

GRASS



The tools of the trade—banjo, dobro, mandolin, guitar, fiddle, and bass.

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Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys, the first true bluegrass band (and also where the genre got its name). Monroe (center) played mandolin.

Poetry Corner

Banjo by Elijah Cockey—A Cinquain

Loud, clear

Long, skinny frame

Seems as if it's joking

Its twangy, fast, and yet clean sound

Brings joy to my heart



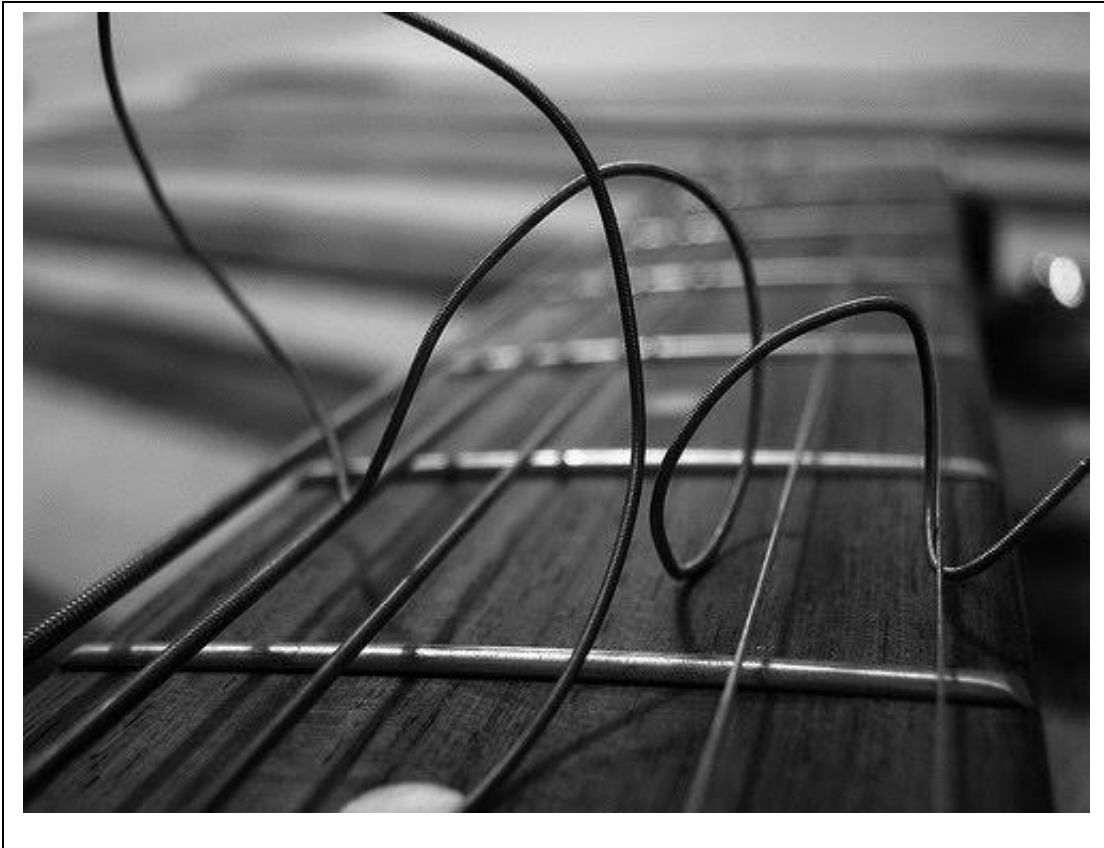
Earl Scruggs—often said to be the greatest banjo player of all time

Tuning by Elijah Cockey—A Senryu

As I tune my B

It stretches, then snaps in two

Flying towards my face



A broken string—a common dilemma for musicians.

Mando Picker by Elijah Cockey—A Limerick

There once was a mandolin picker
On the mandolin no one was quicker
On the neck, low and high,
His fingers would fly
That talented mandolin picker



Your average, 8-stringed bluegrass mandolin.

