

Bluegrass Battleship takes the stage

Local bands play at coffee shop Johnny's Gone Fishing throughout the week.

By Brandon White
Staff Writer

Carrboro residents who seek a great place to listen to local musicians can go to Johnny's Gone Fishing on West Main Street.

The local coffee shop, known for holding small concerts three to five times a week, hosted the local band Bluegrass Battleship March 29 at 7:30 p.m.

Banding together

The band was founded in 1974 by vocalist Jane Provan, her husband Scott Provan and banjo player Terry Baker at the Silver Bay YMCA.

It has since expanded to include eight members, including bassist Marc Alperin, mandolin player Mel Freedman, guitarist Danny Gotham, vocalist Catherine Grodensky and fiddle player Eileen Regan.

"We belong at The Community Church (of Chapel Hill)," Jane Provan said.

"At one point during a concert there were so many musicians on stage. Danny said that it was 'like a battleship,' and the name stuck with us."

Bluegrass Battleship tours throughout Carrboro and Chapel Hill and has played at places like the Carrboro Music Festival and Vimala's Curryblossom Cafe.

The band is working on their first album in their 32-year history that will be released around Christmas.

Baker explained that an album was the next logical step for the band to take to forward their career.

"We wanted better recordings to obtain better gigs," Baker said.

"Danny said that it is a part of a band's legacy to have a recording."



(From left to right) Fiddle player Eileen Regan, vocalists Jane Provan and Catherine Grodensky, guitarist Scott Provan and banjo player Terry Baker of Bluegrass Battleship perform during the first hour of their concert at Johnny's Gone Fishing in Carrboro. (Staff photo by Brandon White)

Covering the classics

Throughout their concert at Johnny's Gone Fishing, Bluegrass Battleship played a variety of country and bluegrass hits ranging from traditional songs to well-known classics like "Wagon Wheel" by Old Crow Medicine Show.

At one point, the coffee shop's co-owner and manager, Susan Siplon, joined the band onstage to sing a bluegrass cover of the song "No Rain" by Blind Melon.

"I've loved 'No Rain' since it came out in the '90s," Siplon said as she talked about singing with Bluegrass Battleship.

"I heard a bluegrass version and I've always wanted to sing that version, and I'm very thankful that they gave me that opportunity."

Best kept secret

Siplon said Johnny's Gone Fishing has featured several musicians from

all over the world during the past three years, and most of the hired musicians have commented that the coffee shop is one of their favorite places to play.

Johnny's Gone Fishing has even been featured on the TV show "CMT Southbound" that highlights tourist attractions and lesser-known locations across the southern United States.

But Siplon feels that the coffee shop needs more attention, especially from the town it resides in.

"This place is sadly one of the most best kept secrets in (Carrboro)," Siplon said.

"It has a huge reputation outside Carrboro, but not in the town itself."

Finishing strong

Despite the late arrival of Alperin, who was occupied by a family matter, the overall reception of Bluegrass Battleship was overwhelmingly positive.

Many people sang along with the band, several took pictures and everyone enjoyed the great quality of the music provided.

Bluegrass Battleship is slated to perform two more shows at Johnny's Gone Fishing on April 5 and May 10.

Upcoming events at Johnny's Gone Fishing

April 5: Bluegrass Battleship
April 8: Bob Funck
April 9: Anne DeChant
May 10: Bluegrass Battleship

Find more online at:
johnnysgonefishing.com/calendar