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In Seeking a Definition of Mash: Attitude in Musical Style

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Appalachian Studies  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Appalachian Studies

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by  
Thomas Andrew Cassell  
May 2021

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Dr. Nate Olson, Chair  
Dr. Lee Bidgood  
Mr. Roy Andrade

Keywords: mash, bluegrass, downbeat

## ABSTRACT

In Seeking a Definition of Mash: Attitude in Musical Style

by

Thomas Andrew Cassell

“Mash” is a term used to describe one of the most recent major style shifts in the iconic American string band music known as bluegrass. Beginning in the 1990s, the bluegrass sound began to evolve, and ‘mash’ worked its way into the genre as a descriptor of a certain sound. Though a handful of scholars have discussed the social stigmas of the style, no one yet has investigated the simple musical question about mash: what is it?

The purpose of this thesis is to define mash in its musical form through a combination of transcription methods and extensive analysis. Through this research, a recurring set of musical phenomena is identified in the repertoire, related to rhythms, melody, and modality. This study shows the relationship between the downbeat and this music, and identifies and articulates the musical characteristics that define mash as a unique style of bluegrass.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis, and the many hours I spent listening to mash in my research, are dedicated to my departed friend and masher, Aaron “Frosty” Foster.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without a handful of specific people, this research would not have been possible. I wish to thank my committee members – Nate, Roy, and Lee – for their countless hours of reading drafts, editing, and discussing this topic with me. Thanks to Tim Stafford, Lee Bidgood, and Diggs DeRusha for inspiring me to pursue research and writing on top of a music career, and to Tim for offering notes on this thesis in its late stages. Thanks to my friends Max Etling and Karl Smakula, who often were a source of musical selections or new ideas when I hit a dead end in my exploration of mash. Lastly, thanks to those who have supported me personally in the last number of years: Tim, Stephanie, and Will Cassell, Ange Rees, and all of the wonderful people I have made music with.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	2
DEDICATION.....	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	5
CHAPTER 1: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MASH?.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Review of Relevant Literature.....	10
Historical Antecedents .....	16
Methodology.....	19
Nashville Number System.....	20
Charting and Graphing Arrangements and Intensity .....	21
Standard Notation .....	23
Limitations of Transcription.....	25
Rationale for Musical Selections .....	26
CHAPTER 2. MASH, TRADITIONAL BLUEGRASS, AND RHYTHM.....	29
The Traditional Bluegrass Sound.....	29
Playing Around the Beat .....	45
Rhythmic Disruption.....	47
CHAPTER 3: DYNAMICS, MELODIES, AND HARMONIES .....	53
Considering Dynamics .....	53
Melody and Harmony.....	58
CHAPTER 4: IN SEEKING A DEFINITION OF MASH.....	67
Understanding Where It Comes From.....	67
Rhythm .....	68
Melody and Harmony.....	70
Dynamics and Intensity.....	71
To the Future.....	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	76
DISCOGRAPHY .....	78
VITA.....	80

## LIST OF TABLES

Figure 1. Nashville Number System example. "Oh Death," Jason Davis.....	21
Figure 2. Spreadsheet example. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam .....	22
Figure 3. Spreadsheet example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band.....	22
Figure 4. Dynamic graph. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band.....	23
Figure 5. Notation. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," Ralph Stanley.....	24
Figure 6. Notation. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS .....	24
Figure 7. Notation. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band .....	24
Figure 8. Guitar example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," Ralph Stanley.....	32
Figure 9. Guitar example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS.....	32
Figure 10. Spreadsheet. "I'll Remember You Love, In my Prayers," Ralph Stanley .....	33
Figure 11. Spreadsheet. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS .....	34
Figure 12. Bass example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," Ralph Stanley .....	35
Figure 13. Bass example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS .....	35
Figure 14. Rhythmic example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band.....	37
Figure 15. Bass example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band .....	37
Figure 16. Bass example. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam .....	37
Figure 17. Fiddle example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band.....	38
Figure 18. Bass and mandolin comparison. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam .....	39
Figure 19. Bass and mandolin comparison. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band.....	40
Figure 20. Textural analysis. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band .....	42
Figure 21. Textural analysis. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam .....	44
Figure 22. Rhythm section example. "Money in the Bank," Lonesome River Band .....	48
Figure 23. Vocal example. "Money in the Bank," Lonesome River Band.....	49



Figure 24. Vocal example. "County Fool," Alan Bibey .....	49
Figure 25. Vocal example. "Oh Death," Jason Davis .....	50
Figure 26. Vocal example. "Twister (Devil's Dance)," Mountain Heart .....	50
Figure 27. Guitar rhythm example. "Mash Bend" .....	51
Figure 28. Dynamic example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band.....	54
Figure 29. Dynamic example. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam.....	55
Figure 30. Dynamic example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS.....	56
Figure 31. Dynamic example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," Ralph Stanley .....	57
Figure 32. NNS example. "Down the Road," Bluegrass Outlaws.....	59
Figure 33. NNS example. "Oh Death," Ralph Stanley .....	59
Figure 34. NNS example. "Oh Death," Jason Davis.....	60
Figure 35. Vocal example. "Oh Death," Ralph Stanley.....	60
Figure 36. Vocal example. "Oh Death," Jason Davis.....	61
Figure 37. NNS example. "Devil's Courthouse," Mountain Heart.....	62
Figure 38. NNS example. "I'm Just Here to Ride the Train," Mountain Heart.....	62
Figure 39. Vocal example. "Mountain Man," Mountain Heart.....	63
Figure 40. Vocal example. "Mountain Man," Mountain Heart.....	64
Figure 41. Mandolin example. "Twister (Devil's Dance)," Mountain Heart .....	65
Figure 42. Vocal example. "Twister (Devil's Dance)," Mountain Heart.....	66

## CHAPTER 1: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MASH?

### *Introduction*

When I became interested in bluegrass at age 16, it was Sam Bush, David Grisman, and Chris Thile. I enjoyed the traditional side of bluegrass that I grew up hearing, but coming from a teenage-rock-and-roll obsession with bands like Led Zeppelin or Metallica, more progressive sounds within the genre garnered most of my attention. It wasn't until hearing records from Mountain Heart, Alan Bibey & Grasstowne, and Newfound Road that I began to really latch onto the more traditional side of bluegrass. But it wasn't truly traditional bluegrass that my focus shifted to – it was a re-imagination of bluegrass: the same musical structures that make bluegrass unique, but a different energy, one I had never encountered before in music.

Before moving to Johnson City in 2016, I had heard of “mash,” how it was a specific style of traditional bluegrass that younger musicians played, and that it was usually played in keys like B or Bb, with firm emphasis on the rhythm, and aggressive energy throughout the performance. But after experiencing it myself, I found it difficult to relay to other musicians – who weren't as familiar with the style – how to play it. In the many Johnson City jams I found myself in since moving here, I deduced that mash was a “know it when you hear it” style of playing. Often, it was obvious when a musician did or didn't get it – everyone in the jam could read that, to the extent that it became equally obvious how unwelcome the “non-masher” was.

