to U.S. veterans of all wars
- >>>11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Keith Bass and Tomorrow's News
- >>>12:45-1:30 p.m., Roger Bass and the Hillbillies
- >>>1:35-2:20 p.m., Swinging Bridge
- >>>2:30-3:55 p.m., Crossfire with Clay Hess
- >>>4:05-5:30 p.m., The Lewis Family
- >>>5:35-7 p.m., Ronnie Reno and the Reno Tradition
- >>>7:05-8:30 p.m., The Grascals with IBMA Banjo Player of the Year Kristin Scott Benson
- >>>8:35-10 p.m., Blue Highway

## Bluegrass radio

If you want to hear some bluegrass on the radio, tune in to "The Bluegrass Express" on WMYR 1410 AM from 5-6 p.m. Sundays. The program started just a few weeks ago with host DJ Hoyle, who welcomes e-mails and takes requests at bluegrassexpress@gmail.com.

## Bluegrass on the Web

To find out what's going on locally in all things bluegrass, go to: <http://calendar.yahoo.com/bluewaterbg>.

## Bluegrass at the Phil

Last season, the Philharmonic Center for the Arts held two successful bluegrass concerts: Ricky Scaggs and Cherryholmes. The concerts were so popular that the Phil invited Cherryholmes back to perform next season. Dubbed "Blue Jeans and Bluegrass," the Thursday, May 13, 2010, concert will feature Cherryholmes with the blue jean-clad Naples Philharmonic Orchestra.

## Bluegrass in Kentucky

Romp '09, The River of Music Party & the Pioneers of Bluegrass Gathering, will take place from June 24-27 in Owensboro, Ky., the home state of Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass. For more information, call (888) 692-2656 or go to [www.bluegrassmuseum.org](http://www.bluegrassmuseum.org). ■