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– March 1, 2011

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Greensky Bluegrass gets set to release new studio album and drops new live CD

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For a band that essentially learned to play bluegrass music from scratch, the boys in Greensky Bluegrass sure have come a long way together.

Channeling their creativity and honing their skills on a traditional form of music, the original three band members (Michael Arlen Bont on banjo, Dave Bruzza on guitar, and Paul Hoffman on mandolin) were soon joined by Mike Devol on upright bass (2004) and Anders Beck on dobro (2008).

Michigan's Greensky Bluegrass was beginning to establish a name for themselves (they were winners of the prestigious Telluride Bluegrass Band Competition in 2006) when they recruited Beck, fresh from stints in Colorado bluegrass bands Broke Mountain and the Wayword Sons. The latter featured the oft-recognized songwriting of Benny Galloway, and set a high standard for the caliber of musicianship with which Beck wished to surround himself. "I knew I needed to find a band that was very strong in the songwriting department or else I would feel like I was 'faking it,'" said Beck in a recent interview with *The Marquee*. "For me, lyrics play such a strong role in how I approach playing music that I really need to feel that connection with — the words and melody — in order to play at my best. So, my involvement and evolution with Greensky Bluegrass really made sense and took off."

The chemistry with Beck was made apparent through many spontaneous jam sessions and it wasn't long before he was contributing his individual musicianship to the tight picking and extraordinary songwriting for which the band has become acclaimed. Using traditional instruments, Greensky Bluegrass creates original sounds that feel both fresh and familiar. This is likely due to the plethora of influences brought into the music by the members of the band.

"What's really cool about Greensky Bluegrass is that we have so many different influences between us and among us," said Beck. "There's obviously the bluegrass influence from when we were trying to learn how to play the genre correctly, but for all of us, it goes way deeper than that. Our bass player is a classically trained cellist and our banjo player is a virtual rap and '80s music encyclopedia. Some of my musical heroes are guys like Jerry Douglas on the dobro and Tony Rice on the guitar because they make acoustic instruments sing, but I'd be lying if I didn't tell you that my biggest influences were guys like Trey Anastasio and Jerry Garcia. Those two guys really shaped the way I look at, listen to, and play music."

The variant influences of the band allow them to feel very much in their comfort zone amongst fans of traditional bluegrass and more unconventional audiences. "Greensky Bluegrass tends to be very good at straddling the line between traditional bluegrass fans and newgrass/jamgrass fans, while at the same time inviting in the more song-oriented types of folks, too," said Beck, adding, "We jam. There's no way around that and we are proud of the fact that a song can be three minutes or twenty minutes, depending upon what we think sounds best for that particular song. We don't jam just for the sake of jamming. But if the feel of a song we write lends itself to that vibe, we are all about it. We like to mix it up and play different setlists every night and play songs into other songs through creative segue-ing. Our fans certainly seem to enjoy it, too."

While most fans enjoy a good cover song every now and then, it's truly Greensky's original songwriting that sets them apart from the rest of the bands in the genre. "While everybody in the band writes material, our mandolin player Paul Hoffman has been the most prolific over the past few years and is really writing great songs that connect with people. I just love his songs. As a band, we've been starting to write a bit more collaboratively as well, which has been exciting and interesting. We just finished recording a new studio album and we are all extremely excited about the songs and the translation of those songs onto the album. We can't wait for people to hear it," said Beck.

The new studio album, which is still untitled, is due as a summer release. In the meantime, Greensky released the second installment of their live series *All Access* in December. That release takes their live catalog to three and the band has said that they want to continue to offer shows in the *All Access* arena.

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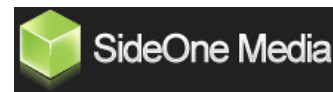
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