

The Hard Times Bluegrass Band

About the musicians.....



Keith Baumann, mandolin and vocals, has been an active bluegrass musician ever since he heard his first Flatt & Scruggs recording in 1971. He began to play the 5-string banjo and guitar, studying with the world renowned banjo player, Tony Trischka and fingerstyle guitar master Ken Perlman. He later set his sights on the mandolin, performing in several New York area bands and placing 2nd in the prestigious South Street Seaport Bluegrass Band Contest.

Keith moved out to San Francisco to be closer to the emerging acoustic music scene that was developing in the bay area. During this time, he studied with mandolin guru Mike Marshall and had the pleasure of performing with many of the area's finest musicians. Keith played mandolin with several bay area bluegrass bands and was eventually asked to join Heartland, replacing Rob Ickes. Keith stayed with Heartland for five years performing alongside band mates Allison Brown, Tony Furtado, Jim Nunally and Amy Stenberg.

In 1991 Keith moved to the Chicago area and began to play in several midwest bands. After filling in on several tours with The Special Consensus, he was asked to join the band as their full-time mandolin and dobro player where he performed at major festivals and concert halls across the country.

Keith formed the Hard Times Bluegrass Band in 2001. He now earns a living as a full-time musician, teacher and bandleader, performing regularly on guitar, mandolin, dobro, 5-string banjo, and tenor banjo. Over the years he has worked with many great artists such as Vassar Clements, Peter Rowan, Laurie Lewis, Rose Maddox, Patsy Montana, Slavek Hanzlik, Jerry Wicentowski, Tiny Moore and The Former Texas Playboys. He also teaches music at The Old Town School Of Folk Music and Harper College.

Tom Boyd, banjo, resonophonic guitar and vocals has been playing bluegrass music for over 50 years. He began performing on steel guitar for church socials at the tender age of eight and by age twelve had started to play the 5-string banjo. In 1961 Tom joined his first professional bluegrass band, The Mad River Boys, performing and recording with them until 1963.

Over the next ten years, Tom played bluegrass at various clubs and concerts throughout the Ohio Area, working and recording with Frank Wakefield, Roy Lee Centers, Earl Taylor, Benny Martin, Hylo Brown, Red Allen, The Allen Brothers and Mac Wiseman. In 1974, Tom was asked to join bluegrass legend Larry Sparks & The Lonesome Ramblers where he stayed for 6 years touring and recording 6 landmark albums featuring great players such as Ricky Skaggs and Chubby Wise. During that time he also worked with Melvin & Ray Goins playing WVA school programs and a weekly TV show in Kentucky.

Since relocating to the Chicago area in 1980, Tom has performed and recorded with many of the midwest's top musicians such as Jethro Burns, Sam Bush, Don Stiernberg and Greg Cahill. He remains active as one of the area's finest and busiest bluegrass musicians.



Chris Walz, guitar and vocals is an accomplished musician and began playing guitar and singing as a teenager in upstate New York. After graduating from Syracuse University with a degree in theater in 1988, Chris relocated to Chicago and began working both as a musician in several local bluegrass bands and as an actor performing and playing in numerous Stage productions.

Chris' exceptional talent was soon recognized when he was cast in the lead role of Woody Guthrie in the national tour of Woody Guthrie's American Song, a role that he played successfully for a number of years. In the mid 90's he started working as a guitar teacher at the Old Town School of Folk Music and soon after was asked to join Chicago's top bluegrass band, The Special Consensus as their lead singer and guitarist.

Chris has spent nearly four years touring the U.S., Canada, and Europe as a professional bluegrass musician. He has appeared on two of the band's projects which contained three of Chris' original songs. Since leaving The Special Consensus, Chris has continued to work as a performing musician, teacher, and composer. He is also program manager of the Old Town School of Folk Music's Bluegrass and Americana Music program.

Marc Edelstein, upright bass and vocals is one of Chicago's most in-demand bluegrass bass players and singers and has been an avid performer and promoter of traditional music for over thirty years. In 1975 he co-founded the Special Consensus Bluegrass Band with banjo powerhouse Greg Cahill and toured with the group for seven years.

Marc has performed with several top name artists such as Kathy Chiavola and Vassar Clements. He has also worked with many of the Midwest's most notable acoustic musicians such as Robbie Fulks, Michael Smith, Alice Peacock, Jerry Wicentowski And Lucky Break, Bob Gibson, Bucky Halker, Al Day and The Sons Of The Never Wrong. He has also lent his skills to numerous recording projects over the years.

Turning his talents toward the theater, Marc has appeared as both a musician and actor in several award-winning stage productions including, Woody Guthrie's American Song, Smoke On The Mountain and As You Like It. In addition to The Hard Times Bluegrass Band, Marc maintains a busy schedule performing and recording.

