

THE MUSIC THAT BELONGED TO EVERYBODY”: TRADITION AND INNOVATION
IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA BLUEGRASS

A Thesis
by
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ABSTRACT

“THE MUSIC THAT BELONGED TO EVERYBODY”: TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA BLUEGRASS. (December 2010)

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This paper examines the lives, contributions, and experiences of four musicians from Western North Carolina: Earl Scruggs, Don Reno, George Shuffler, and Doc Watson. In the 1950s and 60s all four made contributions to the art of acoustic lead guitar playing, specifically in the field of bluegrass, though they have influenced players in all genres of music. This thesis examines their individual accomplishments and seeks to find what made this geographic region such fertile ground for flatpickers. The musicians in this study lived through the period in American music history known as the folk music revival. This event changed and reforged the idea of American roots music, affecting the perception and definition of tradition within American society. Each of the musicians in this study underwent changes as a result of this period.

This thesis submits that North Carolinians were able to create innovative new approaches to playing the guitar because they had older traditions to call on in the process. The most helpful of these were the banjo playing techniques that many musicians translated onto the guitar. Mandolins, fiddles, and even electric guitars all played a role in the development of these new playing styles. However, simply drawing on tradition was not enough for some participants in the folk music revival. They demanded an exact

representation based on an anti-commercial, anti-establishment interpretation of the past. As such, they cared little for accurate representations of southern music, preferring an idyllic pre-commercial southern life that had in fact never existed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the Appalachian State University professors who helped me with this process, specifically James Goff, Cece Conway, and Bruce Stewart. I would like to thank George Shuffler and family for letting me into their home to learn firsthand from a legend. I would also like to thank Doc Watson, Earl Scruggs, Don Reno, the Stanley Brothers, and many others for the music that inspired this thesis; I have been lucky enough to see many of them in person over the last year. Lastly I would like to thank my wife Jessica for putting up with this project that consumed so much of my time over the past two years. She listened to me learn four different guitar styles and that couldn't have been easy for her.

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Preface

The subject of this thesis arose from my interest in the music of my birthplace, Western North Carolina. My father is a bluegrass banjo player, my grandfather played slide guitar, and my great grandfather Julius Caesar Martin was a fiddle player. I did not start playing music until fairly late in life; I was sixteen when I got my first guitar. What sparked my interest in music was not the bluegrass I had heard growing up, but rather my first real exposure to the Beatles. The woman who is now my wife introduced me to the band and it was the first music that really spoke to me. In college I learned more about the local music of both the Appalachian Mountains and the foothills where I was born. When I entered the graduate History program at Appalachian State University, I took a class where I was required to interview a local musician; by chance I was assigned bluegrass guitar player George Shuffler. After a few visits to his home in Valdese, I wrote a short paper about his contributions to acoustic lead guitar playing, specifically his innovative crosspicking approach. This thesis

actually began as a biography of Shuffler, but I expanded it to include other guitar players when I realized that almost all of the early country and

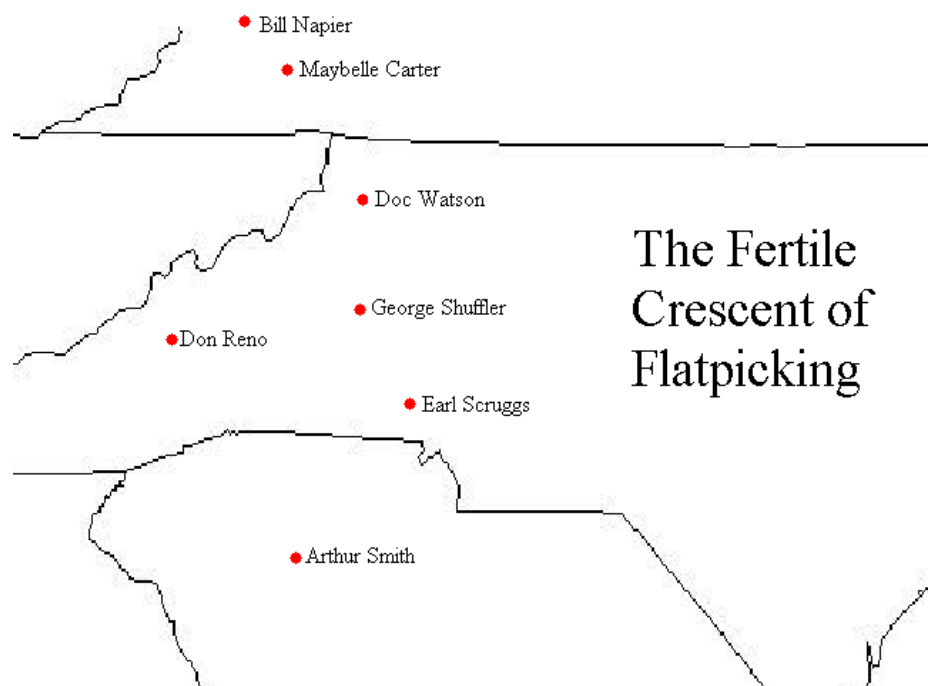


Figure 1: Map of Early Southern Guitar Players

bluegrass lead guitar styles had emerged from a small geographical area in the foothills and mountains. This thesis examines why four separate and distinct lead guitar styles came out of the region. I follow the history of the players, their early influences, and what musical antecedents made North Carolina such a fertile ground for guitar players.

While I was researching the origins of these guitar players however, I became interested in the idea of tradition itself. The three biggest influences on my guitar playing have been my father David Martin, flatpicker Doc Watson, and George Shuffler. I discovered that for a music to be traditional, as defined by folklorists, it has to be learned by a person born into the same community as the tradition, and learned by face-to-face instruction or demonstration. Recent scholarship has explored this idea fully and shown that in the modern world there are essentially three ways to learn music: the traditional one described above, by face-to-face instruction or demonstration but to an outsider, and through instructional books, magazines or the internet. Born in Shelby I had first learned from my father, later from George Shuffler, and even later from Doc Watson through a combination of books and internet tabs. Unaware, I had learned in all three styles. I then began to wonder since I grew up just thirty-eight miles from George Shuffler if that counted as a traditional learning experience. Likewise, Doc Watson was only fifty-four miles away, so even though I had not yet met him I questioned if that was in any way “traditional.” I started to think that maybe some of these definitions of tradition were fairly arbitrary, and as a result the final two chapters of this thesis examine the idea of tradition.

All four musicians in this study lived through the early days of bluegrass and the folk music revival, the time when American roots music first entered the public consciousness. All four were among the first children in the world to grow up with recorded music as the

norm, and all four have been affected in some way by the idea of tradition during their lives. This made them perfect candidates for a study of how tradition, and specifically ideas of tradition held by revivalists in the 1950s and 60s, affected their music and lives.

Introduction

Although ancestors of the guitar have existed for millennia, the modern guitar took shape in Spain in the fifteenth century. In America, the guitar did not gain popularity until it became widely available in *Montgomery Ward* and *Sears and Roebuck* at the turn of the twentieth century.¹ These guitars, though often not of the best quality, were cheap; and trains were able to deliver them to even remote areas. Like the banjo and the mandolin, the guitar experienced a sudden boom in popularity as a parlor instrument and soon became a fad. As with many trends in the country, the American South discovered the guitar a few years after it had debuted elsewhere. Most southern guitar players during this period were fingerpickers, meaning that they used thumb and fingers to play the guitar, or they simply strummed the guitar. Flat picks and plectrums were “strictly mandolin and banjo accessories.”² In the mid 1920s jazz guitarists like Nick Lucas and Django Reinhardt began playing with picks, but most players in the South still strummed or fingerpicked. When the electric guitar was invented, lead guitar playing became much easier since amplifiers provided volume and increased sustain, but it would not be until the 1950s that southern musicians would develop their own unique lead guitar styles.

Once these neophyte southern guitar players joined up with already established fiddle and banjo duets, they formed early strings bands like Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers and the Georgia Wildcats. These groups became enormously popular in the South until the music began to change in the 1940s. A young Kentucky mandolin player named Bill Monroe combined the traditions of African-Americans, Europeans, and southern Americans into a vibrant new music called bluegrass. The first book length treatment of bluegrass was Bob

¹ *The 1902 Edition of the Sears Roebuck Catalogue* (New York: Cleveland Books, 1969), 194.

² Will Hoover, *Picks: The Colorful Saga of Vintage Celluloid Guitar Plectrums* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 1995), 22.

Artis's *Bluegrass*, a 1975 study of the first decades of bluegrass music.³ The two most important books written on the subject, Neil Rosenberg's *Bluegrass: A History* and Robert Cantwell's *Bluegrass Breakdown*, were both published in the early 1980s.⁴ Rosenberg's book was reminiscent of Bill Malone's seminal work *Country Music, U.S.A.*, an attempt to cover the entirety of bluegrass history from the early string bands until the time of the book's publication. Cantwell's study focused more on issues such as authenticity, while he offered a detailed analysis of Bill Monroe's musical development. Almost every book on bluegrass, and most on country music, mentioned the four musicians in this study in some context, but none commented on their regional connections, and none explored the musical antecedents of the region.

No book on bluegrass has been published without at least an entire chapter devoted to Earl Scruggs. Scruggs revolutionized music with his distinctive three-finger banjo playing and made the bluegrass sound. Scruggs may not have invented the three-finger sound, but he perfected it and brought it to the foreground. Scruggs's history has been established in many articles and interviews over the past five decades, but the first lengthy study of Scruggs was in Bill Malone's dissertation turned country music history.⁵ Scruggs later wrote his own autobiography/music book, *Earl Scruggs and the Five-String Banjo*.⁶ Although much has been written about Scruggs's banjo playing, almost nothing has been said about his pioneering lead guitar style in the 1950s.

George Shuffler became widely known as both a great bass player and as the man who invented the crosspicking guitar style during his tenure with the bluegrass band, the

³ Bob Artis, *Bluegrass* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1975).

⁴ Neil Rosenberg, *Bluegrass: A History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985). Robert Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown: The Making of the Old Southern Sound* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

⁵ Bill Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 196).

⁶ Earl Scruggs, *Earl Scruggs and the Five-String Banjo* (New York: Peer International, 1968).

Stanley Brothers. Shuffler's influence on bluegrass music and guitar playing has been covered in a number of sources. In *Bluegrass: A History*, Rosenberg mentioned Shuffler's work with the Stanley Brothers and connected him to early lead guitar styles. Cantwell's *Bluegrass Breakdown* covered Shuffler in some detail as well, and in fact listed Shuffler, Scruggs, Reno, and Watson as the four best examples of early bluegrass lead players, without attributing any significance to the fact that they were all from Western North Carolina. In *The Bluegrass Reader*, a collection of articles about bluegrass from writers as diverse as Hunter S. Thompson and Mike Seeger, David Gates likewise covered Shuffler's musical innovations.⁷ Still, only John Wright's *Traveling the High Way Home* devoted a full chapter to Shuffler, which like many of the chapters in the book consisted of the transcript of a phone interview he conducted in 1985. In it Shuffler described his own life in a few brief passages and then focused on stories about Ralph and Carter Stanley.⁸ Most works explored shallowly or not at all the development of his style, and none featured much information on his life. In 2007 the *Mel Bay's Guitar Sessions* online magazine featured a six part series on the birth of lead guitar that admirably covered Shuffler's style but, like the others, offered very little insight into his music and development as an artist.⁹

Don Reno, the first bluegrass musician to take a flatpicking break on record, was like Earl Scruggs better known as a banjo player with his partner Red Smiley in the band Reno and Smiley. Like George Shuffler his career has been mostly documented in bits and pieces, with the exception of his 1975 self-published memoir *The Musical History of Don Reno, His*

⁷ Thomas Goldsmith, *The Bluegrass Reader* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

⁸ John Wright, *Traveling the High Way Home: Ralph Stanley and the World of Traditional Bluegrass Music* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

⁹ Dan Miller, "The History of Flatpicking Guitar in the U.S.A.," *Mel Bay's Guitar Session*, Feb-Jul 2007.

*Life, His Songs.*¹⁰ Many books on bluegrass mentioned Reno as a banjo player, as bluegrass's first lead guitar player, and as a great singer. An entire chapter of Bob Artis's *Bluegrass* focused on his contributions.