Musical Highlight—Robin Cockey

By Elijah Cockey

Imagine it's Maryland in the early 1970s. A skinny teenager with thick glasses, 3 silver teeth, huge sideburns, and an odd blonde streak in his dark brown hair plays a complicated, several-page-long classical piece of music. Finally he pauses and takes out a single sheet of paper. He then proceeds to play the beginner folk tune "Cripple Creek." This boy is Delmarva fiddling legend Robin Cockey.

Born on February 25, 1955, Robin began playing classical music at an early age. Right from the get-go, he proved to be a talented young violinist, taking part in several orchestras, one at the national level, and even winning a musical scholarship. But he always loved listening to folk, and created many variations of "Cripple Creek" from "The Anthology of American Music." And in 1973, when he went to Swarthmore College, he was ready for more.

A banjist, guitarist, mandolinist, singer, and fellow student, Robby George of West Virginia, took Robin under his wing, becoming the Artful Dodger to Robin's Oliver of the musical world. Together they played in several bands, including Robby George and Friends and Robin Cockey and the Cockaroos before Robin, in 1977, went to William and Mary for his law degree. There he played music from the jazz, bluegrass, blues, country, and classical genres, among others. Finally, he came home to Delmarva in 1979.

From there, Robin pretty much only played classical music for 10 years, forming a string quartet and helping found a community orchestra. But, in 1989, things would change. At a party at Andrew Hepburn's house, some guests, including Charlie Stegman and Mike O'Loughlin took out musical instruments. Robin ran home to get his fiddle, and his love for folk music was back on!

Robin, Mike and Charlie formed the Folk Heroes. Over the next few decades they played and played, adding a younger Delmarva musician, Mickey Justice, in 2004. But then, things broke bad.

Mike didn't like Mickey, and Mickey didn't like Mike. Things only got worse when Robin formed Interesting Monsters, which broke up in 2012. Devil Eat the

Cat was soon to be formed, but broke up in 2017. An unsuspected plot twist occurred in 2016, when Mike and Mickey forgot their differences long enough to yank the rug out from underneath Charlie and Robin and branch off into their own band.

All seemed lost until 2019, when Charlie and Robin joined forces with the band of Robin's three young children, aptly named the Folk Villains. Robin continues to play to this day. The legend lives!



Robin (far left) at a Robby George and Friends reunion. Robby is fourth from left.



The Folk Villains playing “Angeline the Baker” in April 2020. From left to right—Elijah, banjo, age 14. Isabel, fiddle, age 12. Guinevere, mandolin, age 10.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Mr. Editor,

I'm Phil "Grease" Sanger, and I would like to call to your attention my good friend Katie Hansel. Katie makes and sells pretty much every kind of string instrument there is out of her workshop. She handcrafts everyone from scratch—as in, she will go out to the woods and cut down a tree. I'm an avid hiker, so my band decided to pull a publicity stunt where we would give a concert at one part of the Appalachian Trail, then haul our instruments (supplied by Katie) for a few miles to another stop, then give another concert. All in all, we gave 4 concerts and hiked 16 miles over the course of 2 days!

I guess what I'm trying to say is that Katie Hansel makes really tough, hardy instruments, and that any other musicians out there should definitely check her out for their next purchase.

Thanks,

Phil



This picture is of an Appalachian Trail signpost that appeared along the way.

Letter to the Reader

Dear Mr. Sanger,

Thanks for your letter! I think that your story is fascinating! Ms. Hansel's instruments sound as if they're very high-quality, and I'll give her a call the next time I need a new banjo!

Your tale of trekking through Appalachia really interested me, and I believe it has the potential to be a good "Musical Highlight" piece. If you're interested, let me know and I'll give you a call. Again, thank you for your letter, and keep in touch!

Yours,

Elijah Cockey

Editor-In-Chief



Tired of Always Picking In the All the Wrong Keys?

Buy the all-new Rottgen Banjo Capo! This capo allows for seamless transferring between keys! Buy yours today!

How to Do It!