My move to Johnson City marked the descent from mash's peak in the local scene, and my encounters of the style in jam circles have lessened. The core musicians at the time of my moving have aged out of the scene which surrounds ETSU's Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music program, moving on to find other work in the industry or elsewhere. I continuously find myself in jam circles where mash is no longer the nomenclature for performing bluegrass

standards, and for better or worse, the scene that once served as the mash hot-bed is moving on from it.

The style has also brought constant criticism from many musicians in bluegrass – how it is too loud, lacking in dynamics, too derivative – but as the style loses popularity, how could bluegrass just bury it in the dirt and move on like we’re all better for it? As one of the more popular styles of bluegrass in the past 30 years, mash changed the identity of the larger genre. Mash has little been studied in the academic world, and even less discussed in popular bluegrass writing.

As I watch the mash scene around me slowly deteriorate, I am encouraged to present this research, understanding the critical and timely need for it to exist. This research would not have been possible without my connections here at ETSU, to students and faculty alike with whom I have shared so many musical experiences in the past, a large portion of them having to do with mash. In the greater scene, I have created relationships with many friends and colleagues because of mash. Upon thinking about these relationships, my role became clear: not only does the mash style need to be documented and studied in an academic context, but I am in the perfect position to do it.

### *Review of Relevant Literature*

In a 1996 *Rolling Stone* interview, Alison Krauss uses what is perhaps the first popular use of the word mash: “[Krauss] I listened to Merle Haggard last night. Talk about a mash.” [Macnie] A mash? [K] Yeah, he mashed me down, unbelievable. I tell you, I can't believe anybody is like that.”<sup>1</sup> What did she mean by this? She seems to be using the word to describe an emotion, the way she *felt* while listening to this music. Later, in a 2012 *Bluegrass Today* piece

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<sup>1</sup> Goldsmith, Thomas. *The Bluegrass Reader*, 78.

entitled “Dictionary of Bluegrass Slang,” Chris Stuart offers a tentative definition of mash that attends more to the musical characteristics, “After 2005, to play fast with great drive. ‘Let’s mash.’ Before 2005, an abbreviation for sour mash whiskey or a 70s television show.”<sup>2</sup> Here, he relates mash to musical “drive” - or attention to where the notes are placed in relation to the beats (Shelor). In the same dictionary of slang, Stuart defines drive as “the kind of bluegrass rhythm that great players have. You know it when you hear it.” In his 2007 dissertation, Joti Rockwell defines drive as a “trope” - like the idea of “street” in hip-hop music - as it relates to bluegrass, “characterizing the music’s propulsive energy.”<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this research, I am defining mash as strictly a style, rather than a trope or subgenre. In order to define mash as either of these, more extensive and multi-faceted research would need to be done.

Furthermore, Rockwell devotes an entire chapter to this subject, attributing the sonic phenomenon primarily to the banjo. Examining Laney and Rockwell’s ideas along with Stuart’s slang definition, we can infer that drive – or where the notes are placed around the beat, with propulsive energy – is a component of mash. One can drive without mashing, but all mashing has drive!

The timeline is important: even though ‘mash’ was an expression used in the 1990s by Alison Krauss (Alison Krauss & Union Station who began in 1989), it was not until 2005 that a socially crafted definition emerged to describe a particular sound or style of bluegrass music. Even now, in 2021, there is still no clear definition of precisely what “mash” refers to musically.

That being said, the larger question of what is “mash?” has, if only briefly, been explored in some academic contexts, focusing primarily on non-musical themes like gender, politics, or

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<sup>2</sup> Bluegrass Today, Blue Yodel #5: Dictionary of Bluegrass Slang, 2012. <https://bluegrasstoday.com/blue-yodel-53-dictionary-of-bluegrass-slang/>

<sup>3</sup> Rockwell, Joti. What Is Bluegrass Anyway? 2007.

culture. In those rare cases, there has been no detailed musical examination of the topic. Modern scholars have discussed themes or phenomena surrounding the style, as I'll detail below. Though these larger questions are worthy of more rigorous study, they are not the primary focus of this research. Rather, it is my intention to address a narrower question - what is mash, musically?

In recordings, mash came to be identifiable as a style in the 1990s. I will contend that albums like *So Long, So Wrong* (Alison Krauss & Union Station, 1997), *Carrying the Tradition* (Lonesome River Band, 1994) and *Road That Never Ends* (Mountain Heart, 2007) provide nascent examples of how the genre and sound started to form. On these recordings, one can begin to observe what might be considered a new interpretation of the bluegrass ensemble, the instrumental and vocal roles, and the texture of the music. The same stylings exemplified on these recordings can be heard in numerous jam sessions throughout the modern bluegrass circuit.

Previous researchers do make brief references to the musical features of mash. In a 2018 presentation to the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Bidgood considered mash in sound, style, and gesture. The latter explains the bodily movements or pulses that coincide with mash (like any other style of music), including the feeling of the music and its strong emphasis on the downbeat, as Bidgood notes: “Is it **TRUE** that I’ve lost you, am I **NOT** the only one, after **ALL** this pain and sorrow, Darlin’ **THINK** of what you’ve done.”<sup>4</sup> In this case, the bold lettering represents the “downbeat,” of the song, “**ONE** two three four **ONE** two three four...” though in this instance only occurring every other measure. The downbeats are to be “felt,” or “experienced,” hence the bodily gesturing.

Laney discusses mash and drive in her 2018 dissertation, suggesting that the two are synonymous. “As previously noted, bluegrass performances are often positively described as ‘in

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<sup>4</sup> Bidgood, Lee. 2018. Towards a Definition of the ‘Mash’ Approach to Bluegrass: Sound, Style, and Gesture. International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Nashville, TN.

the pocket’ or containing ‘drive’ with an element of aggressive rhythm and stage presence referred to as ‘mashing.’” She continues:

Sammy Shelor insists that it is not necessarily playing hard but ‘where you are placing the notes around the beats’ and Shelor shares that Terry Baucom describes drive as ‘a state of mind’ (Shelor). In order to achieve drive, the band must think the same way about the beat with the band acting together as a drum kit (Shelor). While women can indeed create an aggressively driving sound, ‘drive’ has gathered attention largely from male audiences and was observed as being most widely used in all-male jam sessions, typically surrounded by all male audiences.<sup>5</sup>

Note the emphasis on where each note falls in relation to the beat, resulting in the mash, or “drive” sound. Further, the “drum kit” idea that Shelor talks about suggests the cohesiveness of the mash ensemble as one unit, whether in regards to each other or feeling the meter itself. While Laney dives into the gender roles and musical phenomena of “mash” and “drive,” there is still a need for further musical examination, as she suggests.