Arthel "Doc" Watson may be one of the most unique figures in American music. The blind guitar player has received attention from every genre of music and has been extensively documented. In his book *In the Country of Country* Nicholas Dawidoff devoted an entire chapter to Watson.¹¹ Literally every major book on bluegrass mentions Watson's contributions to the art of lead guitar playing, as do most works on country music and many on jazz and rock. Watson's lightning-paced flatpicking style became the model for acoustic lead guitar players in the decades following his debut in the 1960s. Watson based his flatpicking on a combination of the playing of fellow North Carolina natives Shuffler and Reno, specifically on Reno's rock n' roll-influenced sound and Shuffler's crosspicking. Despite the fact that all of the early innovators of acoustic lead guitar came from the state, no publication has looked at North Carolina as a state that produced lead guitarists, and none of them traced the musical precursors of the region.

American folk music, extant as long as people have lived in America, has existed in the public memory only since the early twentieth century. The rising force of nationalism during that period made intellectuals turn their attention to their own country's folk heritage and vernacular culture, as opposed to one imported from Europe. Carl Sandburg lamented in his *American Songbag* that "there are persons born and reared in this country who culturally

¹⁰ Don Reno, *The Musical History of Don Reno, His Life, His Songs: A Pictorial and Graphic History of the Great American and Country Western Troubadour* (Lynchburg, VA: Self Published, 1975).

¹¹ Nicholas Dawidoff, *In the Country of Country: People and Places in American Music* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997).

have not yet come over from Europe.”¹² This interest spurred a large number of folklorists to go out and document American folk music in the 1920s and 30s. John Lomax became the most famous, but soon record producers like Ralph Peer were also seeking out and recording southern musicians. In 2000 Benjamin Filene’s *Romancing the Folk* discussed how the public had created the idea of American traditional music, establishing that public perception of American folk music and its reality were quite different.¹³ Because folk music was made by the poor, the researchers and performers often became tied in with leftist political movements in the 1930s and 40s.

During the late 1950s this movement gained more momentum, not from people wanting to establish an American folk music for nationalist reasons, but by a group of young people seeking to escape what they viewed as an over-commercialized music scene. The famous folk singing duo Ray and Ina Patterson described how they felt about the 1950s music scene in the liner notes of their second album:

Radio stations were selecting a certain sound, and pushing aside the basic country type. The only way you could hear the old-time sound was to request it ... all that was left was the new modern sound ... but somehow in the process they seem to add a false quality and lose the real meaning ... One of the main gripes we have is that they are making a conglomerate for sale ... Now that’s why we had the folk boom. Music had gone so far out you couldn’t hear a banjo or a standard guitar which was recognizable.¹⁴

This desire to find a music outside of the commercial sounds on the radio led to the folk music revival. The people who participated in this revival, often called revivalists, set out to find old recordings and also to document living folk musicians like the four referenced in this study. This interaction between folk musicians and revivalists has been the subject of much

¹² Carl Sandburg, *American Songbag*, vii. as quoted in Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk; Public Memory & American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹³ Filene, *Romancing the Folk; Public Memory & American Roots Music*.

¹⁴ Album notes, as quoted in Barry R. Willis, *America’s Music, Bluegrass: A History of Bluegrass Music in the Words of its Pioneers* (Franktown, CO: Pine Valley Music, 1989), 33.

scholarship in recent years. Robert Cantwell's *When We Were Good* looked at the urban folk revival movement from an insider's perspective. In Rosenberg's *Transforming Traditions*, a collection of essays by luminaries like Jeff Titon and Archie Green reflected on the meaning of the folk music revival and explored the roles of the participants (musicians, promoters, folklorists, etc.) in creating ideas of authenticity. In her 2003 dissertation Amy Wooley examined the attraction that old time music presented to outside communities, and in his 2009 thesis David Wood explored these concepts as they related to the towns of Boone and Mt. Airy in North Carolina.¹⁵

The many authors in the field have used different theoretical bases for their studies. Utilizing the ideas of Russian writer Mikhail Bakhtin, this thesis will explore how people construct meanings and ideas around words, how discourse and the exchange of ideas are limited by these constructions, and how people use others' words to construct meaning within their own lives. This idea has been previously applied to the music and speech of performers in both Aaron Fox's *Real Country* and Patricia Sawin's *Listening for a Life*. Sawin's study of Boone, North Carolina singer and storyteller Bessie Eldreth examined the significance of "the process through which the subject creates herself through interaction."¹⁶ This study specifically uses Bakhtin's theory of utterance to examine original musical influences in Western North Carolina, and explores how local musicians absorbed and supplemented these influences, and how the new influences of the folk revival affected this process.

¹⁵ Amy Wooley, "Conjuring Utopia: The Appalachian String Band Revival" (PhD. Diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2003) and David Wood, "'That Ain't Old-Time': The Shifting Ambassadorship of Appalachian Old-Time Music" (M.A. Thesis, Appalachian State University, 2009).

¹⁶ Patricia Sawin, *Listening for a Life: A Dialogic Ethnography of Bessie Eldreth Through her Songs and Stories*, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2004), 2.

Chapter I: Scruggs, Reno, Shuffler, Watson, and Bluegrass Guitar

When folklorists like Cecil Sharp came to the mountains of North Carolina, they found an enduring musical culture of Scots-Irish fiddle tunes and ballad singers as well as some of the only black banjo and fiddle players in the country. In the 1940s Western North Carolinians helped produce a new form of music, bluegrass; Earl Scruggs popularized the regional three-finger banjo style that in many ways defined bluegrass, and the state also made many contributions to guitar playing. While the acoustic guitar began as a rhythm instrument, North Carolinians Earl Scruggs, Don Reno, George Shuffler, and Doc Watson all pioneered the use of the guitar as a lead instrument in the 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁷ This chapter identifies the region as one important to the development of lead guitar and traces the musical antecedents of the region to see why lead guitar emerged from that area. At the same time this chapter provides the first ever biographical sketch of Stanley Brothers guitar player George Shuffler, who came out of a “traditional” background and drew on the experiences and traditions of his community to create the crosspicking lead guitar style.

George Shuffler

The town of Valdese, North Carolina, just ten miles from Morganton, sits on the easternmost edge of the Appalachian Mountains. Settled by members of the Waldensian evangelical sect in 1893, the town incorporated in 1920.¹⁸ The fifteenth of April 1925 saw the birth of George Shuffler, the second of nine children.¹⁹ Shuffler’s early life in Valdese echoes the stories of many southern musicians, almost to the point of cliché. His first

¹⁷ Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, 169.

¹⁸ “Town History,” 2009, History of the Town of Valdese, NC, <http://www.ci.valdese.nc.us/history>.

¹⁹ David Menconi, “The Picker Who Set the Beat,” *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, NC, 21 October 2007, 2.

experience with music came from the church, specifically the local shape-note singing school, a popular form of southern religious singing. Shuffler excelled at the meetings, recalling that he could “really tear up some shape notes.”²⁰ Soon the teachers began to direct students who needed help to Shuffler, who could always show them the harmony or lead that they needed. His affinity for music grew and at age twelve Shuffler’s father traded an old broken down car for a Gibson Kalamazoo guitar.²¹ The guitar, an unusual instrument for the area, had only become widely available in the South at the turn of the century. These mass-produced guitars entered the mountains with the railroads and home order catalogs such as *Montgomery Ward* and *Sears and Roebuck*. As a result, although he could hear guitar music on the radio, no one Shuffler knew could tune a guitar. Finally he tracked down one of his neighbors, Jack Smith, after learning that he knew a little bit about the guitar. Smith tuned the guitar and showed him three basic chords: G, C, and D. Shuffler remembered that Smith played the guitar with a pick broken off of a comb.²² Shuffler walked home that night practicing the three chords over and over, afraid that he would forget them. When he got home his mother was singing an old song entitled “Down in the Valley,” which he and others also called “Birmingham Jail.” Shuffler started accompanying her with two of his new chords and he asked her to sing the song so many times that she ended up hoarse.²³

Shuffler practiced his three chords over the next few months, and made up new ones whenever he needed them. Another of Shuffler’s neighbors heard that he had a guitar and invited him to come pick. At first, Shuffler feared that his homemade chords would make him look foolish or unprepared, so he started out playing with his right hand hidden to the

²⁰ George Shuffler, Interview by author in Valdese, NC, April 2, 2009.

²¹ Shuffler Interview, April 2, 2009.

²² George Shuffler, Phone interview by author from Boone, NC, to Valdese, NC, November 23, 2009.

²³ Shuffler Interview, April 2, 2009.

side. However, he soon discovered that his chord shapes matched those of his more experienced neighbor. Emboldened by this experience, Shuffler practiced in his spare time, until his father traded the guitar for a new pistol. Shuffler's mother, a talented seamstress, did some work for a local woman who paid with a guitar her son had bought. Shuffler played this second guitar with local bands over the next five years.²⁴ At this point he was playing mainly in the "scratch" style of Mother Maybelle Carter. This consisted of playing the melody to the song on the bass strings while rhythmically strumming the top strings during the rests of the melody, the very first country lead guitar technique.

Then, in 1942, a seventeen-year-old Shuffler and some friends traveled to nearby Granite Falls, North Carolina, to see the popular country group the Bailey Brothers. When their backup band failed to show up, Shuffler offered to play bass for them, even though he had only a passing familiarity with the instrument. His playing so impressed Danny and Charlie Bailey that they offered him sixty dollars a week to come with them to Nashville to play on the Grand Ole Opry radio show.²⁵

"It was \$60 a week," Shuffler says, "and I was making \$30 at the bakery. So I could send more home than my dad was making at the mill. I asked my dad what to do and he asked me if this was what I wanted. "Yeah," I said, "it's the only thing I've ever wanted to do." "OK, then, be careful and keep in contact." We pulled into Nashville at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and were onstage that night, playing in front of 3,000 people and on WSM. I was scared to death, knew my mom and dad would be listening. But we got an encore. I was ready to pick all night."²⁶

Over the next few years Shuffler played with the Baileys and other groups in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, started raising horses, and met his wife Pam at a radio show in Hickory. Then in December of 1950 Carter Stanley of the Stanley Brothers asked him if he

²⁴ Shuffler Phone Interview, 23 November 2009.

²⁵ Menconi, "The Picker Who Set the Beat," 2.

²⁶ Menconi, "The Picker Who Set the Beat," 2.

wanted to play bass as a member of their backup band, the Clinch Mountain Boys.²⁷ The Stanley Brothers came out of Dickenson County, Virginia, and along with “Bill Monroe and Flatt and Scruggs ... they made up the ruling triumvirate of early bluegrass music.”²⁸ Ralph Stanley recalled discovering Shuffler at Salem School in Morganton, where George and all nine of his brothers had come out to see the group. George managed to get backstage and play with them, impressing Carter Stanley enough that when bass player Ernie Newton left the band, he remembered Shuffler and called him.²⁹ For the next twenty years Shuffler played bass on and off with the Stanley Brothers; he quit the band on several occasions only to be lured back by raises of fifteen or twenty dollars. Shuffler mostly played bass with the band until the late 1950s, which he called the “lean years of bluegrass.”³⁰ With the emergence in the 1954-55 period of rock and roll, bluegrass had lost many of its young followers, and even popular groups like Jim and Jesse lost their record contracts.³¹ Ralph Stanley sold off his whole herd of cattle one year to keep the band going, and for much of the

²⁷ Here there is some disagreement. In Dan Miller’s “The History of Flatpicking Guitar in the U.S.A.,” Miller claims that Shuffler was contacted in “December of 1950” about playing with the Stanley Brothers (Dan Miller, “The History of Flatpicking Guitar in the U.S.A.,” *Mel Bay’s Guitar Sessions*). Shuffler himself recalls being contacted as early as late 1949, while Goldsmith in *The Bluegrass Reader* claims that Shuffler joined the band in 1952 (Goldsmith, *The Bluegrass Reader*, 52). In his discography Gary Reid shows that Shuffler did not record with the Stanley Brothers until April 11, 1952, when he played bass on “A Life of Sorrow,” “Sweetest Love,” “The Wandering Boy,” and “Let’s Part the Best of Friends.” (The band’s last recording session for Columbia) Gary B. Reid, *Stanley Brothers: A Preliminary Discography* (Roanoke, VA: Copper Creek Publications, 1984). The liner notes to The Stanley Brothers, *The Complete Columbia Stanley Brothers* (New York: Sony Music Entertainment, 1996) also back up this claim. In John Wright’s *Traveling the High Way Home*, Ralph Stanley recalls discovering Shuffler when the band “hadn’t got Lester Woodie” (61). Woodie, also from Valdese and a childhood friend of Shuffler, played fiddle with the Stanley Brothers on their November 1949 session. Therefore it seems clear that Shuffler played with the Stanley Brothers in early 1949 at their above Morganton concert, and joined the band in December 1950; but he did not record with them until April of 1952. This is because the Stanley Brothers briefly disbanded in 1951 (Ralph left music while Carter became lead singer with Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys) and did not record between their Castle Studio session in Nashville on November 3, 1950, and the final session with Shuffler and Columbia in 1952. It seems fair to say that Shuffler met the Stanleys in 1949, likely joined right after the November 1950 session (backing up Miller’s claim), and played with the band on and off for two years until the ’52 session.

