

# David & Billie Ray Johnson

## BLUEGRASS



BILLIE RAY JOHNSON & DAVID JOHNSON

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

M  
1630.18  
J65  
B659  
1983

MUSIC LP



FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 31056

# David & Billie Ray Johnson

## BLUEGRASS

### SIDE ONE

- |                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| 1. Blue Grass Breakdown    | 3:10 |
| 2. Sally Goodin            | 3:20 |
| 3. Kentucky Waltz          | 3:37 |
| 4. Billy In The Low Ground | 2:40 |
| 5. Beaumont Rag            | 3:00 |
| 6. Earl's Breakdown        | 2:31 |

### SIDE TWO

- |                                |      |
|--------------------------------|------|
| 1. Grey Eagle                  | 2:45 |
| 2. Back Up and Push            | 2:30 |
| 3. Rose Conley/Wildwood Flower | 2:55 |
| 4. Fishers Hornpipe            | 3:25 |
| 5. Gold Rush                   | 3:22 |
| 6. Groundspeed                 | 2:10 |

DAVID JOHNSON—Guitar, Fiddle, Mandolin, Banjo  
and Acoustic Bass

BILLIE RAY JOHNSON—Guitar

Produced by: JOHN R. CRAIG

Annotated by: JOHN R. CRAIG and DAVID JOHNSON

Recorded at: STAR RECORDING COMPANY,  
Millers Creek, North Carolina.

Recording Engineer: MARSHALL CRAVEN

Photography: KEVIN RASH

Joining David on his third album for Folkways is his father, Billie Ray Johnson. Much of the early training given to David as well as the introduction to the many musical styles found on this recording was by his father. Though they have played together many times, this was the first recording made by the father and son team and the years of mutual sharing of ideas and styles is evident. David can be heard on the older "Clawhammer" style of Banjo playing on Folkways Album FTS 31094.

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PRODUCED BY JOHN R. CRAIG

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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## BLUEGRASS

### Side One

BLUE GRASS BREAKDOWN - Although writer credits are given to Bill Monroe, the Earl Scruggs influence is definitely heard and some feel he was co-author to this legendary tune. A common practice in many such groups was to share credit with the leader or the leader took complete credit for any original selections. It bears a great deal of resemblance to "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" which was written by Earl Scruggs and first recorded by Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs.

This recording by David is closer to the Scruggs style of the original Monroe recording with a chromatic variation in the second banjo break.

SALLY GOODIN - First recorded by Alexander (Eck) Campbell Robertson in 1922 on Victor Records. Born in Arkansas and reared in Texas, Robertson was a dynamic fiddler who made a great impact on what is known as the Texas style of fiddling. Sally Goodin has always been a show-piece for the fiddle, due mainly to the many variations, thirteen of which appear on the original recording.

David's approach is more in the style of the 1967 recording by Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys featuring Byron Berline on fiddle. The flat-picking is in the style of Tony Kice and the late Clarence White.

KENTUCKY WALTZ - A Bill Monroe original which was recorded in the early 1940's but not released until after the war. Though in three-four time, the waltz owes it's "Bluegrass" image to the association with the author.

BILLY IN THE LOW GROUND - Another fiddle tune whose roots are in the south. It was one of the first successful recordings by Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers featuring Gid Tanner, Clayton McMichen and Bert Layne on Fiddle.

David was influenced in his version by the Scotty Stoneman recording with the Kentucky Colonels in the early sixties.

BEAUMONT RAG - A Texas swing tune popularized by Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys in the late thirties. David has kept the faith by playing his arrangement in the original key of F Major although following the later, more symmetrical rhythmic style. The flat-picking style on guitar was influenced by the master of the genre, Doc Watson.

EARL'S BREAKDOWN - Written by Earl Scruggs and first recorded by Columbia Records on October 24, 1951. This is a unique banjo tune in that it was the first recorded use of "D-tuning" in which individual strings are tuned by twisting the tuning keys with the left hand while plucking the strings with the right hand. This style had been in use for quite a while in performance and led to the invention and patent of cam type D-tuners which were standard equipment on certain models of Gibson Mastertone banjo's made in the fifties.

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Today, most banjo players use the Keith-Scruggs D-tuners which are a refinement of the cam type.

David's recording differs little from the original version with the exception of the ending where the last notes are accomplished by using both hands on the D-tuners while the banjo is still ringing from the last harmonic chimed notes.

GRAY EAGLE - Originally a hornpipe of Scotch-Irish origin, it was popularized by the western fiddlers who performed this regularly in competition at various fiddling contests in the mid-west.

The tune found its way into the Bluegrass format through Howard "Big Howdy" Forrester, well known for his performing with Bill Monroe and Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs.

Though still a big competition piece, it is usually played in a breakdown style - using less notes in the melody - and David has chosen to feature both the old and new in his arrangement.

The guitar style is flat-picked and well suited to this older composition.

BACK UP AND PUSH - Also known by the title "Rubber Dolly", it was very popular with the swing bands. Done here in the "standard" format, this version - from David's father, Billy Ray Johnson - is representative of the way most bands perform this tune.

ROSE CONLEY/WILDWOOD FLOWER - These were the first two songs David taught himself on the guitar and they have a special meaning for David. He learned them because "Rose Conley" was a favorite of his Grandmother Minnie Johnson who sang the song for him many times, and "Wildwood Flower", a favorite of his Aunt Mary Melton. The closeness of the mountain family make this a sentimental favorite of Davids.

Though David taught himself these tunes, "Rose Conley" was the influence of Charley Monroe - brother of Bill Monroe - and "Wildwood Flower" owes a debt to A. P. Carter and Family as well as numerous local musicians. The flat-picking guitar style is again evident in this medley.

FISHERS HORNPIPE - One of the most popular old tunes, this traditional hornpipe is played in various styles - including Western Swing (fiddle and guitar) and chromatic (banjo), the latter necessary for the intricate melodic line.

Another point of interest in this arrangement is that David plays in the key of B-flat instead of the traditional F or D, giving the fiddle a warm, dark tone.

GOLD RUSH - Another Bill Monroe composition only recently recorded in the seventies. David pays his respect to the Monroe style by his close imitation to the original recording.

Slower than the "breakdowns", it contains one of the more intricate melodic lines found in any of his compositions. The flat-picking influence is again heard in the guitar break.

GROUNDSPEED - An Earl Scruggs composition first recorded in 1959 by Earl but not released until the early sixties on the classic "FOGGY MOUNTAIN BANJO" album on Columbia Records.

David's banjo work is heavily influenced by the Scruggs style on this recording as well as Paul Warren's fine fiddle break. However, David has chosen to substitute the mandolin for the Dobro solo on this version.

Though rarely performed, this is one of David's favorites and reflects as well as any song the true Scruggs style.