Journeying back to Bidgood’s research, a student in his 2017 class, “Survey of Contemporary Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music,” made observations of mash in both musical and social structure, primarily the latter:

Songs at these jams are notorious for sounding mean and making you want to throw things and thrash about because of how intense the downbeats and rhythm section usually are. If you notice, not only are the people playing getting into the music, but the onlookers are also thoroughly enjoying themselves... jams like these are the ones that if you were to just walk up and break out your mandolin and start playing you would most definitely get glares and it would be made very clear that you are not welcome to ‘ruin’ their ‘perfect’ jam.<sup>6</sup>

An entire project of its own could be devoted to the social stigmas of mash jamming, through gender, politics, or otherwise, but that is not the focus of this research. Rather, defining

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<sup>5</sup> Laney, Jordan. *Recreating and Deconstructing the Shifting Politics of (Bluegrass) Festivals*. 2018, Dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

<sup>6</sup> The Class/Bidgood, *Super Hot Picker Syndrome*, 2017. <https://surveycb2017.wordpress.com/2017/09/25/super-hot-picker-syndrome/>

factors such as “downbeats,” or “rhythm section” noted above provide a starting point to analyze and define this musical style in terms of its sonic qualities.

Bidgood asks questions similar to those of his student, articulating the ideals and sociality of the music. The student refers to “Camp B-Chord,” which is a popular mash jam tent at the Galax Fiddler’s Convention, and happens to be the location of a recording (“Devil in Disguise”) I analyze throughout this research. The student goes on to define the tent: “Bluegrassers who pursue the downbeat in Mash seek an ideal of alignment, a purity of satisfied expectation. A jam like ‘Camp B-Chord’ is, as my student put it, a ‘perfect jam’ - a utopic one, and one that dismisses elements of reality and discord, rather than formulating or negotiating with them.” While, again, this is another unit of study, some of the ideas, such as “alignment,” can help shape a musical definition. This alignment, though in this case talked about socially, is perhaps the same alignment which defines mash musically.

In seeking a definition of mash, one may also look to the musical community itself. A simple web search of “bluegrass mash” retrieves multiple forums in which musicians ask this same question. One user on the Mandolin Cafe explains it as:

...slammin' hard drivin' bluegrass style made popular by bands like Mountain Heart and Blue Highway... most of the common "mash" tunes (In the Gravel Yard, Cold Sheets of Rain, etc) are done in B. I like to mash as much as anybody, but I also see why some people are turned off by it - it's very easy to loose dynamics and just play fast and LOUD.<sup>7</sup>

Another Banjo Hangout user explores the same question, though with some contempt, in 2016:

...the approach is certainly recognizable, as is its adoption as the groove of choice by a lot of young musicians. And there, I think, is the problem. Mash bluegrass is heavy, heavy, heavy on the downbeat, and while that can be counterbalanced by a solid backbeat chop on mandolin and/or fiddle and/or Dobro, the style - at least to me - eventually becomes repetitive and boring and the music starts to drag and lose its drive.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Justus True Waldron, Mandolin Cafe, 2013. <https://www.mandolincafe.com/forum/threads/91738-not-a-quot-mash-in-B-quot-mandolin>

<sup>8</sup> Fleischer, Arnie. Banjo Hangout, 2016. <https://www.banjohangout.org/archive/325499/2>

Further, banjoist and writer Justin Hiltner mentions mash in a *Tuesday Tuesday* segment for the Bluegrass Situation:

Ask a bluegrasser to define “mash” — that driving, head-bobbing, modern iteration of traditional ‘grass that refuses to commit to a minor or major third — and their answer will more than likely include some sentiment similar to, “It’s hard to explain, but I know it when I hear it!”<sup>9</sup>

We can gather from these that mash is a “know it when you hear it” style of bluegrass. As someone who has observed and participated in too many counts of mash to recollect, I can testify that Hiltner’s observation is true. Personally, I fall in line with Bidgood’s idea of *feeling* mash, and how the first beat of each measure, even through the vocals, is felt bodily. In relation to actually playing mash on my instrument, I have always felt the need to focus on the beat first and then think about the notes – if I lose the pocket, then so does everyone else, and my notes won’t matter. All musicians and listeners that surround this style have their own personal knowledge and notions of mash from what they hear – but that’s all we have to go on for mash’s definition, something this research begins to codify.

In a *No Depression* interview for their 2007 debut album, Andy Hall, dobroist for the popular progressive-bluegrass band the Infamous Stringdusters, explains: “With young bluegrassers the ultimate aesthetic is mashing. Like that is what you want to do, is mash. As hard as you can.”<sup>10</sup> Here in 2006, a member of one of the most popular bluegrass bands to this day acknowledges mash as an aesthetic, and the idea that mash is something you do “as hard as you can.” Though the Infamous Stringdusters have garnered most attention for being on the progressive end of the spectrum, their debut *Fork in the Road* album arguably contains many

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<sup>9</sup> Hiltner, Justin. *The Bluegrass Situation*, 2019. Hard Drive, “Missouri Road.” <https://thebluegrasssituation.com/read/hard-drive-missouri-road/>

<sup>10</sup> Infamous Stringdusters - Thou Shalt Not Mash, *No Depression*, 2007. <https://www.nodepression.com/infamous-stringdusters-thou-shalt-not-mash/>



components of the mash sound. Hall also gives the indication that mash is popular with the “young bluegrassers,” who around the time of this interview would be born after 1980 or so, growing up with the “conservators” just starting their careers and popularity.

### *Historical Antecedents*

To begin to understand the formations of the mash style in the 1990s, one can look at the musicians who created it, and the way that they reimagined traditional bluegrass. Bluegrass historian Fred Bartenstein identified what he called the “conservators” generation of bluegrass musicians, born between 1963-1976, including artists like Dan Tyminski, Russell Moore, Adam Steffey, and many former members of the Lonesome River Band. These musicians grew up in a different time from Bill Monroe or Earl Scruggs, when artists like J.D. Crowe and the New South, the New Grass Revival, or the Country Gentlemen were at the forefront of popular bluegrass. Another group, the Bluegrass Album Band, was formed in 1980 as the backing band for a Tony Rice solo record. After the extreme success of *The Bluegrass Album* (1980), the group released a total of six volumes and toured for over three decades. Made up of seasoned pros J.D. Crowe, Bobby Hicks, and Doyle Lawson alongside young up-and-comers Tony Rice and Todd Phillips, the Bluegrass Album Band was seminal in reimagining the identity of traditional bluegrass.

In an Oct. 1982 review for *Bluegrass Unlimited*, John Hartley Fox referred to *The Bluegrass Album, Vol. 2* as, “the perfect bluegrass album” made by “the perfect bluegrass band.”<sup>11</sup> As Fox writes, “Because each of these five men has his own career and his own muse to follow, a project like this one brings them together for just one reason: a chance to play the music they love with a truly exceptional group of their peers.” - hence, the same “satisfied

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<sup>11</sup> Fox, *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine, October 1982.

expectation,” a unanimous vision perhaps, which Bidgood noted of mash earlier. This “satisfied expectation” is prevalent in not only those jam circles, but the “drum kit” approach of the mash ensemble. Though the ‘BGAB’ was presenting a plethora of traditional material, they were doing it in a polished and modern way, including guitar solos, rhythmic hooks, and even including new (to the 1980s) songs from bands like the Flying Burrito Brothers, presented in a bluegrass style.