²⁸ Rich Kienzle, “The Stanley Brothers,” from Goldsmith, *The Bluegrass Reader*, 51.

²⁹ Wright, *Traveling the High Way Home*, 60.

³⁰ George Shuffler, Interview by author in Valdese, NC, July 28, 2009.

³¹ Neil Rosenberg, “Rockbluerollgrass/bluerockandrollgrass Recordings,” from Goldsmith, *The Bluegrass Reader*, 165.

1955 to 1965 period, the band consisted only of Ralph, Carter, and George. While the Stanleys had generally carried a full band early on, the declining popularity of bluegrass forced them to cut back and rely more heavily on Shuffler's talents. Shuffler quickly rose to fame as a bass player (and even had time to fill in a mandolin part for the 1957 recording of "The Flood"). His own style focused not on the typical two-four bass playing of the time, which he called "boom-boom," but on a four-four bass technique. In the *Bluegrass Unlimited* "Worldwide Readers Poll" in 1967, Shuffler received more votes for the bass than Bill Monroe on the mandolin, Doc Watson on the flattop, or Earl Scruggs on the banjo.³²

For the first ten years Shuffler played only bass until 1960, when he took a lead guitar break on several songs in the July 11, 1960, session for King Records.³³ The Stanley Brothers had been using lead guitarists since as early as 1954 when the Bluegrass Boys' fiddler Charlie Cline took a break on several songs.³⁴ Cline's style resembled the fingerstyle picking of Merle Travis on "Calling from Heaven," but his solo for the instrumental "Hard Times" was a true flatpicking solo, in which he imitated his own fiddle playing.³⁵ The earliest southern lead guitar styles in country music were those of Maybelle Carter, Merle Travis, and the Delmore Brothers. Maybelle Carter adapted "scratch" or Carter-style from earlier clawhammer banjo playing techniques she had learned as a child. She played the melody "on the bass strings while placing rhythmic strums in-between melody notes" with her forefinger.³⁶ Merle Travis played fingerstyle, meaning that he used his "thumb to maintain a bass rhythm while the forefinger" played a "syncopated melody on the treble

³² Wright, *Traveling the High Way Home*, 92.

³³ Gary B. Reid, *Stanley Brothers: A Preliminary Discography* (Roanoke, VA: Copper Creek Publications, 1984), 16.

³⁴ Reid, *Stanley Brothers*, 7.

³⁵ "Calling from Heaven," and "Hard Times," The Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys, *Stanley Brothers & the Clinch Mountain Boys: 1953-58 & 1959* (Hambergen, Germany: Bear Family Records, 1993).

³⁶ Dan Miller, "The Pioneers of Flatpicking," *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*, Volume 11, Number 4, 8.

strings.”³⁷ His splaying was based on black guitar styles, specifically Durham, North Carolina-based blues guitarist Blind Blake. Finally the Delmore Brothers played in a tremolo mandolin style that George Shuffler called the “quick wrist mandolin style.”³⁸ In this style the player used a flatpick to pick rapidly the notes of a melody, often playing the same note numerous times before moving to the next. All three of these had limitations and advantages, and all attempted to “play lead lines without allowing the rhythm to drop out,” a challenge unique to acoustic music.³⁹

Electric instruments could play a melody note for note as a singer sang it, but on an acoustic guitar simply repeating the melody seemed empty, so the guitarist needed to develop a fuller sound. Southern musicians turned to older instruments to solve this problem, imitating the fiddle, the mandolin, and the banjo. Because these styles were adapted, they each had limitations when applied to the guitar. Travis style allowed a player to maintain the rhythm, but the available melody notes were limited because the player had to maintain a chord form for the alternating bass. Carter scratch let the guitarist play a melody, but the rhythmic strums could not so much keep a beat as demonstrate it. The mandolin style came closest to allowing both, and when the Stanleys signed with Syd Nathan at King Records in 1958, he told them that he considered the mandolin overplayed and that they should use the Delmore Brothers guitar style.⁴⁰ As a result their mandolin player Bill Napier switched over to guitar and played lead at the King Studio in Cincinnati on September 14, 1959.⁴¹ His solo on “Mountain Dew” from that session sounded exactly like a mandolin player on guitar,

³⁷ Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, 202.

³⁸ Miller, “The Pioneers of Flatpicking,” 8.

³⁹ Miller, “The Pioneers of Flatpicking,” 8.

⁴⁰ Wright, *Traveling the High Way Home*, 59.

⁴¹ Reid, *Stanley Brothers*, 14.

rapid strumming of the same note in tremolo before moving to the next.⁴² His solo on some songs from this period actually featured early crosspicking based on Jesse McReynolds's mandolin playing. The difference between the two styles, discussed in Barry Willis's *America's Music, Bluegrass* was in the rhythm. Shuffler described Napier's playing as having a "lope in it."⁴³ Napier played with the Stanleys for another year, and the lead guitar became associated with their act; when he left the band in 1961, George Shuffler took over as full time lead guitarist.

When Shuffler left the Bailey Brothers in 1942, he played with a number of other groups before signing on with the Stanleys in 1950; one of these was a brother duo called Jim and Jesse. Jesse McReynolds had been developing a way to imitate the Scruggs style banjo on the mandolin, and he was "working it out" when Shuffler joined the band. During this period Shuffler began "creating some things on the guitar" that he "never did get a chance to use."⁴⁴ Noting that "people like to pretend that we worked on it together," Shuffler insisted that he and McReynolds developed their playing separately.⁴⁵ Shuffler's style, now called crosspicking, imitated the three-finger banjo playing popularized by Earl Scruggs. The player would use a flatpick and play in a specific directional pattern, in Shuffler's case a constant repeat of down-down-up, down-down-up, down-down-up across three adjacent strings.⁴⁶ This pattern, he argued, was the only way to crosspick properly, because doing it any other way could "really get you in a hole or a rut" while this method produced a constant stream of eighth-notes.⁴⁷ Another important part of Shuffler's crosspicking style was his

⁴² "Mountain Dew," The Stanley Brothers, *The Early Starday/King Years: 1958-1961* (Dearborn, MI: Highland Music, 1993).

⁴³ Shuffler Interview, April 2, 2009.

⁴⁴ Wright, *Traveling the High Way Home*, 91.

⁴⁵ Shuffler Interview, April 2, 2009.

⁴⁶ Shuffler Interview, August 9, 2009.

⁴⁷ Shuffler Interview, August 9, 2009.

focus on melody. He claimed that crosspicking “weren’t worth a damn without a melody.”⁴⁸ He based his playing in part on the Scruggs banjo style, the pattern of threes over fours, but also on Maybelle Carter’s style. Like Carter, Shuffler played the melody on the bass strings only; instead of strumming with his forefinger, he picked on the two adjacent strings with a flatpick.

Mathematically, crosspicking seems problematic, since it is a nine-note pattern played in the space for eight notes, so the guitarist must use one of two tricks Shuffler used to make it “come out right.”⁴⁹ The first is simply to let the ninth note of the series bleed over as the first note of the new bar, a process that works out every four bars.

Em	Am
E -----0-----0-----0-----	--0-----0-----0-----0-----]
B -----0-----0-----0-----0--	-----1-----1-----1-----]
G --0-----0-----0-----0-----	-----2-----2-----2-----]
D -----	-----]
A -----	-----]
E -----	-----]

Fig. 2

Most instructional books and sources either use this technique, or teach an improper crosspicking pattern of “down, down, up, down, down, up, down, up.”⁵⁰

Em	Am
E -----0-----0-----0-----	-----0-----0-----0-----]
B -----0-----0-----0-----0--	-----1-----1-----1-----]
G --0-----0-----0-----0-----	--2-----2-----2-----]
D -----	-----]
A -----	-----]
E -----	-----]

Fig. 3

While this technique ensures that chord transitions will be easier since the first note will fall on the first note of the chord, the last down-up interrupts the flow of notes. More often

⁴⁸ Shuffler Interview, April 2, 2009.

⁴⁹ Shuffler Interview, April 2, 2009.

⁵⁰ Joe Carr, *Mel Bay’s First Lessons: Flatpicking Guitar* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 2002), 37.

Shuffler used the crosspick on only the rests in his solos, and played rapidly picked melodies throughout, or as he put it, “you got to make up your own little runs and things for it to come out.”⁵¹ These three bars from Shuffler’s arrangement of “Will You Miss Me” aptly demonstrate this technique.⁵²

G

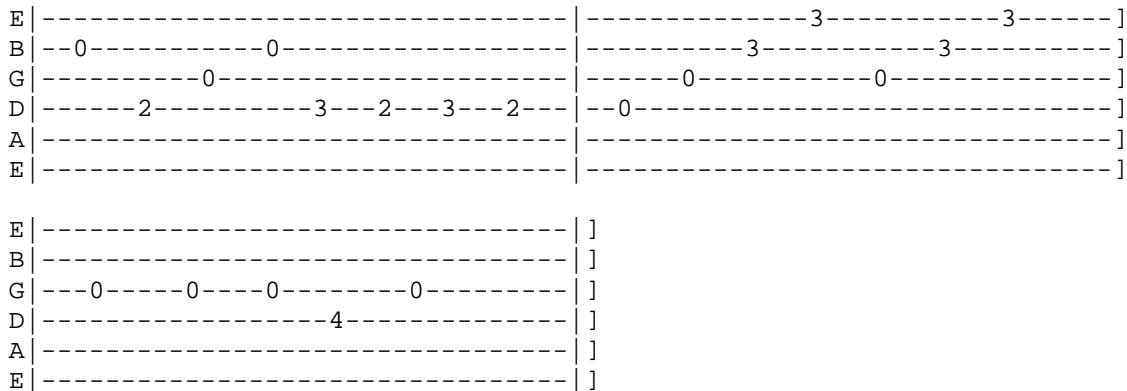


Fig. 4

Shuffler developed and began implementing the technique “out of necessity” during the early 1960s.⁵³ In an interview with John Wright, Ralph Stanley related the circumstances of the band during this period:

After '61 or '62 we didn't carry a full band. The reason was that maybe we'd play two weeks and off two or something and not keep anyone on a regular salary except George, of course. We'd pay George a regular salary whether he'd play or not and if we'd play two weeks out of the month why he'd draw his money, see. We couldn't afford to do a full band that way. But we could take George and just about serve as a full band, you know.⁵⁴

In bluegrass, as in jazz, each member of the band takes a musical break or solo on their respective instrument. When the band consisted of only the two Stanleys and Shuffler, their

⁵¹ Wright, *Traveling the High Way Home*, 91.

⁵² Dan Miller, *Clinch Mountain Guitar* (Pulaski, VA: Flatpicking Guitar Magazine Publications), 8.

⁵³ Shuffler Interview, April 2, 2009.

⁵⁴ Wright, *Traveling the High Way Home*, 60.

instruments were Ralph's banjo, Carter's guitar, and George's guitar and bass.⁵⁵ At this point most musicians saw the acoustic guitar as a rhythm instrument, and most people viewed lead guitar as a novelty. At first Ralph simply took all of the breaks, and then when that sound quickly grew tiresome, Shuffler remembered the crosspicking techniques he had worked on in the late 1940s. The three styles that preceded him—mandolin, Carter, and Travis—were insufficient as far as he was concerned. Carter and Travis were limited in different ways; the Travis technique did not allow for much in the way of melody playing, and the Carter style could not keep a beat. In addition, Shuffler had always disliked the mandolin style, believing "it didn't fit the guitar."⁵⁶ Now reduced to his own creativity, Shuffler used his new technique on a few recordings in July of 1961 for an intro on "There is a Trap," and for a few fills on "Thy Burden is Greater than Mine." But his first full crosspicking solo came on the Stanleys' September recording of "I'm Only Human."⁵⁷ Here Shuffler's fairly bluesy style is featured in the intro, in the background throughout the song, and in a solo. Guitarist Bryan Sutton remembered Shuffler as the first player to "incorporate the concept that when a fiddle player takes his part, and a banjo player takes his part, the guitar player could also take his part."⁵⁸ This was because of the sparse arrangement within the band, where Shuffler needed a fuller sounding guitar style that could keep the rhythm and play melody.

