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Greensky Bluegrass Goes to Bonnaroo

Written by Kelly Quintanilla

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This summer, the tables have turned for Kalamazoo-based **Greensky Bluegrass**.

"Instead of being the token weird band at a bluegrass festival, we'd much rather be the token bluegrass band at a weird festival," says Anders Beck, dobro player for the band.

Beck and his four bandmates will definitely be the latter when they roll onto a 750-acre farm in Manchester, Tenn., to play **Bonnaroo**, the country's largest music festival. The band was chosen as one of 150 performers playing on 12 stages at the tenth anniversary of the fest, held June 9-12.

"Everyone knows Bonnaroo, even people who don't love music festivals," Beck says. "When we explain what we do as Greensky Bluegrass to someone who doesn't really get it, we tell them that we play festivals all summer. People always ask, 'Oh, like Bonnaroo?' Now we can finally say, 'Yes! Exactly like that!'"

Greensky Bluegrass -- made up of Beck on the dobro, Michael Arlen Bont on the banjo, Dave Bruzza on the guitar, Mike Devol on the upright bass and Paul Hoffman on the mandolin -- will perform twice at the festival. The band's first show is Thursday afternoon at the Miller Lite-sponsored On Tap Lounge, followed by a Friday show at the intimate Sonic Stage.

The love child of a rootsy bluegrass quintet and a funky jam band, the group's Bonnaroo set list will not only include selections from its three studio albums, but also an unexpected cover or two. Known to perform songs made famous by anyone from **Michael Jackson** to **Pink Floyd** to **Bob Marley**, Greensky Bluegrass appreciates that experimentation in all forms is encouraged at the 80,000-person, sold-out festival.

"We are mindful of not having a lot of time to play, so we'll keep it focused and present our songs as best as we can," Beck says. "We mix it up so current fans enjoy it, but also get a good representation for people who are seeing us for the first time."

Though the boys are festival veterans, with 12 fests scheduled this summer including local events **Electric Forest** and **Hoxeyville**, this will be everyone's first 'Roo experience.

"Bonnaroo is so eclectic music-wise," Beck says. "We're not particularly traditional, so we'll jam, get weird and have fun."

Though the artists will have limited time to take in the sights, sounds, sun and spectacle that is Bonnaroo, Beck says he is looking forward to seeing **My Morning Jacket**, **Bela Fleck** (who will perform on the Sonic Stage shortly after Greensky Bluegrass), **Ray LaMontagne** and **Arcade Fire**.

"As a band, we don't actually listen to a lot of bluegrass anymore," Beck says. "We're more into other music as fans and listeners."

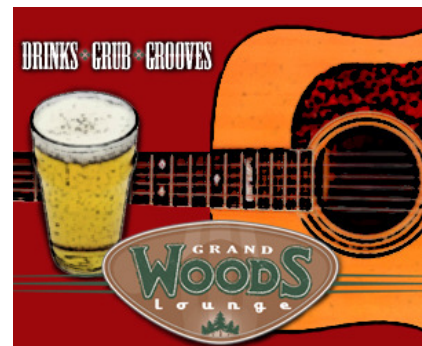
Beck says Greensky Bluegrass has reduced the number of bluegrass festivals in which it plays, instead branching out into rock, jam and broader music experiences.

You can't get much broader than Bonnaroo. With stinky, sweaty attendees from all 50 states bouncing between stages and tents showcasing **surf rock**, hip hop, dubstep, comedy (<http://www.comedycentral.com/shows/workaholics/index.jhtml>), indie rock, funk, **knife fight music**, burlesque and **Mongolian folk**, the musicians of Greensky Bluegrass embrace their role as the token bluegrass band.

"There's so much going on at Bonnaroo that people will walk by a stage and get their mind blown by someone they've never heard of," says Beck. "That's what we're counting on."

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Greensky Bluegrass Goes to Bonnaroo

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