The Bluegrass Album Band and their volumes released throughout the 1980s were a gateway for younger musicians (the aforementioned “conservator generation”) into traditional bluegrass, albeit a polished and reimagined version, with tighter rhythms and guitar solos being only some of the many modern elements included. Even though the Bluegrass Album Band may lean more towards a traditional bluegrass texture than the “drum kit,” uniformity to the beat texture of mash, the noted research does suggest that it serves as a middle ground between the Flatt & Scruggs and mash eras and imaginations of traditional bluegrass. Many of the songs that are popular in mash jams - “Devil in Disguise,” for instance - stem from the Bluegrass Album Band, as well as musical elements like the Tony Rice-style rhythm guitar. Still, there is need to investigate what these defining musical elements are and how they are different from traditional bluegrass, tracing them through the generations.

Though little work has been done in documenting mash as a style, there are other musical analyses that inform this study. In his 2017 dissertation, *Liturgical Jazz, The Lineage of the Subgenre in the Music of Edgar E. Summerlin*, Dr. Derick Cordoba traces and documents the entire trajectory of a subgenre of jazz, with emphasis on its formative years. Cordoba cites that the liturgical jazz movement was a product of its time - the “turbulent” 1960s - which provided great change for jazz and religion alike. Still, there were obstacles in its path, just as any genre (especially bluegrass) would face. “A deep and frank discussion...emerged as to what liturgical

music should and would be allowed to sound like... These years give a basis for better understanding and appreciating the development and defining features of liturgical jazz.”<sup>12</sup>

Though existing in two different worlds, these two styles (liturgical jazz to jazz, mash to bluegrass) can be studied in a similar manner, and Cordoba makes the case by drawing on a number of well-explained transcriptions (pg. 95 for example), documenting the music which defines the work of Edgar E. Summerlin and the larger canon of Liturgical Jazz. Mash can be documented in a similar manner. Cordoba unpacks the notions of genre and distinguishing both the canon and what defines liturgical jazz against the greater genre – ultimately, the use of jazz in a liturgical setting. “While I might agree with the notion that ‘you’ll know it when you hear it,’ that argument is not sufficient for the purposes of this dissertation.” That same “know it when you hear it” approach is important to mention in regards to my study of mash, and the need to circumvent that for musical evidence to distinguish mash as a style of bluegrass.

While it is important to distinguish mash as a subgenre of bluegrass, that job is better suited to follow this definition of the style, as it requires a different avenue of research. Research has been done considering genre and bluegrass, notably Stephen Stacks’ 2014 thesis, *Chris Thile, the Punch Brothers, and the Negotiation of Genre*, where he examines how Thile and his band work with identifying themselves as bluegrass, or at times without genre.<sup>13</sup>

Ingrid Monson’s book, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, serves as another template for this study. Her work includes contemplations of jazz musicians’ socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds, with musical analysis to bolster it. Though more ethnographic, her work includes detailed transcriptions and explanations for the different roles

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<sup>12</sup> Cordoba, Derrick. *Liturgical Jazz*, 2017, Dissertation. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

<sup>13</sup> Stacks, Stephen. *Chris Thile, the Punch Brothers, and the Negotiation of Genre*, 2014. Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

and behaviors of the ensemble. Monson's idea of "intermusicality," the relationship between sounds, derived from the literary intertextuality, is key. Her transcriptions and research of how each of the instruments relate to the overall sound (or in this case the bluegrass "drum kit") serves as a proper template to explore each instrument's role in this study. On page 139, her non-standard notation graph for the musical intensification of "Bass-ment Blues"<sup>14</sup> is a direct model of my same analysis for musical intensity and mash. This work is analogous to the study of mash, emphasizing these musical roles, and transcriptions and explanations thereof.

This literature shows that there is need for a clear definition for what mash is musically. Though ethnographic research on the cultural, political, gender or otherwise roles has or should be done, such work may be better suited for a study following this one. What has not been done is to define the underlying theme of what mash truly is musically, which will only strengthen further study of the surrounding themes. This project aims to understand, explain, and define the sounds which make mash its own style of bluegrass music.

### *Methodology*

Drawing on these studies of musical styles and phenomena, I utilize the following musical methodology to define mash: I begin with using the Nashville Number System as a way to establish chord and rhythmic values in a neat and presentable manner. Then, I use a more creative method of mapping a spreadsheet with each measure and instrument, to describe the values or textures of what is happening and when. I also chart the dynamic intensity of my selections on a traditional line graph. Finally, I offer some examples in standard notation, which allows for consideration of pitches and note values throughout. This combination of

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<sup>14</sup> Monson, Ingrid. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, 139.

transcription styles will offer a nuanced picture of mash’s characteristics including texture, dynamics, and vocal and instrumental stylings.

In the asking of “what is mash?” it is crucial that more than just the notes be observed, especially considering that so much of the genre’s definition is the “know it when you hear it” approach (Stuart), or Terry Baucom’s idea that drive (read: mash) is “a state of mind.” (Laney) With multi-faceted musical analysis, a more complex and thorough description is possible.

*Nashville Number System.* This mode of written music stems back to Nashville’s early heyday in the 1950s. Originally, it was devised by Neil Matthews as a musical number system for Jordonaires, but soon studio musicians began using it until it evolved into a method for writing and understanding both chords, melodies, and the arrangement and dynamics of a song.<sup>15</sup> It is still the go-to in Nashville, and the norm for recording bluegrass today. Understanding the Nashville Number System, and its use in this research, is a simple but crucial requirement. In its simplest form, note values are interchanged for their relevant numbers, represented in this G major chord scale:

G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F#dim
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	viii°

In charting bluegrass, it may often be more common to see a major 2 chord (2maj, II), flat 3 chord (b3) and a flat 7 chord (b7). Minor chords, in number form, may be marked with only a dash (5-). In terms of rhythm, each letter represents its own measure unless otherwise indicated with an underline. For example:<sup>16</sup>

G	<u>Bb C</u>	G	<u>Bb C</u>	G
1	<u>b3 4</u>	1	<u>b3 4</u>	1

<sup>15</sup> *The Nashville Number System.* <https://nashvillenumbersystem.com/>

<sup>16</sup> “Bb” represents B-flat, as the second ‘b’ represents a flat for any musical note it follows. (Ex., Eb/E-flat).

