

## It's Not Nostalgia, the Ozark Mountain Daredevils Are Still Doing It!

by Dean Nelson | August 2024



### Cobby Brzeski: A Three-Headed Threat

by Jim Trageser | August 2024

### Postmodern Jukebox Brings Their Unique Entertainment to El Cajon

by Terry Paul Roland | August 2024

### Labor Day Blues at Humphrey's Capri by Blues at Humphrey's Backstage

by T.E. Mattox | August 2024

### Joe Amato: First-Call Guitarist

by Wayne Riker | August 2024

### Growing Community

by Sandé Lollis | July 2024

### Dean Hickman: Teaching Everybody to Love Music

by Catherine Barnes | July 2024

### The Particular Answers I was Looking for that I Just Happened to Find in a Bottle of Whiskey

by Carina Wheatley | July 2024

### Aaron Lind's Musical Journey

by Wayne Riker | July 2024

### Josh Weinstein: Crawling Out from Ground Zero

by Drew Douglas | July 2024

ADVERTISEMENTS



## FEATURED STORIES

# It's Not Nostalgia, the Ozark Mountain Daredevils Are Still Doing It!

by Dean Nelson | August 2024



The Ozark Mountain Daredevils: Mike "Supe" Granda, Steve Cash (died 2019), author Dean Nelson, and John Dillon.

Several years ago my wife was trying to think of something to get me for my birthday and, apparently, I wasn't cooperating with timely suggestions. After a few conversations that started and stopped, she got an inspiration.

"Think back to when you first started going to concerts," she said. "Are there any bands you would like to see again?" "there any bands you would like to see again?"

Not really, I thought at first. I remember seeing bands like Flash Cadillac and the Continental Kids, Three Dog Night, and Sha Na Na when I was in high school, but I didn't long to see them again.

Then I stood up straight and made a proclamation.

"If the Ozark Mountain Daredevils were still playing, I would go anywhere to see them," I announced.

My wife nodded. When she and I were dating in college in Kansas City, we'd first heard them at an abandoned roller rink on the edge of downtown called the Cowtown Ballroom. Often at the same show we'd hear Brewer and Shipley, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, and a comedian no one had heard of named Steve Martin.

All the acts were amazing (especially that guy with the arrow through his head—wow, could he play the banjo!), but the band that mesmerized me was the Ozark Mountain Daredevils.

We'd sit on the floor and listen to these guys make the most unusual music I'd ever heard—it was difficult to describe. There was bluegrass, folk, rock, country, and maybe even a little gospel all mashed into what I can only call joy. And they seemed to be having a damn good time on stage.

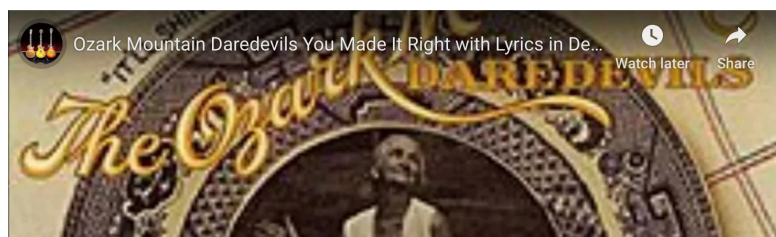
There was something both intellectual ("Black Sky") and ludicrous ("Chicken Train") in the music, as it pointed to nature, the cosmos, transcendence, and lust. My girlfriend (now wife) and I were attending a fundamentalist school from which I would eventually be expelled, but my anthem soon became rooted in "If You Wanna Get to Heaven You Gotta Raise a Little Hell."

When my birthday arrived, the gift from my wife was a tell-all book by Mike "Supe" Granda about life as the Daredevil bass player, called *It Shined*, the title referring to one of the band's most significant songs, "It'll Shine When It Shines." Inside the book was a printout from a place called Wildwood Springs Lodge, in Steelville, Missouri.

"The band still exists," my wife said. "And we're going to hear them this fall."

We've been going every year since.

