

Central

Texas Bluegrass

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IBMA Member

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Christmas Times a Coming!

**ARTIST PROFILE
INTERVIEW WITH
EDDIE COLLINS**

**MEET A MEMBER
THE SCHUTTGER
FAMILY**

**HAVE YOU BEEN
BAD OR GOOD?**

**IT'S A FAMILY
THING
LEARNIN' A LITTLE
ABOUT THE
RELATIVE MINOR**

CTBA's Annual Membership Meeting

will be held at

ARTZ RIB HOUSE

Sunday, December 11th, @ 2:30pm

Everyone's invited

Be there!

**GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST
HIGH STAKES ROLLERS**

WES GREEN, EDDIE COLLINS, AND CLAYTON ELLIOT

The Listening Post



Dapple Patti

Alan Munde teamed up with his old Oklahoma buddy, Adam Granger. What came out of the other end was “Dapple Patti”, a fine collection of traditional and original Munde melodies sprinkled in with a few humorous tunes from fellow Okie, John Hadley. Since Alan was under the weather I spoke with Adam about the new CD. “I think twelve of these cuts are live, from three different venues in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The other three were done in the studio in my house. The venues are indicated on the album. We had wanted to do an album for a few years, and our extended tour up here afforded us the opportunity”.

Many of you already know that Alan recently underwent heart surgery and, as of this writing, he is doing well. If you want to help Alan out a little, order this new CD, maybe one of his many books, or tablature from his website: <http://al-mundesbanjocollege.com/>



The Listening Post is a forum established to monitor bluegrass musical recordings, live performances, or events in Texas. Our mailbox sometimes contains CDs for us to review. Here is where you will find reviews of the CD's Central Texas Bluegrass Association receives as well as reviews of live performances or workshops.

Wood & Wire and MilkDrive @ the Cactus



One of my favorite things to do is to hear great live music—preferably bluegrass—especially at hard-to-beat, legendary venues like the Cactus Cafe. Possibly even more exciting is the opportunity to witness the fresh, raw, eager musical talent right before my eyes. Such has been the case since I first met Tony Kamel at CTBA's annual band scramble a couple of years ago (where I shamelessly approached him to become a member---which he did) and was now watching his less-than-four-month-old band play at the Cactus Cafe on November 17. Tony's band Wood & Wire had been asked to open for the amazing Austin alt-folk-progressive acoustic string band MilkDrive, who released their debut studio album ROAD FROM HOME earlier this year. Without question, it's amazing to watch MilkDrive's master instrument technicians Noah Jeffries, Dennis Ludiker, Brian Beken, & Matt Mefford weave their musical talents together seamlessly. But it's equally inspiring to watch a musician like Tony Kamel, who only found his way to bluegrass and onto a public stage less than a couple of years ago. Tony's journey to and through the bluegrass maze included stops at Artz Rib House for Sunday afternoon jams, Eddie Collin's open mic nights at New World Deli, all-night jamming at local festivals in-



cluding Old Settler's, AFTM's Austin Stringband Festival, and RiceGrass, and Craigslist postings to link up with other musicians who wanted to play bluegrass. Although Tony has been playing and singing most of his life, he had mostly played only electric guitar. He told me that he recalls hearing Stringed Cheese Incident while he was in high school and realizing, "Hey, I really like this bluegrass stuff!" After playing around town with two of his early projects, Flatiron and My Pet Possum, Tony is excited about his newest trio project that features mostly bluegrass and Americana, sprinkled with swing elements and original music. Tony's talented bandmates are Matt Slusher (founding member of South Austin Jug Band) and Dom Fisher, who just moved to Austin two years ago from Nashville and also studied jazz at Ithaca College in New York. They put on a great opening show with high energy and passionate execution and were even joined by MikDrive's Dennis Ludiker on fiddle for a tune. For a guy who's pretty new to the scene and doesn't do music for a living, he's feeling pretty blessed to be playing the music he loves with such fine musicians--not to mention having his dreams come true of playing at both Gruene Hall and Cactus Cafe in the last couple of months. Tony can also be seen frequently on Monday nights playing with Bluegrass Outfit at Flipnotics and on Wednesday nights in San Marcos at Tantra Coffee House. Tony said it's been especially great to see the increasingly large and enthusiastic young folks coming out to hear this brand of music in San Marcos. I hope you'll get the chance to check out some of these great musical offerings. It's been fun watching you, Tony, and we're looking forward to hearing more from you! For more information, check out Wood & Wire's facebook page at www.facebook.com/woodandwire or for booking information, you can email woodandwireband@gmail.com. -Jami Hampton



Buddy Greene

This may be the first time that CTBA has ever given a review of a harmonica player's CD. If it isn't, you can be sure that Cara Cooke will contact me and straighten me out. Buddy Greene just release a new CD called "**Harmonica Anthology**". Bryan Sutton, Aubrey Haynie, Ron Block, Stuart Duncan, Tim O'Brien, and others perform.

In 1991, Buddy collaborated with Mark Lowry to write "Mary, Did You Know?", which quickly became a modern-day Christmas standard, with recordings by superstars such as Kenny Rogers & Wynonna, Kathy Mattea, Natalie Cole, Reba McEntire, Clay Aiken, Gary Chapman, and countless others. Other songs penned by Buddy and recorded by other artists include "He Is" (Ashley Cleveland), "Fall Down Children" (The Whites) and "Recovering Pharisee" (Del McCoury).

