

## Music: Brad Bays

Over the past year, I had one friend tell me he thinks Brad Bays is the best guitarist in the state; another said he's possibly the best in the southwest. Sounds like an exaggeration, but... maybe it's true. We are so lucky to have such a talented and dedicated player living and teaching in our community. I would send you a website, but he has none. No band bears his name and no CD features him solo. I think he's been too busy!

Brad is currently in nine bands, and has been featured on several other artists' albums through the years.

Current projects include a list of Flagstaff's favorites:

- country band The Rounders (lead guitar – electric)
- jazz bands Giant Steps Jazz Band, Arctic Fox, the Ron James Trio, and Jazz Leroux (jazz guitar);
- Jack Webb New Orleans Jazz Band (banjo);
- Dave Logan Band (lead guitar – acoustic; mandolin);
- outlaw country band Gravy (electric guitar (shared lead with Rand Anderson));
- Onus B. Johnson (lead guitar – acoustic; vocals)

He excels at bluegrass, jazz, rock, and classical guitar, and has become an in-demand mandolin player in the last year. With Jack Webb New Orleans Jazz Band, he plays banjo, and in prior years he played banjo for other locally popular bands. On each of these instruments and in all of these styles, he is admired and respected. On guitar, he is untouchable. His style is sublime, nuanced, and precise. When he gets going fast, he brings an energetic rush to the entire room and captures every ear.

In 2011, Brad was on the stage at most of Flagstaff's biggest events: as part of Flagstaff phenomenon Onus B. Johnson, who whipped up a frenzy at the Flagstaff Hullabaloo (Onus B. Johnson will be back at the Orpheum on New Year's); with Jack Webb New Orleans Jazz Band at Pickin' in the Pines; Flagstaff Brewing Company's "Annibeersary" Patio Party with outlaw country band Gravy; part of the Concerts in the Park series with Dave Logan Band in Wheeler Park; with country band the Rounders at the Heritage Square Summer Concert Series; as part of the "Jerry-atics" for the Jerry Garcia Birthday Show at the Orpheum; every Tuesday night as a part of the popular Tuesday Night Jazz Jam with the Ron James Trio at Mia's Lounge. In 2011, he also toured Alaska with the Bayriders.

Lucky for us, Brad also enjoys teaching, and he's good at it. Brad keeps a full teaching schedule at Arizona Music Pro, and lately he's been performing with one of his students, rising star Anam Cara Dixon. He teaches guitar, mandolin, and banjo in his studio at AMP. He takes his students seriously, and has been known to lend his own instruments to students in need. Several local performers turn to Brad when they need a tune-up. Many of his students have been studying with him for years.

Tuesday nights, he and Ron James (also a powerful force on the local music scene) host the Tuesday Night Jazz Jam with Ron James Trio at Mia's Lounge, where they are helping a new generation of jazz musicians find their way on the stage in live improvisational shows that are open to all jazz players.

He's quick to help with shows for a cause, and for the past two years has helped coordinate bands for the annual Rio de Flag Action Night, a free show and educational event put on by Friends of the Rio de Flag.

Brad is pervasive in the Flagstaff music scene. He has been instrumental (no pun intended!) in cultivating the vibrant and diverse culture that we cherish in Flagstaff. He doesn't work alone – he partners with a suite of talented locals, all of whom respect him, and many who've collaborated with him for two decades. It is time to recognize Brad Bays for the amazing footprint he has on our town.