

## Bluegrass and beer flow through River Run

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KEYSTONE - What do microbrews and bluegrass have in common? More than you might think. The microbrew explosion coincided with the resurgence of bluegrass music in the 1990s and, in fact, nationally known acts like Yonder Mountain String Band started out playing in tiny Colorado breweries. According to musicians, a good microbrew is a necessity at any pickin' party.

This weekend, musicians and brewers from all over Colorado descend on Keystone's River Run Bluegrass and Beer Festival, running from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Unlimited beer sampling is \$20 for one day or \$25 for the weekend and comes with a commemorative glass.

There is something for the whole family at the fest, including a Kidz Zone, lumberjack competition, fiddle contest, and of course, the free live music featuring a range of styles from traditional bluegrass to eclectic acoustic rock. This year the festival also features a beer garden with \$3, 16-ounce beers and musical entertainment provided by Bobber Johnson and the Nightcrawlers from 1-5 p.m. Saturday and the old time bluegrass of High on the Hog from 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

The seven bands playing the plaza main stage mostly hail from Colorado and represent a wide variety of musical tastes, said Molly Speer, events production manager for Keystone Neighbourhood Company. "We [were] influenced by the movie 'O Brother Where Art Thou?' and try to appeal to the audience that listens to that soundtrack, which was so popular," Speer said.

"Keystone is another example of how good bluegrass is going on all over the state of Colorado in the summer," said Rebecca Hoggan, flat pick guitarist for Hit and Run Bluegrass, which performs at 2:30 p.m. Sunday. "Bluegrass music has really gained an audience in this state, and the small festivals popping up all over definitely help that." Hit and Run Bluegrass, perhaps the most lauded act on the schedule, recently made history by winning both the RockyGrass and Telluride Bluegrass Festival band contests. The Boulder-based band features five 20-something musicians who play traditional and original tunes in a polished contemporary style.

Sugarloaf String Band also has a more modern sound, according to Dave Rosenberg, who plays the upright bass. It relies on a repertoire of traditional songs with a sprinkling of more recent cover tunes, modified to fit its style.

"We are high-energy bluegrass," Rosenberg said. "Our strongest feature is our vocal harmonies." The band members look forward to sharing the stage with the other acts, he said. "We're honored to be up there with those bands. It [is] a great lineup; the best bluegrass bands from the Front Range will be represented," he said.

Mike McKee, bassist for Missing String Band, agrees. "It's almost a perfect line-up. It's a representation of the full spectrum of where bluegrass is today," he said. Missing String Band blends swing, reggae and Grateful Dead tunes into its tightly arranged bluegrass tunes. "We have crafty instrumentalists that weave together harmonies that are interesting and fun," McKee said. On the other end of that bluegrass spectrum are Marty Jones and the Pork Boilin' Po Boys, at 4:15 p.m. Saturday and 12:45 p.m. Sunday. The band calls its style "drunky-tonk, souped-up, rough-edged countrified music," said Marty Jones, guitarist and washtub virtuoso. The Pork Boilin' Po Boys, who mix it up between acoustic and electric, are known for their hillbilly versions of Aerosmith, Led Zeppelin and Kiss hits. In fact, the band hopes someone will show up in full Kiss regalia. "We want to see someone in Peter Criss make-up. That would make our day," Jones said. Jones is a long-time River Run fest attendee, making the journey in the past to sample the variety of microbrews. "There's a great array of beers and all local music - the state's best," he said. Beer drinking songs are well-represented on the band's set list, including an original tune inspired by Jones' marriage to his "wonderful, beer-loving wife." The Boys even include a Drinkin' News page on their Web Site. Along the same theme, [www.singlemaltband.com](http://www.singlemaltband.com) offers cryptic ramblings on a link simply called, "Drunk." The page epitomizes Single Malt Band's style, which is hard to pin down. Fans describe the band as folky Irish bluegrass with a twist, while banjo and guitar player Jeff Hamer calls it "high-energy original acoustic." Known for its comedic presentation and witty lyrics, Single Malt Band's members have earned a reputation for quirky live performances. "It just happened," Hamer said. "We listened to a lot of Frank Zappa, and we just wrote songs with a lot of theatrical parts and we wanted to try it out on stage. We like to bring a sense of humor to our music." Single Malt's experimental brand of bluegrass fusion will be featured at 12:45 p.m. Saturday at the River Run fest. The trio Mary and Mars, from Santa Fe, N.M., and the Stanleytones, a traditional bluegrass combo, also will play at 11 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. Sunday, respectively, at the festival.