



Banjo adds new flavor to fan favorites

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By **Jeremy Gartzke** | [No Comments Posted](#) | Posted: **Wednesday, January 25, 2012 9:39 pm**

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Photo courtesy Jamie Van Buhler

From dobro to banjo, Greensky Bluegrass own their instruments.

The sounds of dobro and mandolin will soon be wafting off the historical stage at The Majestic Theatre. Maybe wafting isn't the right word, more like pounding.

The name Greensky Bluegrass may sound like something your grandparents would listen to, but the show these gents put on is way more rockin' than a Gene Autry sing-along. That is the aesthetic the band has been trying to cultivate, too, according to dobro player Anders Beck in a recent e-mail interview. (FYI: the dobro is a type of resonator guitar, typical to bluegrass music.)

"We've also been working on bringing in more of a rock and roll type production level for our shows over the last few months," Beck said. "We have an amazing sound engineer and have just recently started traveling with our own lights and lighting director, which is really exciting for us."

It is this rock aesthetic that leads to things like a bluegrass cover of Michael Jackson hit, "Beat It," or the "Ghostbusters" melody popping up in a solo section. Beck said the audience can expect the band to feed off of the venue and the crowd for this weekend's show.

Beck said they try to pull influences from everywhere when they are playing, even the music between sets.

"We had played the [Ghost Busters] tune in its entirety at our Halloween show this past year, but

not since then," Beck said. "It's stuff like that that keeps it fun for us. We were all cracking up on stage and it was all in good fun, which is a good thing to me!"

"As far as the cover of 'Beat It,' that's something we learned the day Michael Jackson died and we've been playing every once in a while since," he said. "It lends itself to be a great bluegrass song, though the Eddie Van Halen solo in there is pretty hard to recreate."

Though many solo sections in Greensky's songs are pre-planned, bigger jams still have that organic vibe.

"During those it sort of just flows around the stage to whomever is feeling it and fits in the musical moment," Beck said. "It's actually harder to describe than I would have expected."

Even more difficult for Beck than describing this improvisational vibe was choosing a favorite venue he has played. With an answer that nearly managed to avoid the question Beck named off Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and Town Park in Telluride, Col., but maintained that some of his favorite shows to play were "in small dirty rock clubs too where the energy is just packed into a tiny little room and it's just raging."

"It's just mind-blowing to be playing music while literally surrounded on three sides by 13,000 foot peaks," Beck said of the Colorado venue. "Places like that are where it hits me how lucky I really am to get to do this. It's like a dream sometimes."

Beck promised that this show will be different from their November 2011 performance in Madison, saying

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they try to play a different setlist every night.

"We try to write one each night that takes into account what we played the night before and maybe the last time we were in that town, so that it is mixed up from that," he said. "We often just wing it, too, though, or write a setlist and deviate from it pretty quickly."

Beck's parting statements should help convince anyone on the fence about the show that it is worth checking out.

"Even if the word 'bluegrass' scares you off immediately, you should probably come to the show and check us out anyway," Beck said. "While we play bluegrass instruments, it's really more of a rock show."

"Also, a great band Strange Arrangement will be with us. They're this badass psychedelic rock band. It might seem like a strange fit for a bill at first, but it makes sense to us. "

Grandparent band, eh? Unlikely.

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