Buddy will be back in Central Texas January 5-8 in Leakey and at the First Baptist Church in Boerne, TX. It's worth a listen.



Texas Pickin Park Last Show for 2011



The Texas Pickin' Park season finale was the second weekend in November. It will start back up the second weekend in April 2012. For those attending you saw some great shows by Steve Smith, Third Rail, Robertson County Line, Southern Style, and Seven Miles off the Blacktop. Don't miss the jamming next year.



Have You Been BAD or GOOD?

This time of year Central Texas Bluegrass Association will get all sorts of emails & phone calls from friends of musicians asking us what would make a GREAT GIFT for the holidays. Here are a few ideas for your musician friends that have **BEEN GOOD**. How about an **Elliott Capo, Peterson Tuner**, **online lessons from sites like the Academy of Bluegrass, BluegrassCollege.org, BluegrassLessonsOnline.com, Banjotrain.com, almundesbanjocollege.com, Truefire**, and on and on. How do you pick one of the online schools. First, find out if it is a "personalized" lesson or if they just



provide access to lessons. I would recommend Academy of Bluegrass. They have an easy way to buy three months of instruction for one of several instruments for around \$90. You can also go over to Fiddler's Green. They have lots of Christmas gift ideas of picks, books, strings, instructional DVDs, and more.



BUT what if your bluegrass musician friend has been **BEEN BAD!!!**

For the guitar player - a thin rock (be sure to put it in a fancy wrapping and put a price tag of \$255 on it - be careful though, all of their friends will want one when they find out how much it cost).

For the mandolin player - tablature written on a restaurant napkin (it doesn't have to be a real song, just recognizable as tab - oh, and tell them it was written by Chris Thile when you had coffee with him last week)

For the banjo player - four strings (any four AND they don't have to be banjo strings - it just has to be FOUR strings - write on the outside "guaranteed to stay in tune")

For the fiddler - a handi-wipe (write "rosin removal kit" on the outside - by the way, please STOP them before they try to use it)

For bass players - some plastic roman numerals and super glue (all they need is the I and the V - oh yes, you need to watch out for flying objects about ten minutes after they open it - maybe longer)

For dobro players - a stick (tell them it's the same slide Jerry Douglas uses - just be sure and not sharpen the ends and be prepared to duck)

Or buy season tickets to the Opera. It's like the Opry, only a little more formal. They'll love it.



Texas Pickin' Park

Fayetteville, Texas

Jams every 2nd Saturday

FREE e-mail Jam Alerts and monthly newsletter.
sign up at www.texaspickinpark.com

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GUITAR AND MANDOLIN
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Learnin' a Little: The Relative Minor

During these holidays we've all got to spend a little time with our relatives. Some of our relatives make us feel pretty good and some...well, maybe that's just my family...maybe all of your relatives make you feel good.

You may have heard me say that you can't get away from learning how to play your major scales. You have to know them. You can play them with open strings or all notes in the closed position but the bottom line is...you need to know the major scales EVEN IF ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS PLAY RHYTHM. There's just no getting around it. If you haven't started, learn the G, C, & D major scales in the open position (with as many open strings as you can play).

Now let's get down and dirty. The relative minor is the sixth note in the major scale. In the bluegrass key of G the major scale is G-A-B-C-D-E-F#-G. The note "E" is the sixth note in the G major scale. You can play a G major scale and play a G chord and life is good. You can play that same G major scale and play an E minor chord and life is still pretty good, it just doesn't sound as happy. Try it out. Play a G note and play the G major scale, then play an E note and play that same G major scale. Both sound good. If you have an instrument that can play chords try playing a G chord and the G scale and then play an E minor chord and play the G scale. Yes, they both should sound good. That's because Em is the relative minor of G major. Are you ready to turn it up a little?

Bluegrass types play a lot with both major and minor pentatonic scales. The G major pentatonic scale and the E minor pentatonic scale have the same notes. Em is the relative minor of G. So far life is good. Playing the G major pentatonic scale makes the song sound happy. But what if somebody needs to die in this bluegrass tune? Well, if the song is in Em (like Wayfaring Stranger) we'll need the E minor pentatonic (or you could say the G major pentatonic - same notes). But what if the song is sort of modal or minor or bluesy feeling and its in G (like Little Maggie)? We might need to shift up and play the G minor pentatonic instead of the G major pentatonic to get the desired sound. Here's where knowing your relative minors comes in handy. Let's say you are developing a solo or looking at your fretboard. Which chord has G minor as its relative minor? That would be B flat major. So it follows that all the notes in the Bb major scale will work over the G modal tune. Does that change the way you look at your fretboard?

Let's kick it up another notch. You're playing in G (no third). The Bb major scale and the G minor pentatonic scale are relatives...but wait...G minor is also the Dorian minor of F major. What happens when you play an F major scale over a G chord? The notes are all there. Sound like bluegrass?