Banjo Cookies by Elijah Cockey

Hey there, bluegrass-themed chefs! Today, I'll be teaching you how to make banjo cookies! For this recipe, you are going to need: A banjo cookie cutter (available online), flour, baking soda, baking powder, butter, sugar, egg, vanilla, and icing (optional). First, you need to preheat your oven to 375° Fahrenheit. Then, mix your flour, baking soda, and baking powder in a bowl. Then mix the butter, sugar, egg, and vanilla components. After that, combine the two mixtures. Stir until a dough, then roll out. I found that thicker dough cut better and generally made for better cookies. Use the cookie cutter to form into banjo shape. Then bake for 10 minutes. I would recommend using the time it takes for the cookies to bake to practice your instrument. Once the cookies are done, you can either serve them then or paint with icing. Congratulations! Your cookies are done!



The finished product!

Editor's Piece—An Average Practice

It was a sunny Saturday in May, and the Folk Villains were practicing in their living room. This was a fairly average band practice, which meant that everyone was yelling at each other.

“No, no, no!” scolded Isabel. “You’re playing ‘John Stenton’s Number Two’ way to fast, Guin!”

“No I’m not!” shrieked Guinevere. “*You* slowed way *down!*”

“Nuh-huh!”

“Yeah-huh!”

“No! I didn’t!”

“Yeah, you did! I can hear!”

“Well, I can too! Elijah” hollered Isabel.

“Huh?” Elijah was plucking away at his double bass, oblivious to the fight.

“Ugh! Did we speed up or slow down?”

“Oh, I don’t know, it sounded pretty good to me.”

“Aargh!” both girls shouted. Isabel took a deep breath. “Okay, let’s try ‘Take Me to the Ending’. Get out your cello, Elijah.”

“Okee-dokee.” Then, the kids burst out in three-part harmony.

Take Me to the Ending

I wanna see it from the be-

Ginning, oh-oh-oh.

Look up, when I’m—

“Elijah! You’re out of tune!” screeched Guinevere.

“What? No I wasn’t, you idiot!”

“Wha—Mom, he called me an idiot!”

“Please! You’re ten! Pull yourself together!” Elijah scoffed derisively.

“I hate you, you butt!”

“Right back at ya, kiddo!”

Guin turned purple.

Isabel intervened, sensing an oncoming disaster. “Woah, woah, woah. Let’s not fight, guys.”

“Yeah, well, she—” began Elijah.

“But he was—” started Guinevere.

“Stop it!” Both parties glared warily at each other. “Let’s do...’Bonnie Tammie.’” The girls got out mandolins while Elijah took a banjo out of its case. “Now, let’s do it in G, because A didn’t go so well on Tuesday. I’ll play lead today, because Guin took it last time. Elijah, you can have a solo, but please let it be shorter than last time’s, which was 7 minutes long, so that Guin and I can— WOULD YOU STOP PLAYING THAT STUPID BANJO WHILE I’M TALKING?!”

After a pause, Elijah said in a calm yet furious voice, “Joe’s not stupid.”

“WHAT?! IT’S A HUNK OF WOOD, FOR CRYIN’ OUT LOUD!”

“Actually, Joe is a vintage 1960s Kay Old-Time Banjo, exquisitely crafted out of the wood of the—”

“Shut up! Both of you!” Guin snapped.

“What? No, *you* shut up! It’s Elijah’s fault anyway, plucking his stupid—”

“NO! I was frailing!”

“Shut up!”

“Plucking, frailing, whatever—”

“Be quiet!”

“No, I won’t!”

“Frailing!”

“Stop it!”

“Mom!”

“Plucking!”

“I hate you!”

“I was *frailing*, you ignorant—“

“I hate you, too!”

“Ow!”

“Help!”

“Don’t hurt Joe! Frailing!”

“Who cares about your—“

“Stop hitting me, Guin!”

“No, I won’t!”

“Ouch!”

“Take that, Joe, you—“

“NOOO! Joe! It’s okay, Daddy’s with you!”

“Shut up!”

“Help!”

“Mom! Help!”

“Kids!” Mom poked her head in the door. “How ‘bout we practice...individually today?”



The FV.

