

music

The Oly Mountain Boys

By Tucker Petertil

Funny what you can tell from an album cover. While much of the world goes gaga over nasty pretty colors and the latest sexy skinny lollipop trends, others go for more down to earth imagery. Take The Oly Mountain Boys' self-titled CD. Their cover features a tree, a golden field, and a mountain. It seems to promise nothing more seductive than homemade bread and jam, and the music contained within is just as down home and unpretentious.

Opening like 40 miles of bad road, the CD's first song, "Dreams Along the Way," begins with a tale of bad luck and desperation. Set against a wailing fiddle

introduction, the lamenting vocals concern an unfortunate fellow fleeing California and a dead girlfriend. The song showcases some kick ass banjo picking and an intense mandolin break.

The Oly Mountain Boys quintet formed two years ago to perform bluegrass in the tradition of the Stanley Brothers and Bill Monroe on all acoustic instruments: guitar, bass, banjo, fiddle and mandolin.

Bass player Phil Post has lived in Olympia since the 1980s and played in something like 20 bands. He grew up in Missouri near the Ozarks mountains under the watchful eye of his grandfather who was a traveling musician in the 1920s. His earliest musical influence was singing in the



From left: Josh, Phil, Chris, Derek, and Tye. Photo by Judd Wasserman.

BEN MOORE'S Cafe & Bar

Late Night Bar Specials!

9 PM-11 PM

Burger & Fries 3.75

Fish & Chips 3.75

Garden Burger & Fries 3.75

Clam Strips & Fries 3.75

(all with beverage purchase)

11 PM-1 AM

Well Drinks 2.00



112 - 4th Avenue W
Downtown Olympia

Serving Washington's Capital Since 1940

church choir. When he moved to Olympia to study jazz and composition at Evergreen he expanded his musical mind by playing bass, dobro, flute, and pedal steel guitar in local punk and Afro pop bands including Heliotroupe, Big Idea, Head for the Hills, and Milroy Holler. Now he splits his time between Oly Mountain Boys, Erev Rav (bass) and Tilted Stilts (pedal steel guitar). Phil also works at the Blue Heron Bakery, which Phil calls "a survival mechanism for impoverished musicians disguised as a bakery."

Tye Menser came from California where he was a radio DJ, law student, and rock guitarist who got into playing bluegrass banjo while living up in Alaska. When Tye moved to Olympia he got on the internet to search out other local bluegrass players, and in 2007 hooked up Phil and the others and began the band the next year.

He plays banjo in the Earl Scruggs style, which means he uses metal thumb and finger picks to produce a sharper and louder string attack as opposed to the frailing or clawhammer technique that uses no picks.

Tye wrote "Dreams Along the Way" and is the main songwriter for the band. He writes what Phil calls 'Dreamgrass', combining pop and traditional country

music and now splits his time between playing banjo in Oly Mountain Boys and the outlaw country rock band Rodeo Kill.

Derek McSwain, on mandolin, previously played in the Bluegrass Renegades and is now a blackjack dealer at a local casino. Josh Grice, who plays violin with the Olympia Symphony Orchestra, met the rest of the band at a bluegrass jam where he discovered his inner fiddle player. Chris Rutledge, on guitar, grew up in Shelton and now works as a bartender at Tugboat Annie's where the band plays every other Thursday night.

While Tye takes most of the lead vocals, Phil sings a couple songs and the rest of the band joins in on three-part harmony vocals.

They recorded their self-titled debut last February and currently have a new album's worth of original material waiting to be recorded. But Phil said that they plan on including some covers of their favorite tunes as a way to pay tribute to traditional bluegrass. In addition to their regular Tugboat Annie's gig, this coming year they're hitting the road to tour and play all the Northwest Bluegrass festivals. ■

Find more info at <http://www.myspace.com/olymountainboys>.