Put it all together. Play a G chord and then go to a position where you would play a G minor pentatonic up the neck. Now find the F chord in that position and play the notes of the F major scale. Now find the Bb chord/scale in that position. Maybe it opens things up for you, maybe not. Keep on pickin' anyway. Read this again next Christmas.

By the way, some folks will tell you that none of this stuff matters and they just play what sounds good. When they say that just cry "Uncle" and ask them to play "Billy in the Lowground".

By Tom Duplissey



www.aftm.us

AFTMTexas@gmail.com

Meet a CTBA Member: The Schuttger Family

Introduce yourself. Tell us your name, a little bit about yourself, what city you live in, and why you joined CTBA

Chris, Lisa and daughter # 5, Gretchen Schuttger. We are a family membership, so you get 3 for 1 here. My wife and I actually have 7 children, 3 are grown and gone. We're a very musical family. Everyone (except Chris) plays piano as a foundation, then we add fiddle, mandolin, harp, harmonica, bugle, french horn, recorders (several variations). A couple of kids tried to pick up banjo and dobro, but it didn't really take. No matter, there are plenty of pickers to go around.

Once my kids got old enough to play well, we would sing and play for church groups and nursing homes. We met several traveling family groups, but never really got the bug to practice enough to do that ourselves. We have lived in the Austin/Cedar Park area for 6 years now as a job change brought us to town. We joined CTBA to plug into the local "bluegrass scene". I love reading all the articles and keeping up with the groups coming to town. I go to every one I can make.

Do you play an instrument? Which one?

Like many bluegrass fans, I got my start in the 1960's watching Flatt & Scruggs on the Beverly Hillbillies and the Darlings on Andy Griffith. I learned to play guitar for our church choir back in the 1970's. The music director taught me how to Travis pick, so it wasn't hard to turn that into Banjo picking. I wanted to learn banjo so bad in high school, that I bought Earl's book, took 7 strings off my 12 string, rearranged the strings and tuned as a banjo. After a year of picking a "ban-



tar", my parents bought the Alvarez you see pictured as a High School graduation present. Besides banjo I play guitar and stand up bass - when I can get it way from my daughter !

What bluegrass artists do you like to listen to most?

My stable of bluegrass artists is mostly traditional, with a few new-grass groups thrown in. I listen mostly to Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, Ricky Skaggs, Allison Krauss and Union Station, and Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver.

What's your all time favorite bluegrass song?

I would say my all time favorite bluegrass song is Bill Monroe's Southern Flavor. I love the hard driving instrumentals that layer all the instruments throughout the song. The crisp banjo, Bill's mandolin, twin harmonizing fiddles. I don't think you can get much more of a traditional bluegrass sound than that !!





**FREE
MUSIC!**

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From the Mailbox:



Dear Editor & CTBA,

I'm writing this open letter to the CTBA newsletter editor in hopes all CTBA members will be uplifted. I wish to offer my deepest heartfelt appreciation for CTBA and it's members and to say thank you to all whom have given of themselves for the music and for my musical growth. CTBA and its members have taken me from beginner to genuine singer/songwriter.

I started attending CTBA jams in 2002 following the first, and only, Georgetown Bluegrass Festival. I knew nothing of bluegrass and hadn't played my string bass or fiddle in 20 years. Throughout the next 6 years, many CTBA members made special efforts to be inclusive and to invite me in their circles.

Special thanks go to Dave Seaman and Lendall, from whom I learned a bunch of great songs. Frank Wakefield's "New Camptown Races" called in B-flat (thanks Dave! always giving me a challenge...) will forever stick in my head. Having to transpose on the fly was the impetus for me to study theory and learn the circle of 5ths, the orders of sharps and flats, the harmonized scale and how all this music stuff fits together.

I began performing for pay in 2008, good thing Dave jumped in my stuff about that time and in no uncertain terms informed me that they (whom I call "the pros") are always in PERFECT tune. I learned that there is no such thing as "good enough" tune, one is either in tune or not. I also learned that guitar strings really do only last a few weeks for coated strings and a few days for uncoated... who knew?? When you are going for PERFECT tune (the only kind of "in-tune") old strings really get in the way. I also learned I needed a tuner for each instrument I own, so now there's tuners lying around the music room and in every case.

The last critical lesson I learned from Dave and Kevin (thanks Kevin!) is don't overplay and don't step on your neighbor's solo! The players on records have put decades into their study and just because they do something great doesn't give me permission to go to a jam and munge over everybody else. So to those I munged over I offer my apologies and many thanks for putting up with me. I hope I can give back to the music and the players as the music has been given to me.

Reading suggestion - "The Music Lesson" by Victor Wooten (Béla Fleck's bass player).

Very best wishes and thanks to all, Jonathan Field, Randy's Rangers, Georgetown



Hey folks. I've been asked to try and help spread the word that **will not be a jam on the night of December 12**. Waterloo Ice House is having their company Christmas party that night at another location and they will be closed. If you know somebody that needs this info, please forward it on to them. CTBA folks, maybe we should send out an email and get it on the website? Thanks. Ben



**11th
Annual
Gospel Bluegrass Show**

January 28, 2012
(Jamming Begins at 12:00 noon)

Grape Creek Baptist Church
9781 Grape Creek Rd
(Church is approximately 10 miles
north of San Angelo)

6:00-9:30 p.m.