My usage of the Nashville Number system is fairly simple: to define the chord and meter values of any given recording which I am exploring. In doing so, I am able to easily communicate these values and the overall layout of the song (or section thereof) without taking up significant space like standard notation would. Furthermore, I am notating this music in the way in which it was likely charted for its original recording. Here, we can observe a NNS style chart for a song that will be analyzed later in the text:

ⓔ  $\frac{2}{4}$  ♩ = 90 Oh Death (Davis)

---

Ⓥ 1 ♭3 4 ♭6  
 1 1 1 5̇- 1

Figure 1. Nashville Number System example. "Oh Death," Jason Davis

*Charting and Graphing Arrangements and Intensity.* Through analyzing these selections via spreadsheet, I am able to define with words the various textures within a song to their relative measures. I implemented a system of charting the different roles of each instrument per each measure. Instruments are represented vertically on a grid, with horizontal grid boxes representing amounts of time (most cases, a measure each). Through this, I am able to write as much as necessary to describe the texture and timbre of each instrument in each measure. In this example, I am notating what the banjo does during a selected chorus:

Measure	Chorus 9	Chorus 10	Chorus 11	Chorus 12	Chorus 13	Chorus 14	Chorus 15	Chorus 16
<b>Banjo</b>	Backup	turnaround lick	turnaround lick	backup	Backup	hammer on	backup	forward roll

Figure 2. Spreadsheet example. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam

As well as defining the texture of the song itself, this system works nicely for comparing two recordings to one another. There are many blank sections in these charts which indicate rests, such as this alternate recording of the same song where the banjo rests for the same section:

Measure	Chorus 9	Chorus 10	Chorus 11	Chorus 12	Chorus 13	Chorus 14	Chorus 15	Chorus 16
<b>Banjo</b>								

Figure 3. Spreadsheet example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

Furthermore, spreadsheets like this can be helpful in describing the dynamics of a song. Though it is more subjective than empirical, being able to graph the dynamics in a way that is easy to understand and look at is important for this project. This system was inspired by Ingrid Monson's "Bass-ment Blues" musical intensification chart on pg. 139 of her jazz study, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, referring to it as "large scale development."<sup>17</sup>

Her system works well for establishing and comparing the peaks and troughs of the musical intensity for one or all instruments, putting it against a metered section of the song on the x-axis. This method of analysis dates back to Jan LaRue (1970) and an idea called "growth" - different from "form."<sup>18</sup> Here, I implement this system on the introduction of "Devil in Disguise:"

<sup>17</sup> Monson, Ingrid. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, 139.

<sup>18</sup> LaRue, Jan. *Guidelines for Style Analysis*. 1970.

## Devil in Disguise - Dynamic Graph

Bluegrass Album Band - 1983

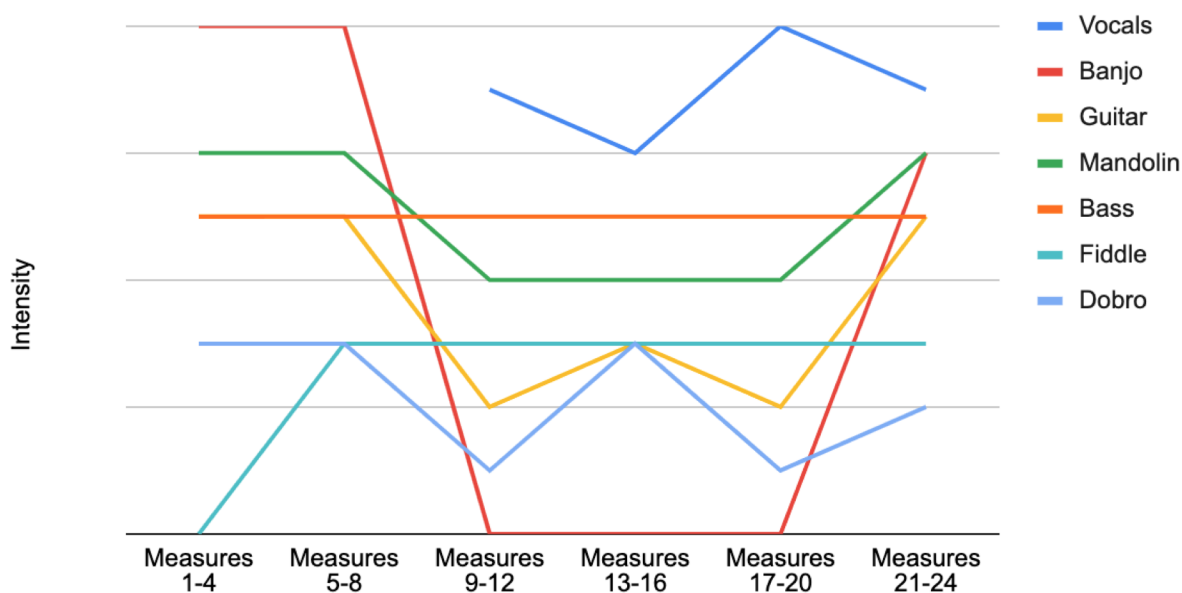


Figure 4. Dynamic graph. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

This method serves to establish a visualization of the dynamics of the different sounds, and how they relate to one another, more so than standard notation would allow. These graphs are also good for comparing two different recordings of the same song, a frequent tool used in this research.

*Standard Notation.* In this research, notation offers the simplest manner of understanding and explaining the notes themselves, and their relationship to the overall music. Though containing its own limitations, the standard notation of western music is standard for a reason, and allows music to be written down in a way that most musicians or music researchers will understand. In analyzing music, it serves well for articulating different rhythms, particularly when relating to the groove or length of the notes. Standard notation is also beneficial in the way of comparison, as it is used by Rockwell (2007), as he compares old and new versions of traditional bluegrass songs. Sometimes, modality – which we can define as any non-major, non-minor scale (Hiltner's



definition of mash being unable to commit to a major or minor third) – is a factor and easily visualized as pitches on a staff. Straightforward enough, it goes without saying that understanding this notation is essential to absorbing this research, though as noted it is not the only, or even the most important, means of analysis. In this example, we observe two bluegrass guitar rhythm styles against one another depicted in standard notation:



Figure 5. Notation. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," Ralph Stanley



Figure 6. Notation. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS

Standard notation is also effective in notating rhythms alone. In this example, rhythmic notation is used against the bass to show the relationship between it and the mandolin's chop (which is purely rhythmic). In doing so, an idea of the rhythmic section can be established musically in addition to the other methods:

Mandolin (chop)	B♭	A♭	E♭	B♭	A♭	E♭
--------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----

Figure 7. Notation. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

Like many musical analyses of Western music, the simplest way to answer my question (in many circumstances, at least) is through this use of standard notation. Where notation fails to

express or convey what needs to be understood in these musical examples, the aforementioned methods are then implemented.

*Limitations of Transcription.* In my research, I have time and time again come to frustration that it is truly impossible to convey every detail of the music by any means other than the music itself. That in turn raises questions that are important to the goals of this research: if I cannot present every detail, then what is the purpose of my analysis? What am I actually presenting? Will my research be more valuable to the readers than listening themselves and drawing their own conclusions? After much work, I have come to a place of compromise, understanding that it is the reader's responsibility to make the connections from the research I am presenting to the recordings themselves.