Shuffler based his crosspicking on a combination of the three-finger Scruggs style banjo and Carter scratch guitar. The style arose as a result of the sparse playing arrangement

⁵⁵ Since Shuffler played both guitar and bass, he would often play bass with the guitar slung across his back for easy access, which can be seen in one of the band's rare taped performances on Pete Seeger's *Rainbow Request*.

⁵⁶ Shuffler Interview, April 2, 2009.

⁵⁷ The Stanley Brothers, *The King Years: 1961-1965* (Nashville: King Records, Inc, 2003).

⁵⁸ Derek Hasley, "Bryan Sutton; A Great Guitarist Digs Deep with the Legends," *Swampland.com*, July 2006, 5. <http://swampland.com/articles/view/title:bryan_sutton> (November 8, 2009).

in the Stanley Brothers. The need for innovative acoustic guitar styles and the interplay between the banjo and the guitar became central to North Carolina lead techniques. The combination of traditional musical styles with new technologies and ideas led Western North Carolina to become the birthplace of lead guitar.

Don Reno

Don Wesley Reno, “probably the first guitar player in bluegrass music to flatpick fiddle tunes,” recorded two of the most famous instrumental hits of all time, “Guitar Boogie” and “Feuding Banjos,” with Arthur “Guitar Boogie” Smith. “Feuding Banjos” was covered in the movie *Deliverance* as “Dueling Banjos” and launched a mini-bluegrass revival in the early 1970s. Widely celebrated as a virtuoso of the banjo, less has been written about Reno’s guitar playing. Born on a farm in Spartanburg, South Carolina, on February 21, 1927, Reno and his relatives soon returned to their family farm in Clyde outside of Asheville. In the mountains Reno’s first up-close exposure to music came at five years old when his twenty-one-year-old brother Harley formed a group called “The Haywood Mountaineers.”⁵⁹ One night Reno picked up Leonard Snyder’s banjo and found to his own surprise that he could play the melody to “May I Sleep in Your Barn Tonight Mister?”⁶⁰ His brother’s bandmate left with the banjo later that night and Reno, too young to buy one on his own (and with a father who did not want both of his sons to become musicians), made his own with his friend and neighbor J.R. Sorrells. The skin came from a mountain cat and the strings he made from screen door wire. When his brother gave him a banjo, he sold his stock in the homemade one to Sorrells for \$1.50.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Reno, *The Musical History of Don Reno, His Life, His Songs*, 4.

⁶⁰ Reno, *The Musical History of Don Reno*, 4.

⁶¹ Willis, *America’s Music, Bluegrass*, 151.

Reno may have started on the banjo, but he claimed that he always found it “harsh and crude” before he heard esteemed three-finger pioneer Snuffy Jenkins on WBT radio, who heavily influenced his development.⁶² When he turned twelve he “went into the business professionally at WSPA radio in Spartanburg, SC, with a group known as the Morris Brothers.”⁶³ His son Don Wayne Reno described the development of his father’s guitar playing to Rob Bulkley in 2007:

I think that came more or less just from playing electric guitar. When he was thirteen he took a bus to Atlanta and played on Jack Guthrie's Oklahoma Hills. I think he evolved that flatpicking style that he does from picking the electric guitar, and then playing the fiddle tunes with Tommy Magness (one of Bill Monroe's early fiddle players), trying to figure out the notes on the guitar.⁶⁴

Reno’s guitar style incorporated “a strong melodic sense, flashy runs, jazzy chord solos, harmonized scales, and effects such as sliding down the fingerboard, ‘zooming’ from a high note to a low.”⁶⁵ When he developed his post-World War Two banjo style, called single-string, Reno described “taking stuff from the guitar and transplanting it onto the neck of the five-string banjo.”⁶⁶ When he returned from service and began playing around Columbia, “people told him ‘you sound just like Earl Scruggs.’ He said that really bothered him considering he never played a banjo while he was in the service and when he returned to the U.S., he continued to play in the style he had always played before.”⁶⁷

Though Earl Scruggs made the three finger technique popular, it has been widely established to have originated as a North Carolina piedmont style. Descended from a combination of the “classical” parlor banjo playing of Fred Van Eps when the instrument

⁶² Willis, 151.

⁶³ Peter Wernick, “Interview with Don Reno,” *Bluegrass Unlimited* (Feb.1967), from Goldsmith, 55.

⁶⁴ Miller, “The History of Flatpicking Guitar in the U.S.A.,” *Mel Bay’s Guitar Session*, Feb, 2007.

⁶⁵ Miller, “The History of Flatpicking Guitar in the U.S.A.,” *Mel Bay’s Guitar Session*, March 2007.

⁶⁶ Peter Wernick, “Interview with Don Reno,” Goldsmith, *The Bluegrass Reader*, 55.

⁶⁷ Don Wayne Reno, “Don Reno,” Banjo Tablatures and Bluegrass Information.

<http://bluegrassbanjo.org/donreno.html> (November 6, 2009).

became a fad at the turn of the century and African-American blues and ragtime musical influence, Charlie Poole of the North Carolina Ramblers first transformed it into a “raggy, percussive style whose prominent upbeat, expressed by tight stiff chords snatched often from positions high on the banjo neck, echoed the rhythmic pulse of the older mountain clawhammer or frailing styles.”⁶⁸ Carolina natives Smith Hammet, Mack Woolbright, Rex Brooks, and Johnny Whisnant all played in a three-finger style, and while playing guitar in a band with Brooks and Hammet, Snuffy Jenkins learned the style.⁶⁹ Jenkins, “a product of Harris, North Carolina, had taken the technique to the largest audience through his performances on WBT in Charlotte in 1934 and on WIS in Columbia, South Carolina, after 1937.”⁷⁰ Ralph Stanley, Don Reno, Earl Scruggs, and a host of lesser-known banjo players acknowledged learning three-finger banjo from Jenkins.⁷¹ Reno developed a new banjo style called single string that focused much less on the arpeggio technique of Poole, Jenkins, and Scruggs. Instead he took the fiddle tunes he played on the electric guitar and played them on the banjo. In 1956 Reno and his partner Red Smiley recorded a satirical song called “Country Boy Rock and Roll,” which poked fun at the new musical form that had stolen much of their audience. Reno took his electric guitar leads, his improvisational single string banjo leads, his earlier guitar playing, and the influence of rock guitarists like Chuck Berry and transposed all of that into an energetic and rapid guitar lead for the new song. Using a constant up and down pick direction for speed, he flew all over the fret board and introduced the acoustic lead guitar to bluegrass in a dramatic fashion. By this time Reno and Smiley had

⁶⁸ Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, 54. While Hammet, Woolbright, Brooks, Whisnant, Jenkins, and Scruggs all came from Cleveland and Rutherford county, where it appears that many banjo players played in a three-finger style, it should be noted that Poole only played in a three-finger style because an injury to his hand prevented him from playing in any of the other styles such as frailing or clawhammer.

⁶⁹ Artis, *Bluegrass*, 43.

⁷⁰ Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, 327.

⁷¹ Rosenburg, *Bluegrass*, 284.

signed with King Records, the same company with which the Stanley Brothers ended up in the late 50s. As with the Stanleys, Reno and Smiley were produced by Syd Nathan who encouraged them to use more guitar leads.⁷²

Earl Scruggs

Shelby, North Carolina, has produced a number of important musicians including Don Gibson, the author of “I Can’t Stop Loving You.” The best known of the Shelby contributions though is Earl Scruggs, whose three-finger banjo style drove the music of Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys. He and Lester Flatt provided the soundtrack to the TV show “The Beverly Hillbillies” and the movie *Bonnie and Clyde*. Scruggs also played one of the earliest lead guitars in bluegrass, based on a combination of Carter scratch and three finger banjo:

When I would play with my older brother, he wanted me to play guitar with him because he wanted to play the banjo. So anyway, I started playing guitar back as far as I can remember. My idol at the time—the main person I loved the most—was Momma Maybelle Carter, so that’s who I copied.⁷³

Scruggs played the melody with his thumb and picked two accompanying notes on adjacent strings with his fingers, essentially emulating his banjo style on the guitar. When people described lead guitar as a novelty during this period, this style was one to which they referred. Scruggs used it on light-hearted songs like “Jimmie Brown the Newsboy.”

Doc Watson

Deep Gap, North Carolina native Arthel “Doc” Watson did more for the flattop guitar than any other figure in American music. Born in 1923 and blinded by an eye infection

⁷² Nathan himself can be seen as an important figure in early lead guitar since he encouraged three of the first lead players (Reno, Napier, and Shuffler) to use their guitars more. Nathan’s motivation seems to be that he thought the fiddle and banjo were becoming clichés, and that he had had such great success with the Delmore Brothers and their early lead guitar.

⁷³ Willis, *America’s Music, Bluegrass*, 151.

before his first birthday, Watson was by all accounts a musical prodigy—playing pots and pans, strings tied to broom handles, and the harmonica all before he turned six. Watson can trace his family back to 1790, when Tom Watson fled Scotland and homesteaded 3,000 acres in the Deep Gap area.⁷⁴ As the sixth of nine children Watson had plenty of exposure to the traditional music of North Carolina; both of his parents played banjo and sang, as did several of his brothers. When Watson turned eleven his father built him a banjo, both because Watson wanted one and because one of his relatives needed a sixteen-year-old cat drowned. This cat's skin, a few pieces of maple, and the teaching of his father, General Dixon Watson, and older brother Arnold set Watson on a musical path.⁷⁵

In addition to learning from his family and neighbors, Watson learned via a phonograph that the family acquired when he turned seven. The phonograph introduced him to the music of “early county artists such as the Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, the Carolina Tar Heels, and Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers.”⁷⁶ When he turned ten Watson began attending the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, and there heard the music of 1930s jazz guitar players like Nick Lucas and Django Reinhardt.⁷⁷ During his third year in school Watson's friend Paul Montgomery showed him the G, C, and D chords on a guitar. Then, when he returned home he found that his brother Linny had borrowed a guitar and Watson started “messing around with it.”⁷⁸ When his father heard his son fumbling with the unfamiliar instrument, he bet him that he would not be able to learn a song by the end of the day. As stakes General Watson said that he would buy his son a new guitar in Boone. The

⁷⁴ Dawidoff, *In the Country of Country*, 153.

⁷⁵ Dan Miller, “Introduction,” from Steve Kaufman, *The Legacy of Doc Watson* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 1998), 5.

⁷⁶ Miller, “Introduction,” 5.

⁷⁷ Miller, “Introduction,” 5.

⁷⁸ Miller, “Introduction,” 6.

younger Watson put his three chords together, and when his father returned home, he found his son playing the Carter Family song “When the Roses Bloom in Dixie.”

The guitar that his father bought for eleven dollars came with a book by Nick Lucas demonstrating how to hold a flat pick. Despite this he began to play the guitar in a fingerpicking approach based on Merle Travis, but mostly in the thumb-lead technique of Maybelle Carter. However, when he heard that Jimmie Rodgers, one of his musical heroes, played the guitar with a flat pick he began to use one as well:

I figured, “Hey, he must be doing that with one of them straight picks. So I got me one and began to work at it. Then I began to learn the Jimmie Rodgers licks on the guitar. Then all at once I began to figure out, “Hey, I could play that Carter stuff a lot better with a flat pick.”⁷⁹

Watson started playing in the streets of Boone and Lenoir, sometimes making as much as \$50 a day, and soon also began playing on local radio stations, where he acquired his nickname “Doc.” The radio announcer decided that Arthel did not suit a performer and deemed it too long to say on the radio anyway. A woman in the audience suggested the new moniker.

Doc met his wife Rosa Lee Carlton when he was eighteen and she was ten, and they married when they were reacquainted again six years later. Doc supported his family in any way he could, working as a piano tuner and playing in a local country-western swing band called The Country Gentleman, where he traded his acoustic guitar for a Gibson Les Paul electric. Since the band lacked a fiddler, he began working out fiddle tunes on the electric guitar using a flatpicking technique, something he had heard electric guitarists like Hank Garland do. Earlier Watson had attempted to play the fiddle with little success, but remembered the bowing motion and began imitating the rhythms with his right hand.

⁷⁹ “Doc Watson,” Miller, “The History of Flatpicking Guitar in the U.S.”

