



PRESS RELEASE

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The 12th Annual Park Slope Bluegrass & Old-Time Jamboree September 11 & 12

Annual music festival celebrates roots of American music

Each September, Park Slope becomes the focal point of American traditional music when the Park Slope Bluegrass & Old-Time Jamboree, now in its 12th year, takes place. The sounds of banjos, fiddles, mandolins, guitars and big upright basses echo through the "hills and hollers" of Brooklyn in this annual celebration, conference and music festival.

The Jamboree, held each year at the historic meeting house and surrounding gardens of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture on Prospect Park West near 2nd Street, starts off with a bluegrass concert on Friday night, September 11, by James Reams & The Barnstormers, the band that the *New York Daily News* called "New York City's bluegrass icons." This internationally known bluegrass band plays bluegrass music the old-fashioned way, reminiscent of the way the founders of the genre played it – Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs and other "pioneers" of the music. James Reams fronts a band that has garnered nominations from the International Bluegrass Music Association and critical acclaim from every major bluegrass and roots-music publication.

The next day's schedule, Saturday, September 12, includes a full day of activities, including workshops in banjo, fiddle, harmony singing, and more, plus all-day jamming and an evening concert featuring many fine performers.

Musicians from all over the Northeast, and some from points south, convene at the Jamboree each year to play and enjoy the music that originated with the earliest immigrants to this country. The settlers from Scotland, England and Ireland combined the ballads and instruments of their tradition with the music and instruments of the slaves (the American "banjo" was originally the African "mbanza") to produce this country's first "fusion" music.

Each year, the Jamboree attracts more than 700 musicians and fans of old-time and bluegrass music. The Jamboree is sponsored by several arts organizations, civic associations and community businesses. "We're lucky we have great organizations that support and sponsor American traditional music," says James Reams, who organizes the Jamboree. "In addition, there are lots of incredibly talented musicians in the area as well as an appreciative audience and supportive radio deejays, so we have all of the ingredients to keep the Jamboree going – and it's been going for 12 years so far!"

This year the Jamboree is once again sponsored by Warren Lewis Realty (warrenlewis.com) – an organization that is among the most active in supporting the arts in Brooklyn – with additional sponsorship by The Clay Pot (clay-pot.com – sponsor of the "Brown Jug" award), the Park Slope Civic Council (parkslopeciviccouncil.org), Carnegie Hall (carnegiehall.org), Con Edison (coned.com), RetroFret (retrofret.com), the Brownstone Authority (brownstoneauthority.com), Slope Cellars (slopecellars.com), D'Addario, (daddario.com), the NY Pinewoods Folk Music Society (folkmusicny.org), Marcia Savin & Michael Brailove, Los Blancos, and HelloBrooklyn.com. The Jamboree is made possible by

a grant from the Greater New York Arts Development Fund of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, administered by The Brooklyn Arts Council, Inc. (BAC), and is hosted by the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture (bsec.org). And Dizzy's Diner (dizzys.com) will be back again this year, offering delicious food on site at Saturday's festivities.

The Friday night concert by James Reams & The Barnstormers starts at 8pm (doors open at 7:30, and admission is \$10 for adults and \$6 for children). The band is a favorite on the bluegrass music festival circuit and has garnered excellent reviews from music publications:

No Depression magazine:

"James Reams & The Barnstormers move deftly between old-time, bluegrass, and country with a sound that leans toward the first half of the 20th century a la Bill Monroe, the Stanley Brothers and Roy Acuff. ...What makes the album so appealing is the energy, fullness, and occasional roughness of the Barnstormers' sound. ...The Barnstormers deliver an edge that's missing from a lot of bluegrass being made today."

Sing Out magazine:

"Tight instrumental excellence and hard-edged vocals ...uncompromising, hard-core bluegrass."

Bill Monroe biographer Richard D. Smith in *Bluegrass Unlimited*

"There are few vocalists as natural as Reams. He doesn't have to try to sound down-home, he's there at each turn in the song."

Saturday's activities run from 12:30 to 10:30pm (admission \$4 – that's right, four dollars) and feature workshops, all-day jamming (with acoustic instruments only: acoustic guitars, fiddles, mandolins, banjos, Dobros, upright basses, dulcimers, autoharps, harmonicas, etc.), and evening concerts.

In addition to James Reams & The Barnstormers, here's a sampling of this year's musical guests:

Alan Jabbour (alanjabbour.com), who will teach a fiddle workshop on Saturday afternoon and have a concert on Saturday evening, documented and learned from Southern old-time fiddlers in the 1960s. Fiddlers like Henry Reed of Glen Lyn, Virginia, and Tommy Jarrell of Toast, North Carolina, provided him with a rich repertory of tunes as well as models for Southern fiddling style. His band, the Hollow Rock String Band, became pioneers in the revival of old-time Southern stringband music that began in the 1960s and continues today. After serving many years as director of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Alan is spending his retirement teaching, writing, and playing the fiddle.

