

Uncle Earl

By skillfully complementing their deep roots in traditional American music with new ideas, songs, and arrangements, the “all g’Earl” stringband Uncle Earl has emerged as one of the leading lights in the ongoing old-time renaissance. Now entering the band’s tenth year, longtime Uncle Earl members KC Groves and Kristin Andreassen are leading a new formation of the band that has influenced a remarkable new generation of old-time musicians. With the addition of the hard-driving 23-year-old fiddle player Stephanie Coleman and the accomplished multi-instrumentalist Paula Bradley on banjo and clogging (Paula has toured with Bruce Molsky, Tony Trischka, The Rhythm Rats and the honky-tonk band Girl Howdy), the band continues to develop its unique sound – a hybrid of contemporary and modern, with all the members committed to music steeped in tradition and yet unafraid to explore new frontiers. This fall, renowned bassist Bryn Davies (The Tony Rice Unit, Patty Griffin) will again tour with the g’Earls.

Originally founded by vocalist, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist KC Groves (mandolin, guitar, bass) in 1999, Uncle Earl’s lineup evolved as the band’s musical boundaries expanded. Kristin Andreassen joined in 2003, contributing her perceptive original songs in addition to vocals, rhythm guitar, fiddle, ukulele, and clog dancing. Two self-released EPs lead to a contract with venerable folk label Rounder Records, for whom they recorded *She Waits For Night* with producer Dirk Powell and *Waterloo, Tennessee*, produced by Led Zeppelin’s John Paul Jones, who called the album “definitely one of the most enjoyable productions that I have ever been involved with.” Their albums, combined with the group’s infectious live shows, garnered rave reviews from such influential media outlets as the *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *Mojo*, *No Depression*, *The New Yorker*, and *Relix*.

Now reconvened after a year-long hiatus, Groves and Andreassen are thrilled by the possibilities of working with Bradley, Coleman and Davies. “Paula has always been one of my favorite musicians,” Groves says, enthusiastically. “She’s talented and knowledgeable about traditional music, and funny as heck. I’ve loved Steph’s fiddling since the first time I heard it years ago, and of course Bryn is as solid a bass player as you can find.”

“The five of us met, played together, and became friends over the years at festivals like Clifftop and Rockygrass,” Andreassen explains. “I’m looking forward to jamming on the good old-time dance tunes that first inspired us to play music.”

“I’m really excited about mixing old and new traditional instruments on new original material as well as new musical perspectives on traditional material,” Bradley adds. “That’s what Uncle Earl has always been about.”

Able to draw from a vast range of experiences, talents, and perspectives, the newest edition of Uncle Earl is versatile and powerful. This fall, the band will join forces with Sierra Hull and the Dixie Bee-Liners on the “American Revival: Celebrating the New Stars of American Roots Music” tour. “This is my first touring with a band, and playing this music with these people is exactly what I want to be doing,” says Coleman.

“We are a multi-generational band of women working together,” Andreassen says. “It makes for a real collaboration that reaches back and reaches forward.”

– *Brad San Martin 2009*