Kalia Yeagle's 2020 study of Old-Time music transcriptions draws on important considerations regarding transcription practices. What are the purposes of transcriptions? The limitations? Yeagle describes transcription as "the reduction of sound to visual form. Transcription represents a 'reduction' because of the inherent differences between sound and visual information (one cannot possibly capture the nuance of the other)."<sup>19</sup> This is similar, but maybe more open to unorthodox methods than Bruno Nettl's idea of transcription as "the reduction of recorded sound to standard western music notation."<sup>20</sup> For this research, I am painting transcription in the same manner as Yeagle: as a reduction of sound to visual form, though through several means.

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<sup>19</sup> Yeagle, Kalia. *A Comparative Study of Old-Time Fiddle Tune Transcriptions*, 16. East Tennessee State University, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Nettl, Bruno. *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*, 2nd ed. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 75.

The methods (or purposes) of transcription are broken down by Yeagle (via Shelamay) into five categories: preservation, memorialization, mediation, descriptive, and prescriptive.<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, I will be using primarily descriptive transcription, that is to interpret music and explain what is happening by written means. Yet no amount or level of this style of transcription (or any) can completely explain every bit of the music; it is rather a means to extract enough information to communicate and relate what is happening. Like she suggests of Bartók's transcriptions of European folk songs, overly detailed descriptive transcriptions can be difficult to interpret, and frankly, a mess.

Zygmunt Estreiche writes that “the ideal goal of a musical transcription then cannot be realized because it seeks to find a visual equivalent to an oral phenomenon.”<sup>22</sup> Standard (western) notation is simply the most prominent, and is good for notes and rhythm, but “poor for much else.”<sup>23</sup> Hence, the range of non-standard transcription practices used in this research.

*Rationale for Musical Selections.* In order to adequately explore and document this emerging style of bluegrass music, some sort of rationale must be used to establish a repertoire for study. Going back to the *Mandolin Cafe* user's definition, songs like “Cold Sheets of Rain,” or “In the Gravel Yard,” (furthermore, bands including Mountain Heart and Blue Highway) are cited as mash, with the additional claim that they are often done in the key of B.<sup>24</sup> One defined place that we can start is Bidgood's 2018 presentation, where he furthers the claim that mash emphasizes the “downbeat.” He describes a “tension and release” of players individual lines coming together, only to meet in the next measure with an emphasized downbeat.

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<sup>21</sup> Shelamay, “The Ethnomusicologist and the Transmission of Tradition,” 46.

<sup>22</sup> Roxane McCollester, “A Transcription Technique Used by Zygmunt Estreicher,” EM 4 (1960): 132.

<sup>23</sup> Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts*.

<sup>24</sup> Justus True Waldron, *Mandolin Cafe*, 2013. <https://www.mandolincafe.com/forum/threads/91738-not-a-quot-mash-in-B-quot-mandolin>

Bidgood continues by listing multiple recordings among defining interviews. Sammy Shelor suggests of his own group: "Lonesome River Band sound, in my opinion, it's country vocals, a little bit of bluegrass edge, our instrumentation is completely bluegrass, we're very much on the front edge of the beat, energy. We base everything around energy."<sup>25</sup> Although this idea of energy isn't very amenable to transcription, the idea of mash being "very much on the front edge of the beat" is something that can be listened for in recordings. The combination of country vocals with bluegrass edge can be recognized as well: a lower, less-nasal, more polished sound than traditional bluegrass, helping to accent the difference between the two styles.

Alison Krauss & Union Station are a band of focus for mash study - clarified by former member Adam Steffey's statement that the band was in part responsible for shaping the mash sound. He cites Krauss as being on the opposite end of the intensity spectrum while simultaneously featuring the mash style: "When I had been with her about maybe two or three years maybe or something like it ... she started leaning more towards singing the quieter softer love ballad kind of thing and letting Dan [Tyminski] or Tim Stafford or whoever was playing guitar and singing lean more towards the guy singing the hardcore kind of bluegrass stuff"<sup>26</sup> What we can gather from this is a sense of masculinity coinciding with mash - something Bidgood (2018) and Laney (2018) both touch. More importantly for this research it seems that Alison Krauss and Union Station, as well as members Adam Steffey (later, Mountain Heart), Dan Tyminski (formerly, Lonesome River Band), or Tim Stafford (later, Blue Highway) are key players in regards to establishing the genre.

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<sup>25</sup> TV Feature, YouTube. *Lonesome River Band - Money in the Bank*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITITiMR0gOA>

<sup>26</sup> Bidgood, Lee. 2018. Towards a Definition of the 'Mash' Approach to Bluegrass: Sound, Style, and Gesture. *International Association for the Study of Popular Music*, Nashville, TN.

This study is not nearly long enough to analyze every piece of recorded bluegrass and gauge whether or not it is mash. Rather, my aim is to examine essential pieces of “obvious” mash using the above criteria, categorizing and linking them to one another to understand and document the style. It is worth noting, however, that a small amount of subjectivity cannot be avoided, considering my musical background within the genre and perspective of the mash recordings that have made impressions on me specifically, as a musician involved in East Tennessee’s hotbed of mash. This subjectivity can have a positive impact, such as how it helps me to incorporate my own understanding and experiences of mash when necessary. To any effect, considering these musical ideas (such as downbeat emphasis) or artists (Alison Krauss and Union Station, Lonesome River Band) lends enough rationale for a basic selection of songs which exemplify these characteristics.

## CHAPTER 2. MASH, TRADITIONAL BLUEGRASS, AND RHYTHM

The purpose of this chapter is to begin to articulate what mash is on a musical level. Using definitions and examples of traditional bluegrass as a launching point, I present the differences between multiple recordings of the same song, often traditional versus mash. Through these examples, I will assign musical identifiers to mash, with attention to rhythms, differences in how each instrument executes its own part, or the texture of the ensemble. An examination of the rhythm will show that rhythmic disruption plays a big part in distinguishing the mash sound. Tension is created, then released, all based around accenting a downbeat. There are further musical identifiers we can hear in these considerations – such as half-measures at the end of a lyric verse, or the way a g-run ties together the end of a solo, or how the guitar can pull itself out of tune and time, while the other instruments rest, only to all come back together on a massive downbeat. The result is a formative understanding of what mash is, how it is different from traditional bluegrass, and how rhythmic particularities and motifs help to establish it as its own style.

### *The Traditional Bluegrass Sound*

In his 2007 dissertation, Joti Rockwell explores bluegrass, dissecting over 70 years of music and analyzing it on multiple levels, including musical, language (tropes such as “drive”), and the notion of bluegrass as a genre, and defining it as such. There is little need to dissect his nearly 300 pages of work, though using it to define a clear musical idea of traditional bluegrass aids this study. Rockwell cites “Bluegrass style” as having a “collection of discernable aural characteristics, most of which can be traced to Bill Monroe’s recordings from 1946-48, when his band the ‘Blue Grass Boys’ included Lester Flatt on guitar and vocals, Earl Scruggs on banjo,

and Robert R. (Chubby) Wise on fiddle.”<sup>27</sup> Identifying and understanding these characteristics lays a groundwork for defining mash in context to the genre stylings of traditional bluegrass.

