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Greensky Bluegrass returns Mike Devol talks upcoming LP, sold-out tours and love for The Avett Brothers

Myles Cochrane/Tri-City Weekly
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Michigan bluegrass quintet Greensky Bluegrass is returning to HumBrews with tried-and-true catchy resonance on March 12. The talented musicians' latest and 2011 LP "Handguns" shot all the way to No. 3 on the Billboard Top Bluegrass Albums charts.

While they tour, mixing is being done on the follow-up to that record. They recorded the new album once again with the help of Glenn Brown, known for his studio work with comedy-rockers Spinal Tap and fellow Michigan rockers The Verve Pipe.

"In true Greensky form, we approached the project as not only a sprint, but also a marathon," said Mike Devol, Greensky's bassist and vocalist. "Nine nonstop days, two days of shows, one day off, then three nonstop days."

The band members said they hope to release the not-yet-titled LP this June.

"Like 'Handguns,' the album is self-produced," Devol said. "Unlike 'Handguns,' the material will be mostly brand new to the listener at the time it's released. Previous albums have provided us with an opportunity to record a really intentional version of songs that we've been honing live for years or months. And, with this new project, the songs have mostly taken their first true form during the studio process. For me, that's really exciting. Because the material was developed mostly over a short period of time, the finished product provides a really great representation of who we are as a band right now -- our influences and

attitudes, our playing and singing. Like a live show, a moment can only happen once."

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Devol and the rest of Greensky Bluegrass sold out their last West Coast tour.

"We're not the kind of band to just launch to wild success all of the sudden," Devol said. "I feel like because what level of success we've achieved hasn't just fallen in our laps, it's worth more. I won't come back to these markets expecting it to sell out again, and I won't come back expecting some sudden wane in our popularity. We've spent years touring through these markets and some of our fans have been there since the beginning. We're so grateful for that strong core fanbase and stoked to see all the new faces."

Greensky Bluegrass formed in 2000 and have played nearly 175 shows a year since then. With a lineup featuring Devol, Anders Beck (dobro), Michael Arler (guitar/vocals), the band has shared the stage with Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, Keller Williams Quintet and many more. Devol spoke highly of his experience playing with North Carolina folk-rockers The Avett Brothers.

"The Avett Brothers are huge," Devol said, and I'm glad. They write great songs and they still rode in a van then. I remember the Avett Brothers might just be shaking in their boots. They weren't. They had a weird poise. I'd never seen an entire place singing along. An awesome

...n I ever would have expected when we met them so long ago, banjos cool. We opened for them in 2006, kind of accidentally. After our set feeling like we had killed it, that these Avett Brothers use they had to play after such a fiery bunch of rowdy pickers. ... in a string band, and by the end of the show they had the new showmanship."

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Shortly after playing Arcata, Greensky Bluegrass

the stage with Sam Bush at the Fillmore in San Francisco.

"We are, of course, enormously excited to play the Fillmore for our first time," Devol said. "When we confirmed the gig, we were all brainstorming a way to make it memorable for our fans when Sam's name came up. He played a few tunes with us during our Telluride Bluegrass Festival slot last summer, and it was amazing. We called him up to see if he'd be interested in coming out for the show and it basically just all worked out. We're really looking forward to having a freaking hero be our fiddle player for a while."

Advance passes for the HumBrews show can be purchased online at humbrews.com. Boston's soulful folk-rockers The Ryan Montbleau Band will also play.

"Hmm...Humboldt," Devol said. "I vaguely remember being there. Kinda hazy. Humboldt you say? If you come to our show at Humboldt Brews, you will have the most amazing time of your life. Guaranteed."

If you go

What: Greensky Bluegrass, Ryan Montbleau Band

When: 9:30 p.m. March 12

Where: Humboldt Brews, 856 10th St., Arcata

Admission: \$15 in advance, 21+

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