

## Grass-roots evolution



Michael Weintrob/Courtesy

Greensky Bluegrass performs Tuesday night at Mojo's.

By [Aarik Danielsen](#)

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While artistic revolution certainly is necessary, it's important to remember that not every wheel needs reinventing. Sometimes, the slightest variations or just a dash of nuance makes the biggest difference.

### **GREENSKY BLUEGRASS**

**Where:** Mojo's, 1013 Park Ave.

**When:** doors open at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday

**Tickets:** \$10

**Website:** [www.mojoscolumbia.com](http://www.mojoscolumbia.com)

The members of Kalamazoo, Mich., outfit Greensky Bluegrass are no doubt aware it would be tough to truly improve

upon the American sound that makes up half the group's name. Yet in toying, tinkering and trying out a new wrinkle or two, the band has amplified the roots of bluegrass while walking it forward just a step or two. Think of the group as a straitlaced cousin to Punch Brothers or a family band made of Sam Bush's rebellious nephews.

The group's latest, "Handguns," sprawls out over nearly 70 minutes but never feels laborious. Largely composed of ambling, mid-tempo bluegrass numbers — the kind perfect for expanding and contracting to the band's delight in a live setting — the disc also takes a promenade through sonic pastures such as Dixieland jazz and western swing. Late-album tune "Bring Out Your Dead" sounds as if it will reside in Punch Brothers territory, mimicking the progressive act's insistent rhythmic breaks before entering a psychedelic realm that evokes classic rock glories.

Early tracks such as the title cut, "Cold Feet" and "Beauty and Pain" are a bit more customary and set the tone for the album as a whole. Each offers shimmering examples of instrumental prowess as the quintet gets busy with the business of swapping and setting up flourishing solos. The band's work throughout is marked by a refreshing fluidity and remarkable sense of lyricism.

Each of these qualities seems, on good report, to translate to a live show that the Orange County Register deemed "breathtaking." Labeling Greensky Bluegrass anything but ordinary, the New Orleans Times-Picayune's Wesley Hodges wrote the band's "vocal and instrumental harmonies showed careful attention to subtlety, avoiding the freight train-style breakdowns which, although fun to watch, can often become as frequent and cyclical as a 'drop' at a DJ-heavy festival at your run-of-the-mill bluegrass show." The band's sound testifies to a desire to evolve rather than a need to experiment, and bluegrass is indeed better for it.

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