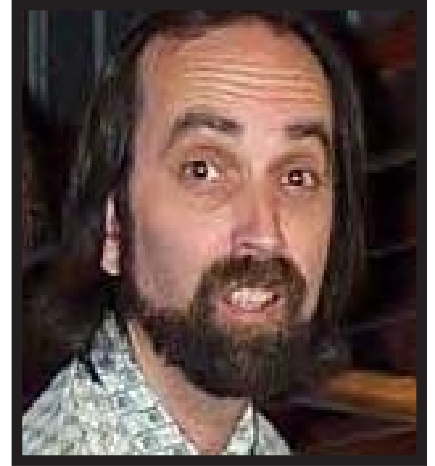
Featured Groups

Borderline Singer- Del Rio, Texas
Mercedes Bluegrass- Odessa, Texas
Concho Grass- San Angelo, Texas

Free Admission
meal will be served beginning at 4:30 p.m.
Donations for meal will help G.A.'s go to
camp

FMI- Call Ricky Rogers 650-8934
Church # 653-8761

Artist Profile: Eddie Collins



When did you start playing banjo?

Hmmm, '73...'74...whenever *Dueling Banjos* came out. I just did a history of that part of my life on my first radio show on KOOP radio. I did an evolution of how I got to bluegrass. I talked about all of that.

I missed that show. I usually listen to it each Sunday but sometimes I lose the day of the week. Well, this interview will benefit those that missed your show that weekend. So, what kind of banjo did you buy?

I was in a band that was playing progressive country stuff like the Byrds "*Sweetheart of the Rodeo*" album, Flying Burrito Brothers, stuff like that. Then "*Deliverance*" came out so people would ask if we knew "*Dueling Banjos*" and there was another guitar player in the band who bought a banjo for \$15 at a pawn shop. Because the first part of that song was so simple we worked it up within a week and then when it got to the fast part he would just kind of pound away and everybody would go crazy thinking they actually heard the song. He got tired of it and after about three or four months and he asked if I wanted to play, so I gave him the \$15 that he paid. It looked like some of the parts might have actually been about a 1910 Stewart Mac. It actually had a carved heel. It had a wood dowel that had the serial number stamped on there but it didn't have any brand name on the headstock. It was playable enough that I could start learning. I was just doing my thing. As you know the only thing available was Earl Scruggs book. So, I looked at the book and decided that I wanted to learn the "*Ballad of Jed Clampett*", which the way Earl plays it and the way he does it in that book...doesn't translate into licks that you'd use in other solos...most of the time when you learn an Earl Scruggs tune you have a ton of licks that you could use in ten or fifteen other songs, but none of the licks in "*Jed Clampett*" could be translated to any other song. They were all backward - forward - backward rolls...they were the totally wrong thing to learn as a first song. So I sort of gave up on it and tried to get the sound. So then in '75 there was a music store real close to where I lived and I went in and asked them if they could use a guitar teacher. They already had four or five guitar teachers. They said, "no, what we really need is a banjo teacher" and I don't think they knew I played banjo. I think they just threw it out there. So I asked what kind of people would be taking lessons and they said it would be beginners, so I said, OK, great I'll give that a shot. I started out giving banjo lessons but then I also got guitar students.

The same thing happened on mandolin. I was already teaching there for a year or two when they got a call for a mandolin teacher and while they were on the phone, they covered the phone and asked me if I could teach mandolin, and I said "ask them if they are a beginner". They said yes she is a beginner so I said OK, send her on in then (laughter). They had a mandolin hanging on the wall for \$30 and I bought it and got the only book that was available at the time "*Mel Bay's Deluxe Mandolin Method*". Which has no "method" to it other than it shows you four scales and has several songs in the wrong key, like "*Liberty*" is in the key of G. So my heart was in the right place but looking back on it, and I've heard several other teachers say the same thing, that they feel sorry for those early students as you were trying to find your way. In my case it wasn't my inability to teach it was my inability to actually play.

Well, you don't have that problem now. I'm curious. How has the internet impacted your teaching? Has

it helped you to become a better teacher?

My skills were already honed when the internet came along. I was either the first or second banjo site on the internet. That was when I had my magazine, 5-String Quarterly. Back in 1995 we put up an internet web site. Ralph Kephart was involved with that. John Hood was the co-editor. When stuff actually started coming online with the internet that was something I was glad to see. The quality of stuff we were putting up was very high quality versus some others that would throw together a site with a bunch of banjo tabs but I'm glad to see it overall. It's a double-edged deal. There's some really good stuff on the internet and I'm still trying to make a living teaching. Some of these guys are just giving it away, so that's kind of a tough deal for the teacher. It used to be that a person giving things away was mostly garbage, but now there is some good stuff out there for free. I go along with it, giving enough free stuff away. Just within the last two years I've started doing video instruction, but I was way behind on that. I should have been doing that maybe eight or nine years ago. But when I did it I realized that I had to give some of the stuff away to get people to the site so they would maybe buy something off the site. When I got into it was about the time that the hey-day of video instruction was already over as far as selling DVDs. Video instruction online...the new model is the Tony Trischka thing where you become a member of his site and he has all sorts of videos posted there and you pay a monthly fee. That's something I haven't explored that yet.