Instrumentation is a clear place to start. Rockwell identifies a bluegrass ensemble as containing “some combination of the following:” mandolin, five-string banjo (typically played using rolls with the fingers), guitar, fiddle, occasional dobro (resonator guitar), and the upright (acoustic) bass. Rockwell suggests that “Scruggs-style banjo” and “Monroe-style mandolin” are two ubiquitous approaches that define the genre. Continuing, vocals, and vocal harmony, are a distinguishing feature in bluegrass music, just as any genre (think Hank Williams for country, Robert Plant for rock) has a distinct vocal style. Rockwell lists the likes of Lester Flatt, but more so the high tenor nature of Jimmy Martin or Bill Monroe as defining figures of the sound. Harmony is most often present, however, with tenor and baritone lines surrounding the leads, and the less occasional duet or gospel quartet.

Rhythm and meter are particularly important when distinguishing these notions of traditional bluegrass, especially as it relates to this research. Rockwell lists Bluegrass as most commonly a 2/4 or 4/4 genre with the bass notes playing on the beat and the mandolin “chopping” the off-beat, though frequent waltzes do occur. “Unlike the mandolin, the chords of the guitar are typically allowed to sustain for a certain amount of time after they are played. The guitar is generally strummed on the beat, although up-strokes with the mandolin are also popular.”<sup>28</sup>

Though “traditional” bluegrass may seem like a restricted genre, new sounds have worked their way into the genre since its inception, eventually becoming defining features of the

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<sup>27</sup> Rockwell, Joti. *What is Bluegrass Anyway?* 2007. Dissertation. University of Chicago.

<sup>28</sup> Rockwell, Joti. *What is Bluegrass Anyway?* 2007. Dissertation. University of Chicago.

genre itself. Mikael Jonassen (2016) traces the features of Earl Scruggs' banjo playing over the years, and how it has inspired new players that have changed the genre and style of bluegrass banjo. For instance, Don Reno, a contemporary of Scruggs, utilized a "single string" style – that is to play two or more notes together on the same string, something Scruggs avoided in his playing method. This Reno style later went on to influence players like Tony Trischka and Bela Fleck, who have been among the largest boundary pushers of the bluegrass genre.<sup>29</sup>

This idea of still being bluegrass banjo without sounding like Scruggs points us towards the Melodic style, originated by Scruggs' successor, Bill Keith. After playing rolls modeled after Earl Scruggs, Keith began to try and play melodies to fiddle tunes on the banjo using the same method of rolling with his right hand. As Jonassen suggests: "Keith's approach to melodic playing was strongly based in the Scruggs style, of which he had painstakingly transcribed lots of to master the style. Keith kept the dogma from Scruggs style of avoiding hitting the same string in succession, and was instead utilizing the roll figures known from Scruggs style to play diatonic and chromatic phrases."<sup>30</sup> A method of playing that is derived from traditional stylings, but incorporates new ideas in order to fulfill a certain goal – this framework is synonymous with Mash, and as we continue to see, Mash follows a similar path, redefining its rhythm to meet a certain goal, just as Keith did with the melodic style of banjo.

In relating traditional bluegrass stylings to mash, the rhythm guitar is the first point of contrast. The following analysis is of two versions of "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers." The first version is from Ralph Stanley, released on a 1971-1973 compilation, and the second (mash) version comes from Alison Krauss & Union Station and their 1997 *So Long, So Wrong*.

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<sup>29</sup> Jonassen, Mikael. The Impact of Earl Scruggs on the Five String Banjo. Master thesis, University of Oslo, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Jonassen, Mikael. The Impact of Earl Scruggs on the Five String Banjo. Master thesis, University of Oslo, 2016.



The recordings, in this instance, serve as a polarization of the traditional bluegrass style versus that of mash. Here, we can observe the guitar pattern heard throughout the original recording:



Figure 8. Guitar example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," Ralph Stanley

This is identifiable, as we observed in previous recordings, as a basic strum pattern for bluegrass style rhythm guitar, though with more emphasis on the off-beat than Rockwell would suggest (since there is no mandolin on the recording). We can directly compare this to the rhythm stylings of Dan Tyminski in the 1997 AKUS recording, noted here:



Figure 9. Guitar example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS

This example is observably, and audibly, of course, different. The grace note (or ‘appoggiatura’), which pushes its way into the 1 chord on the downbeat is a signifier, as well as the open space which follows the last eighth note of each measure, versus the sixteenth notes in the middle of the measure. This movement creates a busyness on the front end, opening a space on the back end for impact by the grace note on the next measure’s downbeat: “one two-and three four.” Though these two examples are in a sense, general, starting here is an appropriate way to begin comparison of the two recordings.

In addition to the guitar rhythm, note the textural differences in the band sound. By ‘texture,’ I am referring to the way the instrument roles complement one another as a unit. The spreadsheet, introduced in chapter 1, allows for a more detailed written analysis of what is

happening and when. In this example, we have the seventeen bars of intro for the recording by Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys:

per 2/4 bar	Measure	Intro 0	Intro 1	Intro 2	Intro 3	Intro 4	Intro 5	Intro 6	Intro 7	Intro 8
Key: C	<b>Banjo</b>	pickup notes	kickoff	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.
Tempo: 115 bpm	<b>Guitars</b>		strum	Strum	Strum	Strum	strum	Strum	strum	strum
Time: 2/4	<b>Fiddle</b>									
	<b>Bass</b>		steady 1-5 beat	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.

cont.	Measure	Intro 9	Intro 10	Intro 11	Intro 12	Intro 13	Intro 14	Intro 15	Intro 16	Intro 17
	<b>Banjo</b>	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	fades
	<b>Guitar</b>	Strum	strum	Strum	Strum	Strum	strum	strum	strum	strum
	<b>Fiddle</b>									
	<b>Bass</b>	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.