### A little taste of the Ozark Mountain Daredevils: It'll Shine When It Shines





**SAN DIEGO FOLK HERITAGE**

**WHOLE HOG**  
 SATURDAY AUGUST 24  
 7:30 PM (DOORS 6:45 PM)  
 ADMISSION: \$18/\$15  
 2020 CHESTNUT AVE CARLSBAD  
 PILGRIM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**ZZYMZY**  
 FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 6  
 7:30 PM (DOORS 6:45 PM)  
 ADMISSION: \$18/\$15  
 14134 MIDLAND RD POWAY  
 TEMPLARS HALL, OLD POWAY PARK

**SAN DIEGO FOLK HERITAGE** Further information  
<https://www.sdfolkheritage.org>

*Carina's Listening Lounge presents*

**KING TAYLOR PROJECT DUO**  
 AUGUST 11, 2024 4:00 PM

**TROUBADOUR READER SPECIAL**

VIP SEATS (FIRST 3 ROWS)  
 FULL PRICE \$30  
 2 TICKETS \$55  
 3+ FOR \$25 each

Reserve your VIP seats at [kingtaylorproject@gmail.com](mailto:kingtaylorproject@gmail.com)

**JAZZ @ TIO LEO'S**

**SUNDAYS 5 - 7PM**

Tio Leo's  
 5302 Napa St  
 San Diego

**JAZZ LISTENING SPACE**



Wildwood Springs is a 100-year-old lodge, run by Bob Bell, on the bank of the Meramec River. Since the '90s when he bought the empty lodge, Bell has booked bands like Poco, Little Feat, Marty Stuart, Ricky Skaggs, Don McLean, Leon Redbone, Jeremiah Johnson, Marshall Tucker Band, Head East, Little River Band, Michael Martin Murphey, Pure Prairie League, Asleep at the Wheel, Richie Furay, and, for the biggest show each year, the Ozark Mountain Daredevils.

There is no stage. The band plays at one end of the lobby at the same level as the 200 chairs. Fifty more chairs are in the balcony.

"It's our favorite show of the year," said John Dillon, one of the founding members of the band. "It feels like it did when we first started playing, where we're in a big living room playing for our families."

Granda agrees and said it's the closeness of the audience that gives the show its unusual vibe.

"It's like we're playing badminton with the energy of the audience," he told me. "You can feel the history of the building. There's a magic to it."

I had assumed the band had stopped playing years ago, because I hadn't seen anything about them touring or releasing new albums.

"We never stopped playing," Granda said. "We just didn't play very often. We kept writing, kept recording new material, but we mostly stayed home and played local gigs."

They are not, Granda insists, a nostalgia band.

"We're not Paul Revere and the Raiders," he said.

Bell got them to come to Wildwood Springs for one weekend per year back in the early 2000s.

The year 2022 was a particularly heady year for the Daredevils. They celebrated their 50th year as a band, played to a sold-out Grand Ole Opry auditorium in Nashville, had a documentary made about them, and performed with the Springfield, Missouri Symphony.

One of the reasons they're not as well-known as other bands, the members tell me, is that their style of music was hard to categorize for record stores and radio stations back in the day. Their music could go in the folk bins, or in rock or country or bluegrass. But if you're not easily defined, you're not readily found.

Jerry Moss, the head of their record label, wanted them to move to Los Angeles so he could promote them more aggressively.

"We thought it was more important to live our own lives, not the Eagles' lives," Steve Cash told me in 2018. Cash was one of the original band members. He had studied with the Beat Poets in San Francisco and told me he caught one wave while surfing off Sunset Cliffs in San Diego. He died in 2019.

"We wanted to stay with the land and our families," he said.

It's impossible to imagine "It'll Shine When It Shines," being written anywhere other than the Ozarks.

"We didn't want to move to LA because we were afraid we would lose the muse," Dillon said. "Jerry Moss said if we'd give him two years of our lives, we'd never have to work again. We said 'Nah.' Our values were based on something other than success and fame.

"We were hippie hillbillies who wouldn't leave the woods. We wore flannel and looked at our tomatoes and made music. Business people didn't understand that approach."