You're talking about the "Academy of Bluegrass" with Tony, Bryan Sutton, Mike Marshall, Darol Anger... and....who else

I think Missy Raines teaches bass.

That seems to be a pretty cool site. I signed up for it recently. After interviewing David Hamburger I also signed up for Truefire because it is almost exclusively guitar (but no bluegrass). That site gives you access to thousands of hours of guitar video instruction from more than thirty instructors. Some are good, some are really good, and some are so beginner that they are painful to sit through.

And they will painstakingly say I'm putting my first finger on the first fret of the first string...yes.

(Pulling out an old photo) Route 66. This is your California band?

Yes. In Ventura.

That's a nice looking guitar.

It's an interesting guitar. The body is a '62 and the neck is a '69. What happened is that when they sold Fender, when CBS bought it, they had all these old parts, but a guitar like that, because of the serial number of the body and if it were all '62 it would be worth about \$35,000. With that it's worth about \$20-25,000.

It seems to me that the guitars they are making today sound better.

Yes, that's the thing about the vintage market. I had owned that guitar two different times. We used to buy, swap and trade. Usually one of us would have a Tele, one a (Gibson) 335



and we'd all swap out these instruments. I had had my fingers in on that instrument since the mid 70's. Usually it would go for about \$500 in the exchanges and that went on for ten years. It wasn't like things were going up in value but then....

What about the other guitar?

It's a Gibson but it's not a 335. That might be a 347? It's only got a single cut-away.

I can't tell the name on the head stock. It looks like it says Chet Atkins. I didn't know Gibson made a Chet Atkins model.

Well, you know, I think you're right. I think they did for a real brief period in the 80's.

What year was this picture taken?

Late 1980's. It may have even been 1990. We moved here in 1992.

Were you playing banjo then?

We'd pull the banjo out for two or three songs. It was an anomaly back then because we were mainly a country dance band...playing oldies.

The online teaching thing seems to be an effective model. I've noticed some instructors are building sites with all of their instructional videos online for a small monthly fee. There are some where you can get one-on-one instruction with Skype and other tools. That has really taken off in the last year or so.

Right. The last couple of years. The downloadable lesson, the AcuTab people, have been impacted by the instant access is the age we live in. When someone wants to learn a song by so-and-so they don't want to wait ten days to get it in the mail. They actually want to learn it that night and they can do it with the right resources. The thing that I have focused on is that I don't just throw something out there to put it out. It's always very high quality and as far as I know that's what I am known for and respected for. A lot of these camps I'm involved in...I'm brought in as the guy that will actually teach people something. I don't have the biggest name. So, they will have the name guys get in there. Occasionally some of those name guys can teach but about 80% of them really can't. They say, this is what I am playing, and they play it. Can't break it down. So people that are at those camps, after about an hour or two of that, they've paid several hundred dollars and...well, you've seen that at the camps you and I have been to together.

We could name names, but maybe we shouldn't.

Well, there are also a lot of people going about it kind of like I did when I first started. Their methods are too much shotgun and not put together in a step by step approach that you know will have long term success. They would actually become a much better player if they were on some form of a program. If you try to learn this song and that song you are going to be like I was with "Jed Clampett" where all those hours were just wasted because I didn't have the background skills.

There are so many more benefits that you can get from having one-on-one instruction. It's immediate feedback on your abilities and weaknesses that you might miss on a recording or even a video of yourself.

I've done a couple of Skype lessons. The one thing is that I try to have people play with me during a lesson so they get the sense of it in a real world or jamming context. It's hard to do because you get that slap-back echo...are you really hearing the guy, is he really hearing you, locking into what you are trying to get him to do. That is the one dimension that isn't being delivered through Skype very well but it is really helpful to people stuck out in some holler someplace where there is no access to a teacher. A lot of great name players are offering that now and some people just want to say that they took a lesson from so and so. Again, the quality of the lesson may not be all that great.

It would seem that as an instructor you must always evaluate where the other person is as you explain things.

When I do Skype I usually charge more than a private lesson. Most guys charge less because they

just turn on the computer and start charging for that time. But for me, we trade a lot of emails ahead of time so we can both know what they want to work on before we even turn on the computer. So I've already got time invested in it before the lesson actually starts and then the lesson is on a real specific thing.

How many students do you currently have?

I have 70 in my rotation and I see about 40 a week.

Wow. 30 minute lessons?

Almost all at 30 minutes. I have quite a few people coming from over an hour away and for those I do a 45 minute lessons and they will go every other week. That's why I have such a seemingly big load because some people don't come every week.

Have you every counted up in a year's time how many people you come in contact with?

Yes. I've actually tracked that since I've been doing personal lessons in Austin I've taught over a thousand different people. That's over 16 or 17 years.

Wow.

That's just personal lessons but then you factor in workshops, how many people your books reach, and all that...you realize that you influence an awful lot of people. The neatest thing is that lately, on my last radio show, I was playing new CDs and on four or five different CDs there were players that started out taking lessons with me.

Very cool.

That is where I feel like I've begun to develop something of a legacy.

Have you' been teaching since the early 70's.