When folklorist Ralph Rinzler discovered Watson in 1961, he had come down to record a local musician named Clarence “Tom” Ashley.⁸⁰ Ashley arranged for a number of local musicians to accompany him on the records, with Doc Watson playing the guitar. When he first met Watson he was shocked to see the blind mountain folk musician holding an electric guitar. He forbade him to use the instrument despite Watson’s protests that at a lower volume it would be indistinguishable from an acoustic guitar.⁸¹ Depressed by the incident, Rinzler, Ashley, and Watson set out to recruit local banjo player Jack Johnson as a replacement for Watson:

Rinzler ended up setting in the bed of the truck and decided to spend the time practicing his banjo playing. According to Rinzler, not long into the ride the truck stopped Watson jumped out of the front to join him in the back saying “Let me see that banjo, son.” Watson began playing his version of “Tom Dooley” and “proceeded to play the hell out of it,” deeply impressing Rinzler with his command of the instrument and strong baritone voice.⁸²

Now desperate to record Watson, Rinzler encouraged him to borrow an acoustic guitar from a neighbor and began marketing him on the folk circuit. When he transposed his electric fiddle tunes to the acoustic guitar, Watson created a new style called flatpicking by combining “up and down picking and cross-picking.”⁸³

A few common threads linked the playing and lives of each of the four musicians, but none affected all four. Don Reno and Doc Watson both developed their styles playing fiddle tunes on the electric guitar, while neither George Shuffler nor Earl Scruggs played electric.⁸⁴ Scruggs and Shuffler both worked in Piedmont mills, though Watson and Reno did not.

⁸⁰ Jon Hill, “Tradition and Innovation: Doc Watson and the Folk Revival, 1960-1964” (M.A. Thesis, Appalachian State University, 2009), 20.

⁸¹ Hill, 20. The volume of the amp is one of the major factors in how much distortion a guitar has. An amp at maximum volume will “break up,” while at a lower volume it will sound much closer to the sound of a traditional acoustic guitar.

⁸² Hill, 21.

⁸³ Hill, 52.

⁸⁴ The lower action (distance between the strings and fret board) of the electric guitar likely helped with the greater speed necessary to play fiddle tunes.

Scruggs, Watson, and Shuffler first played guitar in the Carter scratch method, but Reno never did. Scruggs, Reno, and Shuffler acknowledged Snuffy Jenkins as an early influence; however, Watson did not. Many Western Carolina musicians gave similar responses when asked why they began playing with a flat pick instead of in the thumb-and-one fingerstyle common in the Piedmont. George Shuffler responded that “it just seemed like the thing to do,” and another local bluegrass musician responded with “that’s what you do with one.”⁸⁵ Only Shuffler, Reno, and Watson played with a flat pick. Shuffler, Reno, and Scruggs all developed their styles as part of the commercial bluegrass industry, but Watson claimed to have never played bluegrass. Scruggs, Reno, and Watson all played the banjo, but Shuffler did not. Of all these factors, none of them accounts for the playing styles of all four musicians, but by concentrating on just two of these, the banjo and bluegrass itself, we can gain a clearer understanding of why the acoustic lead guitar emerged out of North Carolina.

Bluegrass

The simple fact that bluegrass emerged as all four of these musicians came of age may be one of the most significant factors. Bob Artis pointed out in his 1975 book that “the Carolinas have often been called the true cradle of bluegrass music because of their wealth of great musicians.”⁸⁶ In many ways, bluegrass began in North Carolina. Bob Carlin in *String Bands of the North Carolina Piedmont* and Patrick Huber in *Linthead Stomp* have both traced the development of the guitar/banjo/fiddle combos commonly called string bands or old-time bands.⁸⁷ Both authors argued that North Carolina Piedmont musicians had been influential

⁸⁵ George Shuffler, Phone interview by author from Boone, NC, to Valdese, NC, November 23, 2009, and David Martin, Phone interview by author from Boone, NC, to Shelby, NC, November 23, 2009.

⁸⁶ Artis, *Bluegrass*, 61.

⁸⁷ Bob Carlin, *String Bands in the North Carolina Piedmont* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2004). Patrick Huber, *Linthead Stomp: The Creation of Country in the Piedmont South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

during the early days of country music, at the time called hillbilly, and that the region had been overlooked because of a focus on the Carolina mountains. String bands were the musical predecessors of bluegrass bands, and many string bands transitioned to bluegrass when Bill Monroe's music became popular. The Monroe Brothers themselves were "tremendously popular ... in the Carolinas, enhancing the already enviable reputation the Monroes had established on some of the major country radio stations."⁸⁸ With both bands Monroe had forged his reputation in North Carolina, playing on radio stations out of Raleigh, Charlotte, Hickory, and Asheville. Bill and his brother Charlie both moved to North Carolina in the 1930s, and the music spread quickly throughout the region. When bands made the transition from string bands to bluegrass bands, the main changes were the inclusion of a Scruggs-style banjo player over a mountain or clawhammer player, the addition of a mandolin player, and the fact that the banjo, fiddle, and mandolin all took breaks, instead of just the fiddle. Only the bass and the guitar remained rhythm instruments. The guitar had usurped the place of the banjo in the South because of its greater bass range and versatility; it gave bands a harmonic center and made chord forms more exact. Listening to the early 1920s string band recordings of Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers, it becomes clear the guitarist Riley Puckett often does not know which chords go with which parts of the melody. As the guitar became more commonplace, the chords became more important, while in earlier banjo and fiddle duets the banjoist often played the melody of the entire song over the (I) chord, and unresolved dissonances abounded. By the time Bill and Charlie Monroe formed the Monroe Brothers, the guitar had become central to the band, maintaining both a constant rhythm and a harmonic center, as well as filling in bass lines in the absence of a bass

⁸⁸ Artis, *Bluegrass*, 16.

player.⁸⁹ When bluegrass with its alternating solos came along, guitar players wanted to be able to play lead along with the other members of the band. Framming, the term most people used for early guitar playing, only allowed these musicians to keep a rhythm, so it seems natural that bluegrass music would produce lead guitar players, and since bluegrass began in North Carolina, it makes sense that the first lead guitar players would come from the area.

Banjo

Wayne Erbsen claimed that “it was in North Carolina where the banjo became a deeply ingrained part of everyday life. Both blacks and whites frequently played the banjo along with the fiddle for rural dances and frolics.”⁹⁰ C. P. Heaton put it more simply when he stated, “North Carolina is banjo country.”⁹¹ Banjos have always been extraordinarily popular in the state, and no region has maintained or produced more playing styles. North Carolinians also kept their banjos much longer than residents of other states; Heaton notes that by the early 1940s most companies had stopped making five-string banjos altogether.⁹² Yet in North Carolina they remained popular, and would soon be rescued from obscurity by Earl Scruggs. Still, many musicians black and white gave up their banjos for the versatile new guitars. When they did this, they often transferred their banjo methods directly to the guitar. In *African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia*, Cece Conway argued briefly that many of the black players she researched had used banjo techniques on their new guitars. One, Thomas Burt of Durham, described a Saturday night dance:

⁸⁹ Many early string bands and bluegrass bands lacked a bass player because of the size and expense of the instrument, making it difficult to transport. As a result many of the early guitar players, Jimmie Rodgers, Riley Puckett, and Ed Mayfield, all played bass runs in between chords, creating the distinctive guitar style still used in bluegrass today.

⁹⁰ Wayne Erbsen, *Rural Roots of Bluegrass: Songs, Stories, & History* (Asheville NC: Native Ground Music, 2003), 15.

⁹¹ C. P. Heaton, “The Five-String Banjo in North Carolina,” Native Ground Music <http://www.nativeground.com/banjoinnnc.asp> (November 23, 2009).

⁹² Heaton, “The Five String Banjo in North Carolina.”

They'd kick up and dance. They'd kick up more dust, I declare! We used to sit and play all night long some nights and they'd dance all night. We'd play some sort of fast music for them to dance by—never played no blues or nothing. I used to tune my guitar in the tune of a banjo and play. They'd kick up and cut up just like it was a banjo.⁹³

Elizabeth Cotten, the famous black banjo player best known for her guitar song “Freight Train,” played the banjo in her youth (upside down because she was left-handed), and when she switched to guitar (also upside down), she “used a banjo stroke and thumbed the highest pitched string as a drone.”⁹⁴

All four of the musicians in this study based their lead guitar playing on earlier banjo music, though often this connection was indirect or second generation. George Shuffler claimed that there were few guitar or banjo players in the very religious town of Valdese in his youth, though he did listen to Snuffy Jenkins on the radio.⁹⁵ He based his crosspicking on Scruggs and Jenkins's banjo rolls and the bass lead of Mother Maybelle Carter, who had in turn based her guitar playing on the clawhammer banjo she played as a child. Doc Watson played banjo in a distinctive “two-finger technique with a consistent index finger lead,” which he in turn had learned from his family.⁹⁶ When he also began imitating Maybelle Carter's guitar playing, he was really just transferring his banjo playing to the guitar. Then, when he began playing scratch with a flatpick, he laid the foundations for his later flatpicking. Don Reno played both the guitar and banjo from age five; his first banjo was a fretless homemade affair, and throughout his career, he spoke openly about playing guitar leads on the banjo, and banjo and fiddle rhythms on the guitar. Like Shuffler he had learned banjo from Snuffy Jenkins. Earl Scruggs began playing guitar in the Maybelle Carter style

⁹³ Cecilia Conway, *African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia: A Study of Folk Traditions* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 5.

⁹⁴ Conway, *African Echoes of the Banjo in Appalachia*, 6.

⁹⁵ George Shuffler, Phone interview by author from Boone, NC, to Valdese, NC, December 4, 2009.

⁹⁶ C. P. Heaton, “The Five-String Banjo in North Carolina.”

and then added in the finger rolls he had learned from Jenkins and a host of other players in and around Shelby and Rutherfordton. With all four musicians, the point was to find a way to play rhythm and lead at the same time, a problem banjo players solved generations before the guitar. In hindsight, it seems only logical that North Carolina musicians would take the banjo traditions of their respective localities and add them to the new guitar playing.

In fact, the specific traditional influences of the banjo can be seen in the later guitar styles. Doc Watson played in the up-picking style, in which “the melody is plucked by the ‘up-pick’ of the index finger, then the nail brush and thumb ‘kick-off’ follow as in frailing. A variant used by Bascom Lamar Lunsford and other North Carolina players involves an upward index finger brush rather than the brush downward with the nails.”⁹⁷ Watson claimed that the first person he ever heard flatpick fiddle tunes was Don Reno, and said that he also heard George Shuffler crosspick with the Stanley Brothers. He combined crosspicking and flatpicking into a style all his own, but whereas Shuffler was influenced by the forward three-finger rolls of Snuffy Jenkins and Earl Scruggs, Watson based his crosspicking on his own up-picking banjo playing. Thus while Shuffler always played a down-down-up pattern and played the melody in the bass, Watson used varying patterns of down-down-up and down-up-up as well as the alternating down-up-down. As a result Watson often carried his melodies in the high strings and the rhythm in the bass, heard clearly in the crosspicking section of “Beaumont Rag” among other places. Similarly Earl Scruggs played the forward banjo rolls he had learned in Cleveland and Rutherford Counties. These musicians drew on their traditional influences and used them as innovative approaches to a new instrument.

⁹⁷ C. P. Heaton, “The Five-String Banjo in North Carolina.”

Chapter II: Scruggs, Reno, Shuffler, Watson, and the Folk Music Revival

A growing interest in American roots music that began with the nationalist period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries culminated with the folk music revival in the mid-1950s. Many scholars mark the genesis of the revival with the Kingston Trio's recording of the North Carolina murder ballad "Tom Dooley" in 1958.⁹⁸ The song's success helped launch the renewed interest in American folk music and discovered or rediscovered musicians like Doc Watson, Clarence Ashley, and Bill Monroe. Bluegrass music, though only a decade old at the time, quickly became associated with the revival movement. Pete Seeger's publication of *How to Play the Five-String Banjo*, with a chapter on Scruggs-style, and Alan Lomax's 1959 *Esquire* article, where he famously described bluegrass as "folk music in overdrive," lent the approval of two of folk music's biggest supporters to bluegrass.⁹⁹ Folklorist Mayne Smith claimed in a widely read 1965 *Journal of American Folklore* article that, although bluegrass might have been commercial, it shared "more stylistic traits with folk tradition than any other well defined category of hillbilly music."¹⁰⁰ Many technical attributes of bluegrass, among them rural musicians, old songs, and acoustic music, made it a good fit for revivalists. This however was not the only reason revivalists were attracted to bluegrass music.

⁹⁸ Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, 279.

⁹⁹ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 144.

¹⁰⁰ L. Mayne Smith, "An Introduction to Bluegrass," *Journal of American Folklore*, 250. This article was republished in the magazine *Bluegrass Unlimited* where it became much more widely read.