The first time I saw the Daredevils at Wildwood, all that joy from 1972 flooded back. They did songs I knew (and the audience knew), like "Standing on the Rock," "Country Girl," and "Jackie Blue." They improvised, they surprised each other, and, at the end of the show when the opening guitar licks for "If You Wanna Get to Heaven" began, the audience rose to its feet and sang along like it was the Doxology at church. It was their anthem. too.

My daughter tells me about how the tens of thousands in the arenas sing along to Taylor Swift concerts. Those shows create seismic activity that is measured by geologists. Swifties take Carole King's lyrics "I feel the earth move under my feet" from the metaphorical to the literal.

The Daredevils shows at Wildwood are not like that. The ground holds firm. For me, though, there's a seismic activity in my spirit.

And the shows are not the same from year to year. Since they're still writing and creating, the musicians play their new material, too. Last year they played a Supe Granda creation after hearing him play a version of it from his phone in the green room (which is just the arcade room at the Lodge) about 30 minutes before the show. They rehearsed the song called "More Cowbell," figured out who was going to play what, and the song killed. It's the kind of thing they were doing back when we were all 18.

I have encountered fans from Australia, Sweden, and all parts of the U.S. at these shows. At the checkout desk the following morning of the first time we went to Wildwood, a gentleman about my age turned to me and declared, "My friends go on cruises for their annual trips. I come here."



Ozark Mountain Daredevils friends and family.

For those who stay the night at Wildwood Springs for the concert, there is a gourmet dinner (prime rib, salmon, home-made mashed potatoes, grilled vegetables, salads, carrot and chocolate cake, fresh-baked bread) in the Lodge's spacious dining room overlooking the river, plus a similarly extraordinary breakfast (eggs, bacon, biscuits and gravy, fresh fruit, home-made coffee cake) the next morning. The rooms are rustic—you know you're in a 100-year-old lodge—with bathrooms at the end of the hall. It's not camping, but it's not the Bellagio (although the food would rival the Bellagio's). As you fall asleep you can hear people strumming mandolins, banjos, and guitars, singing the songs you fell asleep to when you were a kid. The first night I spent there I drifted off to the sounds of a small group down the hall softly singing "Mr. Tambourine Man."

Bob Bell, the Lodge's owner, said that when he bought the property, he wanted to create "a whole different vortex for the guests when they walk in the door. I want people to experience what life is. That's why you never see anyone looking at their phones at dinner. They're enjoying themselves too much."

When we go to these shows, sometimes we also explore the nearby hiking trails and state parks, and watch the rivers flow through the trees as the leaves change color. But it isn't just the natural beauty of the location that keeps me coming back each year. It's the gravitational pull of the music. It's the vortex Bell and the band created.

And what, exactly, is that vortex?

"Our songs have more meaning now," Dillon told me. "They're like literature. *Pilgrim's Progress* means one thing when you're young, and something deeper when you're older."

He's right, of course, about how literature evolves in the human experience. It made me reflect on how I view their music today, compared to when I first started listening to them more than 50 years ago. In the 1970s I was energized by wanting to raise a little hell, as the song encourages. I was living far from home back then, resisting Henry Kissinger's war, embracing my new independence, and struggling with the religious extremism around me.

Now, I gravitate more toward their song "It'll Shine When It Shines," where they sing,

*"Seems like everyone is out lookin' for the sun  
Singin' rain and pain on he who hesitates  
But it'll shine when it shines  
You might think I'm wastin' time  
But I'm just a good ol' boy that's learned to wait."*

They sing that song as their encore each night at the Lodge. The crowd sings along with reverence. It's the benediction. At this point in our lives, we've all raised plenty of hell. But there's real freedom in declaring that we've learned to wait. The earth moves inside our hearts and heads.

I'll keep returning to that vortex as often as I can.

*Dean Nelson is the founder and director of the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University and the founder and host of the annual [Writer's Symposium by the Sea](#). His most recent book is [Talk to Me: How to Ask Better Questions, Get Better Answers, and Interview Anyone Like a Pro](#), published by HarperCollins.*

RELATED TOPICS:

**DON'T MISS**  
[Ino Amato: First-Call Guitarist](#)

**UP NEXT**  
[Lahor Dav Blues at Humnhrev's Backstage](#)