Mac and Hazel McGee, the founding members of **White Mountain Bluegrass** (whitemountainbluegrass.com), have been proclaimed by the International Bluegrass Music Museum in Kentucky as "Pioneers of Bluegrass Music" – joining an elite group of 80 musicians with a permanent plaque in the museum. Performing with their band for 40 years, they carry their unique singing and harmonies to countless bluegrass fans throughout the Northeast and abroad. At the band's performances, Mac and Hazel sing and talk to you like you're sitting in their living room. Mac is originally from Georgia, and Hazel from Tennessee; they settled in New Hampshire and raised their family of three sons. The Southern mountains that they carry in their hearts show up in their voices.

Hell's Kitchen Country is all about savory three-part bluegrass harmony. The band – comprising three veterans of the NYC bluegrass and old-time scene, Gene Yellin, guitar, Bill Christophersen, fiddle, and Mark Farrell, mandolin, joined by Ethan Kende on bass – draws its repertoire from the lesser-known material of pioneers like the Sauceman Brothers, as well as the Stanleys and Jimmy Martin.

Lightning in the East is a powerhouse string band that puts an exciting spin on traditional Southern Appalachian music. Its members, all widely recognized as outstanding musicians, have played with the very best in old-time, bluegrass and Cajun music. With Stephanie Coleman – Uncle Earl's fiddler, and perennial Clifftop fiddle finalist – on fiddle and vocals, former Blue Grass Boy and Troublesome Creek banjoist Steve Arkin on banjo, Erica Weiss, guitarist, and renowned Cajun singer Jesse Leger on guitar and vocals, the band's repertoire runs the spectrum, from red-hot fiddle tunes to haunting ballads.

The **A-Kays** are a high-powered old-time string band fronted by fiddling ace Alan Kaufman, with Suz Slezak on fiddle and guitar, Marc Horowitz on banjo and mandolin and Bob Jones playing bass and guitar. Their show features hypnotic twin fiddling, tight captivating vocal harmonies, hair-raising banjo-fiddle duets, Bob Jones' legendary flatpicking and spectacular yodeling.

Old-time music is for dancing: Clogging (also called buck dancing) and flatfooting are typically the dances that are done. **Mary Beth Yakoubian** will lead a buck-dancing workshop from 3:30 to 5:00 on Saturday afternoon. The basics of both Appalachian clogging and flatfooting will be taught (using hard-soled shoes; no taps). Mary Beth, founding director of the City Stompers, started clogging in the 1980s as a student of Pat Cannon. She keeps up to date with the world of traditional flatfoot clogging through classes at Swannanoa, Augusta and Ashokan and also with precision clogging through National Clogging and Hoedown Council workshops.

David Laibman, the guitar workshop leader at this year's Jamboree, is one of the "founding figures" of ragtime guitar. His arrangements of everything from jug-band tunes to classical piano ragtime inspired many other fingerstyle players. His latest recordings are a DVD, *Guitar Artistry of David Laibman*, and a CD, *Adventures in Ragtime*, both from Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop.

From the time **Arnie Solomon** (travel.to/ArnieSolomon), who will teach a mandolin workshop, studiously learned Bill Monroe's "Rawhide" during his eighth-grade year until present, Monroe has remained Arnie's chief mentor and musical influence. "You'll notice," he says, "that no matter how far out I go, I always come back to bluegrass."

In addition to the workshops, jamming and concerts, there will be the presentation of the "Brown Jug" award – given each year to a person who has made a significant and continuing contribution to old-time or bluegrass music in the Northeast. The Brown Jug sponsor is The Clay Pot (clay-pot.com). This year's recipient will be announced shortly.

This year's Jamboree includes several special events, including:

- a "slow jam," specially tailored to be a non-intimidating musical performance experience
- a workshop in clogging and flatfooting, the traditional dances of Appalachia.

The Jamboree is heralded as one of the finest events of its kind in the Northeast and attracts musicians and fans of traditional American music from all over the area. *Time-Out New York* magazine called the Jamboree a "happy little festival," and indeed it is. Musicians gather in informal groups in the beautiful century-old meeting house of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture and the gardens surrounding the landmark building for informal jam sessions; attendees who do not play music themselves can enjoy listening to it. In addition to the music, on Saturday food will be available on site by well-known and well-loved Dizzy's Diner, and beverages and desserts are also available.

Friday and Saturday's events are held at the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture Meeting House, 53 Prospect Park West at 2nd Street in Park Slope, Brooklyn. Further information may be obtained by calling the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture at 718-768-2972 or the Jamboree staff at 718-965-8490 or by emailing info@jamesreams.com. Additional information is also available at gchmusic.org or jamesreams.com. Or go to the Jamboree's Facebook page by Googling "facebook park slope jamboree."

Directions: Q train to 7th Av station in Brooklyn; F train to 7th Av; 2 or 3 train to Grand Army Plaza; B69 bus to 2nd St; B75 bus to Prospect Park West; B41 or B71 bus to Grand Army Plaza; B67 bus to 2nd St.

The detailed schedule for the Jamboree and the name of this year's recipient of the "Brown Jug" will be announced shortly.

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Note to editors:

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