Yes, I was teaching while I was learning. I had already started playing guitar for five or six years before I started teaching. There were so few resources back then that when I was learning the stuff myself that if the book didn't deliver what I thought it should that I would make a mental note to self that if I was ever showing this to someone else that I would add x, x, and x to make it more clear. That's how that evolved. I actually did my first book in 1982.

Was Mel Bay the publisher?

No, a friend of mine had a computer that was a Wang computer. The floppy disk I think was a 9 inch floppy disk. They snuck me in on their off hours. It was a government computer (laughter). Yes, so at that point the only other choice was to type out the pages yourself, if you didn't have a publisher. I just made it so my students could have an organized guide. In hindsight it wasn't good enough to be a national release, mainly because I didn't have enough experience myself.

What was the name of it?

It was just an Introduction to Bluegrass Banjo but I've always specialized in filling the gaps because at that time you had Earl's book, Pete Seeger's book, and Pete Wernick's book was the first that tried to have a beginner, intermediate, and advanced section so that was a step up. But there were still so many steps missing for the average person. If you were self motivated and semi-talented you could totally learn from Pete's book but so many people are just doing it as a hobby and they are lucky to get fifteen minutes a day to practice. They may not know what they should be playing.

One of the things that helped me during that time frame was when Trischka's book came out (Melodic Banjo) he had that little vinyl insert in there.

Pete's book had that too.



I guess the version I bought didn't have one in there.

Yes it had one, I have a copy of it.

Maybe the later version did, I've still got my old one...but that to me was such a leap forward because you could actually hear what the tablature was going to sound like without having to go out and buy several albums. That would have been half the cost of first Vega banjo (laughter). Do you still record your students sessions?

Yes, and most of my books have the CDs to go along with the tablature. In the books I do two things I play it and explain it and the second CD is with a band so you can play with a band. The lead instrument will be on one channel so you can take that out and practice playing along with the band.

The same concept as the Aebersold Play-along-CDs.

Yes.

Those are great tools. Not only do they show you what to play but they get out of the way and let you play with it and see how you sound. Immediate feedback.

When you talk to players from our generation and before you hear them talk about spending hours slowing down records. The weird thing for me is that when I got the banjo I really didn't do that and I probably should have. I had already learned Clapton and Hendrix solos and I wore out my records. So I had the discipline to do it but I didn't do that on the banjo and I guess I missed something in those early years, getting those subtleties that I should have been better at.

Your website mentions that your band also won the Academy of Country Music Award as the "Best House Band in the USA". How did that happen?

It was at a club in Ventura. We'd be the house band on any given night of the week, five hours a night, everybody would come in and dance to the latest tunes. That was back in the Urban Cowboy era. The most famous other outstanding dance place in the country was Gilley's. The Academy of Country Music was established as a result of noticing that the Country Music Association wasn't giving awards to people like Merle Haggard or Buck Owens. It was real obvious that you had to be East Coast, Nashville Session stuff to get all the awards. I think it was established in the 70's. They had this one category, House Band, and we actually went out to this famous club out in California called the Palomino Club and we played the awards show and backed all the singers up, anyone that didn't travel with their own band. One of the people I recall backing up was David Frizell, Lefty's brother, Shelly West had that song "You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma", stuff like that. Anyway, the owner of our club also happened to be the President of the Academy that year so he put our name in there and I think there was a little politics involved you know, who knows who actually voted for it. There was some kind of trophy they took home and put in the club but I never even got a piece of paper.

Your last CD was "Out By Sundown", a great CD, but that was a couple of years ago and I know that you are a very prolific writer so is there another CD in the works.

I started doing the third, I see "Rapid Transit", "Out By Sundown" and I have a third one that has a working title, most of the songs will have something to do with trains. Those last two CDs were half traditional tunes with my arrangements and half original, all instrumental. This time it will be all originals because I have written so many originals. I've already got six of the tunes recorded. I've got the other seven with some tracks down but that was over a year ago since I've done anything with that CD. I see those three together as a trilogy. What happened is that more and more people got interested in this Travis Style guitar, which I teach and have written a book about. So I started writing more songs in that style and my other project is now to do an entire album of Travis Style pieces.



I've got seven of those tracks recorded. There's eight more to go. One thing I really would like is, I'm out there supporting all these young bands but it would be a great honor to have someone find one of my songs and record it. There have been a couple of people play some of my songs and I've actually had an instrumental or two that would catch on with the jamming circuit over time.

Your tune Perdenales Waltz is a really great tune.

Chojo (Jacques) said the other day, "hey I just figured out that you wrote Perdenales Waltz". A student of his brought it to him and he wanted to learn it. Chojo was figuring out the chords, he said "where are these changes going?" (laughter)

It is a twister but once you know the chords it lays out perfectly. I've enjoyed playing that with you.

Yes. So, I'm an instructor and I may not have the greatest technique but I know some of the great players could take those as ideas and do some great things. It's like the "Rapid Transit" song was a great idea and I did my banjo parts good but when you listen to Billy's (Bright) mandolin playing it is just through the roof.

I noticed that you went back out to California to Santa Monica to do a camp out there. How was that?