As the original revivalists aged they became self-aware and a recent flood of scholarship resulted. They examined what effect their interactions with folk musicians had and how they had chosen them in the first place. One of the most comprehensive of these folk revival studies was Neil Rosenberg's *Transforming Traditions*, which scrutinized not just the American folk revival, but the British blues revival and even a Northumbrian smallpipe revival in England's northeasternmost county.¹⁰¹ By the beginning of the revival, rock n roll had cut deeply into the young fanbase of bluegrass bands, and bluegrass had become unprofitable. Revivalists generally acted when they saw a "music system as threatened, moribund, or unappreciated ... which they believe[d] to be morally and artistically worth preserving."¹⁰² Bluegrass in this period certainly fit that bill and folklorists and revivalists often secured better pay for traditional musicians than they had received before.

Apart from their desire to help musicians and maintain traditional music forms in danger of disappearing, revivalists also saw roots music as an escape from the commercial music of the day. Some scholars have argued that this anti-commercialist mood stemmed from the saturation of listeners with slickly produced Top 40 songs. Researchers have pointed out that music had only been truly commercialized since the 1920s, when recordings and phonographs became widely available. Previously music was made *in* the home, but had since been sold *to* the home:

In the classic neo-Marxist analysis of commercial popular culture, music-making ability is taken from people and returned in the form of commodity. Individuals and

¹⁰¹ Neil Rosenberg, *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

¹⁰² Neil V. Rosenberg, "Starvation, Serendipity, and the Ambivalence of Bluegrass Revivalism," 196, from Rosenberg, *Transforming Tradition*.

communities are thus alienated from their own creative talent, and deprived of the warmth and solidarity reinforced by communal music-making.¹⁰³

Three decades later young listeners tried to rediscover music as it had existed before recording, both by seeking out older musicians and (ironically) listening to the earliest commercial recordings. This anti-commercial atmosphere of the revival movement stemmed from the young middle class who made up its core searching for their rural roots in a rootless society. This explains why so many traveled to the South, and sheds light on their interactions with folk musicians. Interactions between southern musicians and revivalists focused around their competing ideas of tradition. Revivalists tried to impose images of tradition on folk singers, seeking to create a counter-culture that valued community and tradition and opposing ideas of rampant development and commercialism. Folk musicians, on the other hand, were often very commercial, and bluegrass musicians like the four in this study tried to better fit the revivalists' pre-conceived notions of tradition by playing certain songs in certain styles, dressing in stereotypical fashions, and even researching traditional music themselves.

Folk tradition is commonly defined as a process that emerges from within a culture and was learned from face-to-face interaction or demonstration. Thus, a folk musician is one who learns from his peers and was born into that culture. This is the modern understanding of tradition, but at the time of the folk revival ideas were not nearly so well defined, at least for the public. Therefore record companies sold folk performers based on their authenticity; Bob Dylan, for instance, was commonly described as an authentic folk performer while the same folk music community rejected Hank Williams. According to the folk music community of the time, Dylan, born in a Jewish family in Duluth, Minnesota, could sing

¹⁰³ Manuel, *Cassette Culture*, 7. As quoted in Wooley, 39.

southern music and blues more authentically than Williams, born in a log cabin in Mount Olive, Alabama. The reason for this was that Dylan was part of the anti-commercial folk music movement, while Williams had been a successful commercial country singer. Participants in the revival sought a music that would be the antithesis of the commercial music of the day. The question for listeners then became how do you find a commercial recording of a non-commercial artist? Library of Congress recordings by folklorists like John Lomax were one solution. These early field recordings captured music as it appeared in its original setting before marketing, production, or distribution. Listeners soon discovered that many of the voices on their records still lived, and some set out to find them. Bob Dylan famously found Woody Guthrie dying of Huntington's Disease in the Brooklyn State Hospital, and dozens of other music lovers and amateur folklorists rediscovered early country, folk, old-time, and blues artists living all over the country.

The Stanley Brothers

In music studies, the notion of authenticity has been a recurring theme. Richard Peterson in *Creating Country Music* pointed out the irony that record companies sought performers who were both authentic/traditional and original.¹⁰⁴ Though these attributes seem to be contradictory, many of the most famous musicians became successful because they fit this description. Hank Williams may be the best example. The Stanley Brothers were another; like Williams they were original *because* of their perceived authenticity. Unlike Bill Monroe, who came from western Kentucky, or Earl Scruggs, who came from the North Carolina foothills, the Stanley Brothers emerged from the mountains of Dickerson County, Virginia. The Stanley Brothers have always been viewed as the most “traditional” of the first

¹⁰⁴ Richard A. Peterson, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

three bluegrass bands, and with some justification. In their first recordings for Rich-R-Tone in 1947, Ralph played a mountain clawhammer style on several songs, and two and three finger methods on others.¹⁰⁵ By the time the band moved to the Columbia label, Ralph played mainly in the three-finger Scruggs style (which he claimed to have learned from Snuffy Jenkins), though many banjo players still saw the influence of the rural clawhammer technique in his playing. Their repertoire also seemed much older than contemporary bluegrass bands; in addition to the new Monroe tunes, the Stanleys played older traditional and mountain ballads like “Little Maggie” and “Man of Constant Sorrow.” These questions of authenticity continue to this day, and by examining the ideas of “tradition” and “authenticity” in perceptions of the Stanley Brothers (public and self-perception), this debate can be further informed. The best theoretical basis for this type of discussion is expressed in the ideas of Russian writer Mikhail Bakhtin:

Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere. The very boundaries of the utterance are determined by a change of speech subjects. Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another ... Every utterance must be regarded as primarily a *response* to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word “response” here in the broadest sense). Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies upon the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account ... Therefore, each kind of utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication.¹⁰⁶

Thus, ideas are formed by interaction, first by interaction with a musician’s own community, but also by contact with outside influences.

The Stanley Brothers were a natural fit for the folk revival and they were soon making up their lost income by playing on the college circuit. While Ralph Stanley had “abandoned his two-finger style and begun playing in a three-finger style” in the late 1940s,

¹⁰⁵ Artis, *Bluegrass*, 31.

¹⁰⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 91.

by the early 60s he had taken up clawhammer again.¹⁰⁷ Jack Lynch, who produced several records by the Stanleys and later several of Ralph's solo records, recalled his first taking it back up for an album called *Old Time Music*.¹⁰⁸ He also described how the musical climate influenced this decision:

Another thing—along about that time it might be more into the folk era. You remember that? They were trying to get the sound like that, too. Everybody was. You know, the Stanley Brothers had *Folk Spotlight* and the Country Gentlemen had *Folk* this and *Folk* that and so on. I mean, it was just—it was the folk era.¹⁰⁹

The Stanleys began to release more albums featuring older music, “public domain type stuff,” as well as old hymns.¹¹⁰ They began playing folk music festivals like the Newport Folk Festival in 1959, where the Stanleys and Earl Scruggs were well received. Alan Lomax was the driving force behind moving bluegrass into the folk revival. In his liner notes for a 1959 bluegrass album, he described the music as “the brightest and freshest sound in American popular music today, a sort of Southern mountain Dixie ... bluegrass based itself firmly upon traditional mountain instrumental styles,” and Neil Rosenberg later pointed out that Lomax's notes were aimed “not at the mountain people ... but at the folk revivalists and sophisticated followers of the avant-garde musical arts.”¹¹¹

Earl Scruggs & Don Reno

The first band to recognize the monetary potential of the folk revival was the Foggy Mountain Boys, or more specifically, Louise Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys. Earl Scruggs's wife Louise had been the band's business and booking manager since 1956 and in 1959 began marketing the band to the revival. She made business contacts with folk booking

¹⁰⁷ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 84.

¹⁰⁸ Wright, 164.

¹⁰⁹ Wright, 165.

¹¹⁰ Wright, 164.

¹¹¹ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 154.

agents like Manny Greenhill, promoted them as “Folk Music Favorites,” and connected the group with musicians already popular in the revival like John Jacob Niles, John Lee Hooker, Cisco Houston, and Joan Baez.¹¹² Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs had seen the same ups and downs in the late 1950s as the other bluegrass groups and were grateful for the new interest in their music. Since the banjo was the de facto instrument of the revival, most of the interest was directed at Scruggs, and he alone was invited to play the 1959 Newport Folk Festival. The Foggy Mountain Boys began playing the folk and college circuit, and soon began modifying their “choice of repertoire,” even “moving toward a folk revival sound.”¹¹³ Neil Rosenberg even argued that the band developed two separate repertoires, one of commercial singles with drums and five-part harmonies directed at the country music market and one of “concept” albums aimed at consumers in the folk revival. These albums included covers of the Carter Family and Woody Guthrie.

On September 24, 1962, the Foggy Mountain Boys recorded “The Ballad of Jed Clampett” as the theme song for the TV show “The Beverly Hillbillies” (1962), and the single quickly became the first bluegrass song to hit number one on the country music charts.¹¹⁴ They recorded more TV theme songs for shows like “Petticoat Junction” (1963) and “Green Acres” (1965), and received another big break when they recorded the song “Foggy Mountain Breakdown” for the movie *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). All of this commercial success attracted the attention of Columbia Records, which encouraged the band to use more studio musicians and start recording Bob Dylan tunes. Lester Flatt, who was uncomfortable with both these changes and Dylan’s left-wing politics, soon left the band and Scruggs formed The Earl Scruggs Revue with sons Gary (bass and harmonica) and Randy

¹¹² Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 167-168.

¹¹³ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 169.

¹¹⁴ Barry R. Willis, “Biography Earl Scruggs,” <http://www.flatt-and-scruggs.com/earlbio.html>, (June 23, 2010).

(electric and acoustic guitars) and drummer Jody Maphis. The band, most commonly described as a folk-rock band, recorded songs by Bob Dylan and Joan Baez.¹¹⁵

Don Reno during this same period demonstrated that musicians' experiences were unique. He went back to his roots in country music and began hosting a TV show with Red Smiley and a steel guitar tinged country band. His interaction with the folk revival was more limited than any of the other musicians in this study. He and Smiley played several folk concerts, but never really took off as folk stars the way Scruggs, Watson, and the Stanley Brothers did.

Doc Watson

Unlike the Stanley Brothers or Flatt and Scruggs who experienced a rebirth of popularity as a result of the folk revival, Doc Watson's popular career began after being discovered by folklorist Ralph Rinzler. Watson went from being an electric guitar player in a country western swing band to being one of the main symbols of American roots music. As Jon Hill put it in his study of Watson's interaction with the folk community, "in order to meet the musical requirements of the folk revival audiences, he had to reinvent his personal style and commit himself to relearning music he heard as a child as well as exploring many other sources for new songs to include in his repertoire."¹¹⁶ Many felt that Watson had "abandoned traditional music for the hybrid electric 'rockabilly' music" and that revivalists had helped him rediscover his own roots.¹¹⁷ The specific changes in Watson's music are numerous; he started playing songs he had heard from his family in his youth like "Tom Dooley" and "Little Sadie," and he started playing songs he heard on the family phonograph by the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers. He even started researching mountain music

¹¹⁵ Willis, "Biography Earl Scruggs."

¹¹⁶ Hill, 2.

¹¹⁷ Cantwell, 65.

himself, searching out old records and learning older songs from people in Deep Gap and Boone. At the Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh he had heard the music of jazz greats Django Reinhardt and Nick Lucas, but soon discovered that the revivalists were not interested in jazz. Watson also modified his stage presence from an energetic electric player to a simple mountain man with a vast repository of traditional songs. Though he had been quite well educated in the state capital, Watson played the role that was expected of him. At one concert in Massachusetts, after describing the history of a song quite elegantly, he apologized and said, “they told me not to use any words with more than two syllables.”¹¹⁸ While clearly a joke, this statement revealed what Watson saw as the expectations of the revivalists of a folk musician from Deep Gap, North Carolina.

Revivalists

The same way that young people today seek out the supposedly non-commercial music of “indie” musicians, revivalists in the 1950s and 60s sought a music that had not been tainted by capitalism. Many young people felt out-of-sync and lost in a giant infomercial of culture. They longed for something more “real” that they could get behind; they decided on traditional folk music (a modern comparison would be suburban whites who desire that the rappers they listen to actually come from urban poverty). The attraction to the music was based in part on its perceived pre-commercial nature and partly on the mysterious idea of “roots.”