Dear Elijah

Dear Elijah,

My son plays guitar, and is interested in Bluegrass. I was wondering if you could tell me some of the other instruments in a Bluegrass band, as my son has three younger siblings! Please write back soon, as I would like to have my own little band!

Thanks,

Mike

Dear Mike,

I'm excited to hear about your son's interest in Bluegrass! I personally play banjo, bass, and cello, but tons of other instruments exist in the field. A typical Bluegrass band consists of four vocalists and between four and eight instrumentalists (instrumentalists often double as vocalists). Traditionally, Bluegrass bands have at least a banjo, a mandolin, a guitar, a fiddle, a bass, and a dobro. Occasionally, things like harmonica, accordion, lap dulcimer, and autoharp are used, though those instruments are often associated more with Old-Time. I hope your kids have fun!

Yours,

Elijah



A dobro—one of the least familiar bluegrass instruments.

Humor Column—The Musician's Dilemma

By Elijah Cockey

Note: This is how I imagine myself 20 years from now.

"Is this it?" I wondered aloud, staring at the dumpy bar in downtown Rockfall, Virginia. My band, Spooky Moosic, had been booked to play at Pete's Pub on a Tuesday evening in 2040. I looked at the cramped little structure with more than a shadow of doubt.

"Do you think it'll hold all of us?" my friend Adithya asked, having just walked up, lugging his keyboard. He had given our guitarist, Rick, a ride on the way over. Eventually, David and Colin, our mandolin and bass players and Alex, our fiddler, showed up, and the six of us trooped up to the door. We knocked and, after an upwards of 5 minutes, the door opened. A short, fat man with greasy hair, a stubble on his face, jeans, a ragged flannel shirt, cowboy boots, and a John Deere baseball cap was in the doorway. He had a Bud Lite in his left hand, and a ketchup-covered hotdog in his right. He took a huge bite, smearing his face with ketchup, then swigged out of the can of beer.

"Whaddya want?" he grunted.

"Um, well, are you Pete? The owner of this bar?" ventured David.

"Nah, Pete's almost never around." Swig of beer. "I'm" Bite of hot dog. "Joe. I run this dump in the evenings." Swig. "A guy named Bill runs it" Swig. "In the mornings."

"Well, Joe, we were hired by Pete to play here," tried Adithya.

"When?" Bite.

"Well, uh, tonight."

"Really?" Swig. "Well, then, come on in, and make yerselves comfortable." He led the way into a dimly lit room. A four-stool bar was shoved into the corner, and two tables and a booth were scattered throughout the space. All in all, the entire pub was about as big as an average-sized stage.

“Where should we set up?” asked Rick, a hint of panic in his voice.

“Over there.” Joe gestured with his hot dog. “If that’s too cramped, you can stand on the bar.” He guffawed at his joke, then waddled off.

“Alright, let’s get unpacked,” Colin said, breaking the awkward silence. We did, opening our cases and moving the tables away. Only discovering one microphone, we all sighed. We often sang with four or five people, so this was really inconvenient.

“We should just leave,” muttered Alex. Colin, Rick, and Adithya all murmured their agreement.

“No, we’re too far in to quit now,” reasoned David.

“David’s right,” I agreed.

“Fine.”

“Whatever.”

“Alright.”

“Let’s get it over with.”

“Wha-hoo!” Joe was now loudly rooting for the Eagles as they soundly trounced the Titans.

“Scum,” I growled under my breath as I adjusted my Steelers beanie. Then, I took my banjo out of its case.

Two hours later, the last customers had left, and we woke up Joe, who was now snoring in a puddle of whiskey behind the bar.

“Would you mind paying us?” I asked.

“Uuhh...here’s \$100.”

“But Pete promised us \$200.”

“Wha—fine, here’s \$150.”

I reached down and grabbed his shirt. “Listen up, Eagles-lover. We all have families we need to get home to. Give me \$200 or I’ll take you to court.”

“Alright, whatever.” He produced the cash, and we left him in his puddle.

“Let’s get out of here,” said Alex. “I’m never playing here again!”

I couldn’t have agreed more.

Thank You, Readers!