It wasn't actually a camp. Ann's (Eddie's wife) family still lives in California and I have a brother and his kids out there. Most of the time we are just going out there for vacation, so I knew it would make good business sense if I could book some gigs so I could write off some of the travel expenses. So, originally I put out the word that I was going to be out there to try to hook up a workshop but I contacted a lady that I had met at Gerald Jones camp (Acoustic Music Camp) and she said that if I am ever out in California that she would setup a house concert. The organization wasn't a bluegrass organization but was an arts organization (FolkWorks) that has a mission to preserve old time dance, old time music and storytelling. Which was the one that I really liked because when I do house concerts I try to put in the stories behind not only the songs but also related stories. So I was able to do that concert which was in a really wonderful old wooden house in Santa Monica. Sometimes I can setup workshops and the local stores will pick them up. A lot of times when I'm traveling around the country I'll stop at several places. I have a pretty extensive database of people who have purchased stuff or who have been to a my workshops all over the country so once I decide to go to a certain place I'll put out the word and see what happens. I've been doing workshops since the mid-80's even workshops on jamming. Now it's like this big fad that everybody's discovering and all these artists are doing it and it's almost oversaturated. The only way I can stand apart from all that is to maintain the reputation that I put on a great workshop that gets the buzz going that if you really want to learn something go to this guy's workshop.

And that reputation is there. The people that I have spoken with have always been very positive when they talk about their experiences in your workshops and your lessons. Content wise consistently people say they got the most from you.

The trick is, and this is the reason a lot of people are giving up on them, is that you get such a wide range of people and often times the guy comes in only prepared to deliver one thing. So it's either way over people's heads or he has to get so low that he never gets to the good stuff. I know going in that I'm going to have that so I have little things prepared for each level and I tell the beginners to not try to think they can get to what I have over here but you get the foundation of it and if you keep at it then you will realize it. Then the people that are more advanced feel good because they feel like they got what they came for.



How many students are you teaching Travis Style guitar to?

It tends to go in cycles but it's mostly just a couple at a time. It's usually people that are flatpicking and then they want to do some of that.

Are you doing thumbpick only?

I personally use the fingerpicks when I do it but when I teach it I try to get them to use only the thumbpick. Some of them end up just using their fingers but most use the thumbpick without the fingerpicks.

Are you still taking students?

Oh yes. Sometimes it says on my website that depending on your schedule and my schedule it might be hard to find a time to connect but I can usually get somebody started by telling them that if they are flexible enough on a Saturday, there's going to be a cancellation and I can call them. Then we get them started that way. It gives me a chance to see how serious they are about it too. The ones that really go out of their way to be flexible like that they are on the top of my list when I get a steady opening.

I know that I've sat down with you on some lessons and one thing that rings true is that you don't waste anybody's time.

Right.

You didn't tell any stories of your tour with the Stones, you just taught for the entire timeframe.

I like to put myself in that situation because I have taken lessons from people. I've never been a person of means so I wanted every minute to be action packed so I would feel like I got my money's worth, so I deliver it that same way. I had a guy yesterday, and I get this all the time, he said that he was from California and that he was going to be in Houston but he could travel over to Austin to take a lesson. And I told him that I only have a half hour and that it probably wouldn't be worth it to drive to Houston and then drive to Austin but I gave him a half hour lesson and he just went out of there saying "wow!". I gave him so much material.

Your website is eddiecollins.biz. It's a dot BIZ isn't it?

Yes, the dot com is a photographer in New York.

Yes, there are lots of Eddie Collins out there. By the way, I read the other day that you really died in Matagorda County which is where I was born.

Really?

Yep, in 2007 you passed away. So Ann is now a bluegrass widow.

There used to be a principal of Manor High School.

And a baseball player.

Yes, he's in the hall of fame.

But none of those guys have articles in Bluegrass Now, Bluegrass Unlimited, Banjo Newsletter...

Yes, I've been doing Banjo Newsletter for many years.

Banjo Newsletter is the ultimate banjo players magazine. I recall my subscription years ago alongside the tab there was the name and contact info of the person that wrote the tab. You could call them and they would play it for you or if you were in their city you could easily get a lesson. That's how I met Wayne Shrubbsall.

And you can do that because it's the banjo world. If it was the rock and roll lead guitar world it would have been more difficult.

Well Eddie thanks for doing this interview. We get a lot of positive feedback from these interviews. I hope this one helps people get to know you a little better too.

Yes. Thank you for doing this.



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Listing of Newsletter “Artist Profiles”, “Meet A Member”, & “Scholarship Recipients”

2010

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

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Thomas Chapmond

Stacy Holt

Barbara & David Brown

Eddie & Pat Zihlman

Ray Cargo

Al James

Tracy Sloan

Rixi Rosenberg

Artist Profile

Danny Barnes

Dan Huckabee

The Carper Family

The Lost Pines

Jeff Robertson

Gerald Jones

Chasing Blue

Jim Hurst

The Upham Family

Chris Hirsch

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Gloria Brashaw

Jeff White

Bruce Mansbridge & Elaine Kant

Jerry & Carol Rabun

Doug & Sheryl Sultenfuss

Bryce Koslan

Chuck Middleton

Alan Corlew

Tom Duplissey

Jay Blincoe

The Shuttger Family

David Hamburger

Billy Bright

MilkDrive

Sierra Hull

Tom Ellis

Dennis McDaniel

Rolf & Beate Sieker

Doc Hamilton

Steve Smith

Phil Elliott

James Shelton

Eddie Collins

Scholarship Recipients

2004

Finn Lynch

2005

Christopher Quinters

2006

Amy Bell

2007

Riley Mathews, Jill Corley, Tyler Colley and Erika Richardson

2008

2009

Bethany Rankin and Brett Hawthorne

2010

Adam Greer, John Peyton “JP” Shafer, and Devin Paynkewicz

2011

Josh, Aaron and Micah Upham & Susannah Armstrong

BLUEGRASS JAMS!!!