Many revivalists were attracted to traditional cultures because they sought to regain the roots they or their parents had given up to become middle class, part of a trend among middle class whites deifying the poor. Many southerners had gone North or West in search of better opportunities, the largest of these the so-called Great Migrations of the early

¹¹⁸ David P. Haney, Interview by Author in Boone, NC October 15, 2009.

twentieth century. Often the children of these migrants wanted to come back to the South to find family and see the places their parents had grown up. In *Rural Roots of Bluegrass* Wayne Erbsen described growing up in California and finding out that he was missing his “rural roots,” so he subsequently decided that he would “have to move to the rural South.”¹¹⁹ Another Californian, Bob Artis, described in his book *Bluegrass* how he became interested in traditional music: “I was weaned from country music to rock in the mid-1950s (probably in search of roots) and finally to bluegrass.”¹²⁰ Quite commonly people connected this search for roots with a rejection of commercialism. One musician who recently moved to Boone, North Carolina, from Arizona commented that his decision to move was based on his perception of Appalachian folk life: “I was going through a time when I was really upset with political kind of stuff and modernization and cars and gasoline and that old-living kind of appealed to me.”¹²¹ Amy Wooley argued that the attraction of revivalists to folk music “can be attributed to several factors, all rooted in a rejection of dominant mass-mediated culture.”¹²² This argument, though persuasive, ignores one of the driving forces behind the movement, urban white fascination with the rural poor.

Participation in a non-commercial music form provided several benefits for revivalists. First, it provided the “ultimate alternative music,” a ready-made counter-culture.¹²³ The avoidance of commoditization does three things: it promotes the idea of alienation, protects a musical artifact, and “allows the community to maintain a surface-level ethos of openness while still maintaining its preference for exclusivity.”¹²⁴ In order to

¹¹⁹ Erbsen, *Rural Roots of Bluegrass*, 7.

¹²⁰ Artis, ix.

¹²¹ Wood, “That Ain’t Old-Time,” 43.

¹²² Wooley, 3.

¹²³ Wooley, 9.

¹²⁴ Wooley, 15.

protect these communities, revivalists set up a few guidelines for traditional music. The first two were the same as in all folk traditions, “person to person” communication of traditions and derivation from a particular culture or region.¹²⁵ Additional demands followed folk music, specifically:

Lack of copyright on songs: Copyright prevents songs being aurally transmitted and performed in a legal fashion. While particular performances (i.e. a recording) may be copyright[ed], the song (i.e. the tune) is not.

Pre-globalisation: In a globalised world, many musicians are fusing traditional music with other styles (usually styles from the popular music genres). While this is no bad thing, it is also not traditional music; it's no longer related to their particular culture, but is related to both it and to the culture of the music that their music is being fused with.

Pre-commercial: The points above mean that traditional music tended to arise in a pre-commercial setting ... traditional music continues to evolve today, but generally as a continuation of the music from a pre-globalised culture.¹²⁶

These extra definitions were designed to make sure folk music remained separate and distinct from other music, and to make sure it could never be commercialized. If songs cannot be copywritten, and had to be “pre-commercial,” then companies could never really make money off of them. This demand that music be non-commercial was not one placed on any other form of folklore. Folk music, on the other hand, was held to a different standard because it was defined within the anti-commercial folk music movement.

The problem with this idea of an “unselfconscious, unmediated, and wholly uncommercial mode of musical expression” is of course that it does not exist.¹²⁷ While modern “indie” enthusiasts demand only that their music not be shaped by the corporate

¹²⁵ Jan Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*, 2nd edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), x.

¹²⁶ “Traditional Music,” *Art & Popular Culture*, http://www.artandpopularculture.com/Ethnic_music, June 15, 2010.

¹²⁷ Filene, 3.

music world, folklorists demanded that their music not be shaped by the world at all. In the classic mode of scientific inquiry, a researcher sets up two groups, an experimental group exposed to variables and a control group that remains unexposed. When early researchers looked for “old styles ‘dammed up’ in America’s more isolated areas,” they were seeking the opposite, a group that had been exposed to few if any outside variables like popular music.¹²⁸ Furthermore, in attempting to preserve their idea of “traditional music” they often “did more than deliver ‘pure’ music: they made judgments about what constituted America’s true musical traditions, helped shape what ‘mainstream’ audiences recognized as authentic, and, inevitably, transformed the music that the folk performers offered.”¹²⁹

Just as Alan Lomax “discovered” and transformed Lead Belly from a rural singer to an urban one, and then lamented his transformation into an “ordinary, low Harlem nigger,” revivalists inescapably ended up altering the acts they found.¹³⁰ This idea was discussed thoroughly in Burt Feintuch’s essay “Musical Revival as Musical Transformation” where he pointed out that “rather than encourage continuity, musical revivals recast the music-and culture-they refer to” based on “its own standard repertoire and styles and its own selective view of the past.”¹³¹ This transformation can be seen quite clearly in the particular cases of the musicians in this study. After becoming acquainted with the folk music revival, the Stanley Brothers started writing fewer songs and began covering more public domain material, Ralph Stanley began playing clawhammer style banjo again, and they also made significant changes to their live act.¹³² The revival audiences expected something “real” or

¹²⁸ Filene, 6.

¹²⁹ Filene, 6.

¹³⁰ Lomax (John A.) Family Papers, John Lomax to Ruby Terrill, January 14, 1935, box 2e391, as quoted in Filene, 73.

¹³¹ Burt Feintuch, “Musical Revival as Musical Transformation,” *Transforming Tradition*, 184.

¹³² Malone, 352.

“authentic” in concert, and when the first University of Chicago Folk Festival was held in 1961 the “festival organizers stressed the presentation of new authentic talent,” and the show was headlined by the Stanley Brothers.¹³³ The Stanleys had played at Newport in ’59 and Antioch in ’60, but were still relative newcomers to the revival scene. Israel G. Young described the experience:

The Stanley Brothers after a night or two of misunderstandings with the audience as to what homespun humor was—stole the show on the last evening with songs and instrumentals that I’m sure even the audiences down south don’t hear. They returned to the older traditional music under the wonderful influence of the Festival and everyone knew it and was happy.¹³⁴

This seems to have been one of the main sources of conflict between bluegrass musicians and revivalists in the early days. Comedy was a big part of the southern musician’s act, dating from the times when musicians traveled with medicine shows and circuses. The earliest recordings of southern musicians often featured comedy acts, blackface, and buck and wing style dances. The Stanleys featured a comedian in their act as late as their 1965 appearance on Pete Seeger’s *Rainbow Quest*, where, on account of his baggy pants, bass player/comic Chick Stripling claimed he couldn’t dance the “boogie-woogie,” he had to do the “baggie-waggie.”¹³⁵ These routines, while traditionally a part of the folk musician’s repertoire, came off as cheesy, racist, and vaudeville/commercial to the folk revival crowd. As Neil Rosenberg described it, “the simple formulaic introductions ... the down-home comedy routines, the clichés of contemporary country songs—all of this met with less than enthusiastic response.”¹³⁶ While revival audiences were willing to sing religious songs that fit well into the political movement, such as “We Shall Overcome,” they did not, however,

¹³³ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 175.

¹³⁴ Israel G. Young, “Frets and Frails,” *Sing Out!* 11 (Oct.-Nov., 1961), 55, as quoted in Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 196.

¹³⁵ Pete Seeger, “Rainbow Quest TV Show,” 1965.

¹³⁶ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 158.

respond enthusiastically to “pious and sincere references to religion.”¹³⁷ In fact, one of the left’s anthems of the 1960s, the song “We Shall Overcome,” was called “I’ll Overcome Some Day” before the revival, but the collective pronoun replaced the singular, “reflecting a shift in the locus of redemption, from sacred to secular, or at least from the individual to the group.”¹³⁸ What these audiences wanted were “fast instrumentals on the five-string banjo, thought of as a folk instrument, and the folksongs, with their archaic clichés.”¹³⁹

Earl Scruggs’s music began to change in a very similar way to the Stanleys, including the addition of more traditional songs and an abandoning of vaudeville showmanship. In addition, both Scruggs and the Stanleys did an album of Carter Family tunes. After Bob Dylan and the Byrds started doing electric music, creating a rift between the popular and academic/traditional folk crowd, Scruggs formed the Earl Scruggs Revue and started using drums and electric guitars. The most obvious transformation was seen in Doc Watson, who went from being a rockabilly electric guitarist to being one of the foremost experts of American folk tradition; indeed, in many ways the very emblem of American folk music, almost overnight.

The fact that the music of southern musicians was changed by the folk revival is in many ways a well established fact. Bill Malone claimed that “bluegrass groups everywhere began increasing the percentage of traditional music in their repertoires and in some cases performed songs which had been learned from the urban folkies.”¹⁴⁰ Traditional musicians adapted to what they thought was expected of them by the revivalists, who had their own

¹³⁷ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 158.

¹³⁸ Ron Eyeran and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

¹³⁹ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass*, 158.

¹⁴⁰ Malone, 352.

ideas about tradition. This is the source of conflict between the two communities, that they had competing ideas about the nature of tradition.

Tradition

The story of folk music is one of tradition and innovation; as traditional communities come in contact with new ideas, people, and instruments, their music invariably changes. The banjo, regarded as the instrument de jure of the folk revival, aptly demonstrates this point. When the banjo first came over from Africa, it was a simple four-string gourd instrument, one of which was a short drone string. By 1840 a fifth string, this one a lower bass string, had become common on many banjos. The next major change was the addition of frets after the Civil War, designed to help white newcomers with note placement. Finally in the early twentieth century resonators were added to make the banjo louder. Playing styles and accompaniment have also changed drastically over the years. The first music in the North Carolina mountains was obviously vocal, but was soon accompanied by the fiddle. In the early 1840s fiddle and banjo duets became popular in minstrel shows. In the early twentieth century the guitar joined or sometimes replaced the banjo and led to the formation of string bands. This constant and escalating change has been a continuous part of music, but one that some folklorists seem remiss to accept. Part of the fear of change can be expressed in Henry Glassie's definition of folklore: "Folklore is traditional. Its center holds. Changes are slow and steady."¹⁴¹ Though Glassie acknowledged that folklore was variable, he maintained that change within a folk community should be gradual. This definition, however, does address the fact that change is a relative concept. The study of folklore began during the industrial revolution, the second of the two most important events in human history, the first being the agricultural revolution. Prior to the industrial revolution change

¹⁴¹ Henry Glassie, *The Spirit of Folk Art* (New York: Abrams, 1989), x.

was slow and steady. The first gun was probably invented in the thirteenth century, and the first gun that could fire more than one shot, the Henry Rifle, was invented in 1860, a gap of almost 600 years. By contrast the Wright Brothers first flew in 1903 and man walked on the moon a mere sixty-six years later. The simple fact is that change in general has sped up, and to expect anything less of folk music is folly. Robert Cantwell pointed out that “the long spans of time normally associated with tradition have been violently foreshortened by radio and phonograph.”¹⁴² From unaccompanied ballads to solo fiddle tunes, fiddle and banjo duets, string bands with guitars, fiddles, basses, and banjos, and bluegrass bands with guitars, fiddles, basses, banjos, and mandolins, rural music has constantly evolved at a faster and faster rate.

Many folklorists today study old-time music, which focuses on early string bands (the beginning of commercialization) and fiddle and banjo duets (pre-commercialization). They believe that only by studying folk music in its pre-commercial forms can they understand how the music was played by the folk before it started being processed and homogenized by record companies. To a certain degree this is true; recording technology did indeed change music. Bluegrass was formed around a microphone, for how else could each individual instrument be heard when it took its break? People changed the way they sang, played, and even performed to meet the requirements of the new technology. Opry star Uncle Dave Macon was famous for his on-stage persona and the acrobatics he performed with the banjo, playing the instrument under his knees, behind his head, upside down, and backwards. One musician, Jim Lloyd of Jim Lloyd and the Skyliners, claimed that at Macon’s earliest sessions the recording engineer had to use a handheld mike and follow him in his motions to

¹⁴² Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, 144.

capture the sound.¹⁴³ Music certainly changed with the recording era, so pre-recording era music has value, but no music is truly pre-commercial. Most musicians were motivated by money at the base level. Why they wanted money may have varied. Doc Watson wanted to leave the state dole for the blind while Reno, Shuffler, and Scruggs all worked in music to avoid factory labor that they found arduous and boring. In fact, in both conversation and in writings musicians often mention money to the point of obsession. In his autobiography Don Reno recalled the price of everything, from what his share of the first banjo he ever made cost to how much he sold Snuffy Jenkins's banjo to Earl Scruggs for, a fact also related in Scruggs's autobiography. In various interviews, Shuffler also made mention of how much he had paid for certain instruments, how much he sold them for, the price of cattle, gas, guns, and cars in the 1960s, and even how much he was paid per week or for individual recording sessions.

