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Hit & Run Never Felt So Good

Colorado's Hit & Run Bluegrass Plays the Saloon Sunday

STORY BY DAVID BREWER

Growing up in Richmond, Va., Hit & Run Bluegrass lead singer and guitarist Rebecca Hoggan didn't exactly identify with her parent's love for bluegrass music. While they tried in earnest to make her like it, Hoggan says she enjoyed the harmonies but not much else.

It's a familiar story. You grow up being smothered in your parent's music and culture, and you try desperately to develop your own style and taste only to wind up falling in love with what you deplored as a child. Sound familiar?

While attending college in Michigan, Hoggan hooked up with several local bluegrass pickers, diving into her parents' music. While she had been playing guitar since the age of 12, she had been focused on more groovy folk and honky tonk styles of music. But since being bitten by the bluegrass bug, she has been dedicated to flatpicking and even more dedicated to the success of her band Hit & Run Bluegrass.

Forming in musical hotbed Boulder, Colo. in early 2002, the five members of Hit & Run shared a common desire to play "authentic yet modern bluegrass." Gelling as a group with uncommon speed, the band took top band honors at the 2002

RockyGrass festival, only to repeat the feat less than a year later at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival.

Hoggan attributes much of the band's early success to two-time Grammy winner Gene Libbea who served as the band's mentor, interim bass player and vocalist. Citing his 13-year tenure with the Nashville Bluegrass band and decades of professional experience, Hoggan says Libbea's time with the band allowed the young players to learn from somebody who had essentially been there and done that.

"Having somebody else believe in us at an early stage really helped us with that energy," said Hoggan.

The energy that Hoggan speaks of virtually leaps out of the speakers upon a listen to Hit & Run's 2005 release *Without Maps or Charts*. With all members ably taking their turns on instrumental breaks, the disc brims with first-rate picking spread over chord progressions more identified with the modern bluegrass masters such as Alison Krauss & Union Station while also finding parallels with friends and peers the Biscuit Burners.

While all the members spend time driving particular tunes, Hoggan's guitar abilities have come to the attention of more than just eager fans. Recently, Hoggan was chosen to appear on the cover of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* and is also featured in the April issue of *Bluegrass Now*. And, although initially declining due to trepidation, she was also tapped to conduct a flatpicking workshop in Nashville for the IBMA.

While Hoggan admits to enjoying her initial forays with the instrument, her true passions lie in the music of her bluegrass heroes such as Tony Rice, Clay Hess, Bryan Sutton, Dan Tyminski, Kenny Smith and others.

"That excited me more, the idea of playing bluegrass guitar well," said Hoggan. "You're more rooted and don't have to handle as many influences."

But while the hot picking of Hit & Run may catch your attention, it's their songs that will take hold. Their melodic sensibilities allow band members to use do a masterful job of combining traditional and progressive sounds to render a fresh and exciting blend that is all their own.



Boulder, Colorado's multi-award-winning Hit & Run Bluegrass will be burning up the stage at the Boone Saloon this Sunday at 10:00 p.m.

"People really relate to the singer and the song," said Hoggan. Indeed, the players in Hit & Run are hoping that fans in the east relate to them as much as the fans out west have in their first few years. The trip to Boone will be part of a string of East Coast dates that will undoubtedly have fans clamoring for more.

Hit & Run Bluegrass will be at the Boone Saloon this Sunday, May 21, at 10:00 p.m. There is a \$5 cover and you must be 21 or older to enter. For song samples, click to the band's Website at www.hitandrubblegrass.com. For more info on the show, call the Boone Saloon at 828-264-1811.