(FOR A COMPLETE LIST CHECK THE CTBA WEBSITE)

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Bluegrass Beginner/Intermediate JAM (CTBA Sponsored)
1st. & 3rd Thu. 7-9 PM, (call for location)
Contact: Steve Mangold (512) 345-6155

Bluegrass Beginner/Intermediate JAM (CTBA Sponsored)
2nd & 4th Sat 4-6 PM; Slow Jam starts at 2:00PM ArtZ Rib House
Contact: Steve Mangold (512) 345-6155

Bluegrass Intermediate/Advanced JAM (CTBA Sponsored)
Sunday's 2-6PM, ArtZ Rib House, 2330 S. Lamar

Bluegrass All Levels Jam
2nd and 4th Monday 7-11PM Waterloo Ice House (38th and Medical)
Contact www.waterlooicehouse.com

BELLVILLE (Spring Creek Club Sponsored)
Bluegrass All Levels JAM & SHOW
Jan. thru Sept 4th Sat; 4pm JAM, 6:30 pm SHOW, Couthatte RV Ranch
Contact: (979) 865-5250 bluegrass221@peoplepc.com www.springcreekbluegrass.com

BRYAN/COLLEGE STATION

Brazos Country Grass
Monday's 6-9PM, JJ. Cody's, 3610 S. College
Contact: www.brazoscountrycountrygrass.com

FAYETTEVILLE

Bluegrass All Levels JAM (Texas Pickin' Park Sponsored)
2nd Sat, April—November, starts at 6 PM, on the Courthouse Square
Contact: info@texaspickinpark.com www.texaspickinpark.com

GEORGETOWN

Bluegrass Jam Intermediate Level
every Thursday at Duke's BBQ Smokehouse, 5:30 PM,
Contact: 512-869-8076 or sigi@sigi.us (www.sigi.us/rr)

GARLAND

Bluegrass All Levels JAM
Saturday, March- Nov, 7:30PM between Main & State St at 6th,
Contact:

HARWOOD

Bluegrass/Swing/Country JAM & Stage Show (Pot Luck too!)
3rd Sat, 2-9 PM, 9 mi. E. of Luling, Hwy 90
Contact: Tony Conyers (512) 601-1510 or (512) 940-3731

HOUSTON

Bluegrass All Levels JAM
2nd Sat, 1-4 PM, April-November, Houston Railroad Museum,
Contact: (713) 319-8906 www.houstonrrmuseum.org

LEAGUE CITY

Bluegrass All Levels JAM & SHOW 3rd Sat: Jam 5 PM (BABA Sponsored)
Show 6:30 PM Jan- Nov.
Contact: Rick Kirkland (President) (281) 488-2244

LLANO

Bluegrass All Levels JAM 4th Sat (except Nov. & Dec.): Jam 5:30 PM The Badu House
Bluegrass Beginner/Intermediate 2nd & 4th Thu. Jam 7:00 PM First Presbyterian Church
Contact: Jeff White (325) 248-4114

MANCHACA

Bluegrass All Levels
Manchaca Railroad Bar-B-Q, FM 1626, Every Thursday 6:30-9:00PM
Contact: Dave (512) 680-4433

PEARL JAM & SHOW,

1st Sat: Jam all day
Contact: Ronald Medart (254) 865-6013 www.pearlbluegrass.com

ROUND ROCK

Bluegrass All Levels
Danny Ray's Music, 12 Chisholm Trail, RR, Third Saturday 2:00 PM

SAN ANTONIO

Bluegrass Beginner/Intermediate JAM
Grady's Barbeque at 7400 Bandera Rd. San Antonio. Monday's 6-8 PM
Contact: Clifton Bowren (210) 602-5544 cliftonfiddler5@aol.com

SEGUINE

American Legion Hall, 618 Kingsbury 2nd Saturday 6:00PM
Contact: John Campbell, Solodotna@aol.com

SHULENBURG

RV Park Community Center 1st & 3rd Tuesday, 6:30-9:00PM
Contact: Loretta Baumgarten (979) 743-4388 Camp@SchulenburgRVPark.com

WIMBERLEY

Bluegrass All Levels Jam
Fri 8-12 PM, Rolling House Clubhouse
Contact: Mike Bond

1st Friday each mo., Hondo Hootenanny, starts at 11 AM- Hondo Community Center, 1014 18th st, Hondo, Tx Info 830 426 2831

1st Sat each mo, Field Creek Music - 6: PM -
field Creek is between Llano and Brady on Hwy 71, Info call Bill Tuckness 325 247 3223

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