Simply put, for most working musicians tradition was not an issue with which they concerned themselves, except when trying to use perception of tradition to widen their audience. Ralph Stanley discussed this difference between perception and reality in his recent autobiography as he was portrayed in three separate art forms: photography, painting, and theater. An unnamed "famous photographer" (possibly Annie Leibovitz) said she wanted to capture Stanley in his "natural setting," which included southern clichés like walking down railroad tracks and standing in front of the church. Stanley stated that he did not "care much for the photos. Made me look freakish, I think, more like Dr. Death than Dr. Ralph. That's maybe the way she saw me, but I don't see myself that way."¹⁴⁴ Next he described a painter who tried to paint him "out in the countryside, picking the banjo, Clinch

¹⁴³ Jim Lloyd, Interview by Author in Boone, NC, October 10, 2009.

¹⁴⁴ Ralph Stanley with Eddie Dean, *Man of Constant Sorrow; My Life and Times* (New York: Gotham Books, 2009), 13.

Mountains in the distance,” and also failed to capture him accurately.¹⁴⁵ Lastly, and most tellingly, Stanley described a play that had been written about him:

They played me pretty dumb in that play, made me more backwards than I ever was. The writers told me they done that to sell more tickets, and I can understand, because in a play you can make your story any way you want. It was a good play, I enjoyed watching it, but it really wasn't me up on that stage.¹⁴⁶

While musicians may not have seen themselves as bearers of tradition, they did recognize it as an element and sought to exploit it. Thus, to working musicians, tradition was another part of the act. Robert Cantwell described seeing the great bluesman Howlin' Wolf playing in Chicago in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He said that Wolf dressed the part of an urban sophisticate, complete with suit, tie, and hat. However, he saw Wolf some years later at a show in England and Wolf was dressed in overalls and a straw hat, playing on a stack of hay bales.¹⁴⁷ Musicians made tradition a part of their act, essentially commercializing it. This put them in direct conflict with the revivalists' views of tradition, which if anything was non-commercial.

In reality the commercialization of music is nothing new, and musicians have always been commercial to one degree or another. Musicians have always adjusted their music to fit what people want to hear. This is especially true of working musicians, from street performers to big tours. Even when no money is being exchanged for the music, a musician will play music that pleases his audience. As Bakhtin stated, “every utterance must be regarded as primarily a *response*.”¹⁴⁸ No action occurs independently. When musicians grew up in the rural South, no one used the word tradition, or at least not in the way that revivalists did.

¹⁴⁵ Stanley and Dean, 13.

¹⁴⁶ Stanley and Dean, 13.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Cantwell, Interview by Author in Chapel Hill, NC, November 17, 2009.

¹⁴⁸ Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 91.

Only when the speaker populates [a word] with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own.¹⁴⁹

When revivalists came into contact with traditional musicians, they brought with them their own ideas of tradition. Whenever a musician did not conform to these ideas, he/she was either dismissed as not traditional or forced to change to fit the revivalist definition. The revivalist definition of tradition was essentially anything that appeared to be non-commercial, because the folk music revival was tied in with a liberal movement that was anti-capitalist. The irony here is that most musicians were only playing shows for profits, and all tension, ill-will, and confusion between revivalists and musicians stemmed from this conflict. More ironically, as acts tried to become more traditional, some in fact moved away from their local traditions and playing styles.

¹⁴⁹ Bakhtin, 293.

Conclusion

Those old boys who stood up proudly and played for themselves built their own fences. They got clique-ish with the music that belonged to everybody and became purists. Worse, they became imitators of imitators and there is no surer way to kill creativity than that. The experts had given bluegrass an attitude problem.

-From Mitch Jaynes's, "A Look at Entertainment in Bluegrass Music."¹⁵⁰

"Tradition is the illusion of permanence." -Woody Allen

Tradition Revisited

We have seen that revivalists and folklorists had very specific ideas about the non-commercial nature of tradition, and that musicians were essentially unaware of tradition (as truly traditional musicians must be) except as a new standard that they had to meet to make their audience happy. But the question remains: what is tradition? Is innovation a part of tradition, or does innovation destroy tradition? The truth is that the same definition used for other traditional art forms, that it come from within a community and be taught face-to-face, holds true for much of traditional music as well. It is the stigma of anti-commercialism that creates unrealistic goals for traditional musicians and confuses the idea of tradition in the first place. If, for instance, George Shuffler learned a song at home from his mother, then it would be traditional, but if he later recorded that song, in what way does it cease being traditional? If he learned the song on one instrument, but recorded it on another, does that make it less traditional? Even if he added non-traditional instruments, recorded the song with drums, electric guitars, and lap steels, it is still at heart the same song, learned face-to-face within his community. It has been shaped to some degree by the recording industry,

¹⁵⁰ Willis, *America's Music*, 95.

changed to be more commercial, to appeal to a wider audience, but is this change enough to dismiss a song after a certain amount of modification? As long as the essential facts of the song remain true, then it remains traditional.

What about songs Shuffler learned from the radio, do those count as traditional? This becomes a question of what is meant by community. This song was not learned face-to-face, and possibly was not from within the community. Is the community a certain place, defined by space, or is it defined by shared values and experiences? If the first, then a song Earl Scruggs learned in Shelby would not be traditional because he traveled ten miles from Boiling Springs. If it has more to do with shared values and experiences, then Scruggs could learn a song from anywhere in North Carolina, or anywhere in the South, or even anywhere in America as he would have shared experiences and values in common with all Americans. As many writers have pointed out, “it is the nature of traditional music, like all traditional arts, to adapt elements from outside itself for its own purposes.”¹⁵¹ The radio simply provided a new way for traditional musicians to encounter those elements. This technology may have radically changed music, but it was not the first or only technology to do so.

Among the first and most respected traditional musicians in the world, one must count the Carter Family from Southwestern Virginia. One of the pivotal traits of the Carter family was their wide knowledge of traditional songs, which A.P. Carter gathered mostly on “songcatching trips,” which he often took with his friend and neighbor Lesley Riddle in the family car. Carter used a piece of recent technology, the automobile, to travel all over Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee; a trip that would have been much more difficult just a few years earlier. The radio simply made it even easier for traditional musicians to adapt foreign elements into their own music. No one questions the music of white banjo

¹⁵¹ Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, 71.

players who learned the instrument from African-Americans, so why should modern folklorists and revivalists question a bluegrass band playing a Beatles song?

The problem then becomes allowing too much music into the vague genre of traditional music. If all music is or can become traditional, then that makes all music and all musicians traditional. Some recent folklorists have attempted to deal with the issue of what they call “cultural graying,” that is the fact that distinct local communities are becoming absorbed into the much wider American community. This, combined with recording technology, makes finding a traditional musician who has learned his entire repertoire from his local community literally impossible. Some argue that a traditional musician is still traditional as long as he learns *most* of his music at home. But this creates odd definitions. If a person learned 51 percent of the songs he knows at home, then he is traditional, but if he learns a few more from a new CD he becomes non-traditional? Some have argued that it has become so hard to find a traditional musician that perhaps there are no more, only recordings of dead masters.

The best way to avoid this confusion is to acknowledge that the old definitions do not work. The old definitions did not even truly fit the oldest players, as this thesis has demonstrated. Traditional music is no different from any other form of music. The “preference for exclusivity” within traditional music and the fact that revivalists formed a community within it caused this confusion.¹⁵² Benjamin Filene suggested that when people discuss “traditional” music they should refer to it as “roots” music. This term does not come with the attached strings that traditional music does. The only implication of roots music is that other musical forms evolved from it. The only true requirement of tradition is that the bearers of tradition be unaware that they are bearers of tradition, the one thing universally

¹⁵² Wooley, 15.

changed by coming into contact with revivalists. This ensures that decisions a musician makes about what kind of music to play will be chosen naturally. Any move a musician makes, even if it is towards or from a commercial or outside source, is traditional because the person doing it holds tradition and it is theirs to do with as they please. No revivalist can push them back toward tradition, only towards a frozen image of tradition, picked from a certain point in time based on the prejudices of an individual or group.

Innovation

Doc Watson, George Shuffler, Don Reno, and Earl Scruggs were all “traditional” musicians raised in the South and first exposed to music by their own families. All four were also innovators in the field of bluegrass music. Innovation is not opposed to tradition; in fact, innovation sustains tradition. The story of any tradition is the story of change, not stagnation. No musician in this study played a style exactly like the person they learned it from, because no musician in the world strives for that. Every musician learns a style, then adds his own distinct influences to it to produce something different. Only folklorists are interested in learning a style exactly as it was played.

Technology affected musical tradition long before the advent of the recording industry; the famous ballad collector Francis James Child concentrated his collections on songs that predated the printing press to “ensure the purity of his collection.”¹⁵³ The record player and the radio simply allowed more music to reach more people, and if some regard this as pollution then that is their choice. Ignoring certain parts of a community because they are commercial does not give a clearer picture of that community. While there is value in retaining and studying old-time music, the fact is that it has been largely supplanted by bluegrass and other modern styles by the people who make the music, not by the recording

¹⁵³ Filene, 13.

industry. Robert Cantwell argued best in his 1984 book *Bluegrass Breakdown* that bluegrass music was a “representation of traditional Appalachian music in its social form.”¹⁵⁴ Cantwell saw bluegrass as “an up-to-date and refined form of the old mountain dance band, particularly those North Carolina dance bands.”¹⁵⁵ Old-time music changed because of the addition of new instruments, recording techniques, and playing styles like the ones in this study.

The best illustration of the relationship between revivalists and southern musicians is the story of Doc Watson’s discovery. When Ralph Rinzler came to the Appalachian Mountains to record Clarence Ashley, he brought a certain idea of tradition with him. Watson, being an electric guitar player, did not fit this idea. The acoustic guitar had only been available in the mountains for about thirty years, and the electric guitar for about ten. The issue was not that the acoustic was in any way more traditional than the electric, but that it would sound like a modern commercial recording. Watson, desperate to provide for his family, then picked up the banjo and played a song he had most recently heard on the radio being played by the Kingston Trio. Watson, as a true roots musician, had found his way into the electric rockabilly scene and only played the more traditional ballad because he knew that was what Rinzler wanted. While Rinzler and other revivalists had the best intentions, and often drastically improved the living conditions of the musicians they “discovered,” they in fact simply imposed an idea of tradition on top of an actual one. This also demonstrates a connection between the folk revival and the lead guitar. If Watson had never come into contact with Rinzler, he would simply have continued playing fiddle tunes on the electric

¹⁵⁴ Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, xi.

¹⁵⁵ Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, 60.

guitar and flatpicking would have been invented by someone else or not at all. Because he had to play acoustic for the benefit of the revivalists, he created the new guitar style.

Four of the earliest and most important lead guitarists in bluegrass all came from within one hundred miles of each other in Western North Carolina: Earl Scruggs from Shelby, Don Reno from Waynesville, Doc Watson from Deep Gap, and George Shuffler from Valdese. North Carolina was uniquely situated to produce flatpickers in this period. The two most important factors in the development of North Carolina lead guitar were earlier banjo traditions and the fact that all four musicians were born between 1923 and 1927, and all entered the music world about the time that bluegrass emerged in the state.¹⁵⁶ Early guitarists imitated more established instruments when they created their new styles; the Delmore Brothers played the guitar like a mandolin, and Charlie Cline and others played in a fiddle style. North Carolina emerged as the birthplace of bluegrass lead guitar because the musicians had a number of older banjo techniques on which they could base their playing. This bluegrass guitar style's lineage "reaches back through Maybelle Carter, Jimmie Rodgers, and Riley Puckett to black guitarists" and has been carried on in every form of music.¹⁵⁷

Thus, during the same period that Watson, Reno, Scruggs, and Shuffler were developing this new style, they underwent changes in their music due to their interaction with the folk revivalists. Revivalists were attracted to bluegrass because it seemed more like the pre-commercial folk music they wanted. In the third sentence of the first ever book-length history of bluegrass, the author opined, "it doesn't take an especially well-trained ear to tell that bluegrass has more roots intact than does the current product manufactured for mass

¹⁵⁶ Artis, 3.

¹⁵⁷ Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, 106.

consumption at the country music capital in Nashville.”¹⁵⁸ The result was that the revivalists created a community within bluegrass and old-time which represented to them a new counterculture, an alternate way of living based on romanticized ideas about Appalachian life. Therefore, southern musicians changed their acts to fit these notions, but in doing so in fact became less traditional, moving away from their natural musical inclinations to try and find a new audience.

¹⁵⁸ Artis, 3.

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Vita

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