Figure 10. Spreadsheet. "I'll Remember You Love, In my Prayers," Ralph Stanley

These intro bars are repetitive and simply orchestrated. The banjo drives the melodic “kickoff,” supported by the strumming of the guitars and the pulsing of the bass. The fiddle is absent until later in the song. We can draw comparisons and differences to the recording of Alison Krauss & Union Station, notated in the same fashion below:

per 2/4 bar	Measure	Intro 0	Intro 1	Intro 2	Intro 3	Intro 4	Intro 5	Intro 6	Intro 7	Intro 8
Key: B	<b>Banjo</b>	pickup notes	kickoff	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.
Tempo: 110 bpm	<b>Guitar</b>		rhythm	Rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm
Time: 2/4	<b>Fiddle</b>		chop	Chop	Chop	chop	chop	chop	chop	pickup notes
	<b>Bass</b>		steady 1-5 beat	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.
	<b>Mando</b>		chop	Chop	Chop	chop	chop	chop	chop	chop

Measure	Intro 9	Intro 10	Intro 11	Intro 12	Intro 13	Intro 14	Intro 15	Intro 16	Intro 17	Intro 18
<b>Banjo</b>	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.
<b>Guitar</b>	rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm	Rhythm	run to 5 chord	rhythm	g-run	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm
<b>Fiddle</b>	Fill	Fill		Fill	Fill	Fill	fill		fill	Fill
<b>Bass</b>	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.
<b>Mando</b>	chop	Chop	chop	Chop	Chop	chop	chop	chop	chop	Chop

Figure 11. Spreadsheet. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS

One striking difference in the second recording is that there are 18 measures of intro, with an extra second measure between the kickoff's end and the vocal's beginning. The fiddle is also much more present; additionally this recording includes the mandolin chopping on the backbeat, which provides a countered off-beat to the bass' pulsing on each beat itself. Furthermore, the

guitar plays rhythmic runs in bars 13 and 15 which serve as an audible conclusion to the phrase, especially in measure 15 with the “g-run,” used similarly to “Money in the Bank” (fig. 2.15).

It is worth noting that there is a vast difference in the feel of the “steady 1-5 beat” of the bass on each version as well, which causes a different effect on the overall groove of the music. The first example by Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, features a mostly staccato pulse in a higher register:



Figure 12. Bass example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," Ralph Stanley

In this version, there is a somewhat large tonal range, and for a majority of the time the bass is hanging out on higher notes, which lends less punch, but a steady momentum, to the song.

Compare this to the more modern version:



Figure 13. Bass example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS

If mash is fundamentally based in the ensemble’s rhythm section, then the details of the bass sound are critical. Looking at this second example, one thing that becomes apparent is the lack of note movement in the bass. In many measures, such as 6, 8, and 11-14, the bass pedals the same

note, creating a pulse which is very firm and grounded, not adding to the movement of the tonality, but instead the strength of the rhythm. Notice how both basses approach the flat 7 chord in measure 12. Though both versions typically let the first note of a measure ring while keeping the second note staccato, this staccato technique combined with the pulsing contributes tremendously to the driving feel of Alison Krauss and Union Station's version of the song.

Let's continue our description of the characteristic "mash" bass by analyzing a live jam version of the song "Devil in Disguise," captured at the Galax Fiddler's Convention (Camp B-Chord) and made popular on YouTube. This song was originally written and performed by Flying Burrito Brothers (1971) - but we'll compare the live version to the Bluegrass Album Band's 1983 recording, which helped establish the song in the bluegrass repertoire.

It is important to mention a major disclaimer regarding this comparison. Whereas the Bluegrass Album Band was a well-oiled machine that made multiple records together over more than a decade, the jam recording at Galax is not a professional endeavor, where there is a possibility the musicians haven't played before, or are on some spectrum of inebriation, being at a late night festival jam. Audibly, one song was recorded professionally and the other on a cell phone or video camera.

Michelle Kisliuk writes that bluegrass jamming is "a central part of the artistic lives of many musicians, both professional and nonprofessional," as well as "the pure bluegrass experience."<sup>31</sup> Where a "sociomusical aesthetic" comes together in response to the music, it is obvious how different something like this Galax jam is from the Bluegrass Album Band. The jam is a place that doesn't avoid "risky openness," as Kisliuk puts it, whereas the former group

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<sup>31</sup> Kisliuk, Michelle. "A Special Kind of Courtesy:" Action at a Bluegrass Festival Jam Session. *TDR*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Autumn 1988). Cambridge University Press.

undoubtedly had the chance to try the music and work out its intricacies before the record button was pushed. Still, we can compare the basic musical elements, as we begin to here.

The song uses a “hook” rhythm in its theme, something that is not as common in bluegrass songs as it is in rock and roll. This hook rhythm is a core part of this song’s identity, notated here:



Figure 14. Rhythmic example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

This rhythm makes the song almost instantly identifiable to bluegrass listeners, without using melody or lyric. But, how does this relate to the aforementioned notion that the characteristic mash sound emphasizes the downbeats, and less this kind of syncopation? In the Bluegrass Album Band performance, we see the bass unified with the rest of the band on this rhythm:



Figure 15. Bass example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

Here, the bass is part of the “drum kit,” in near-unison with the rhythm, but (like the last note of the 2nd and 4th measures) sometimes dances around it with grace. Compare this to a live recording of a mash jam, with a much simpler bass part:



Figure 16. Bass example. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam

The difference between these two takes on the same piece of music is instructive, and shows an intentional approach of the bass staying on the beat against a syncopated rhythm played by the

rest of the band, yet again grounding the listener in the firmness of every downbeat. While the bass drives the downbeat, it creates a “rhythmic disruption” against the rest of the band.

The driving bass of mash, as described, continues to be reinforced throughout these two recorded examples. In looking at the roles of the other instruments, one striking feature is the fiddle part on the Bluegrass Album Band recording: it follows the same syncopated pattern as the bass part, bowed out and a couple of octaves higher. But against the rest of the ensemble, the fiddle and bass create a moving rhythmic pattern, something not present on the more modern version (given the alternate bass part and absence of fiddle):

The image shows a musical score for the fiddle and bass parts of the song "Devil in Disguise" by the Bluegrass Album Band. The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of two systems of four measures each. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The bass line is a driving eighth-note pattern, while the fiddle line is a syncopated eighth-note pattern. Chord symbols are placed above the fiddle staff: Bb, Ab, Eb, Bb, Ab, Eb in the first system, and Bb, Ab, Eb, Bb, Bb in the second system.

Figure 17. Fiddle example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

The first measure shows this totally unified relationship of the fiddle and bass, beginning with a delayed fiddle intro in measure 3. There is little to take the place of this rhythmic relationship in the modern version, barring the mandolin and bass relationship.

Continuing on the same theme of the bass’ role in the rhythmic movements of these songs, note the interaction between the bass and the mandolin. The “boom-chuck” pattern of 2/4 bluegrass is practically defined by the interaction between these two instruments, and for that

reason, it is an important one to consider with this recording. With the absence of the fiddle and mandolin unison, one thing which is not present on the original but is on the modern recording is the bass and mandolin relationship, notated here:

Mandolin (chop) B $\flat$  A $\flat$  E $\flat$  B $\flat$  A $\flat$  E $\flat$

Bass

5 B $\flat$  A $\flat$  E $\flat$  B $\flat$  B $\flat$

Figure 18. Bass and mandolin comparison. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam

What is transcribed here is a fairly common representation of the bass and mandolin relationship throughout much of bluegrass music – the bass plays the downbeat, and the mandolin plays the offbeat; a formula which has existed since before the beginnings of bluegrass. This looks ordinary until it is compared against the mandolin’s role on the same measures of the Bluegrass Album Band:



Mandolin (chop) B $\flat$  A $\flat$  E $\flat$  B $\flat$  A $\flat$  E $\flat$

Bass

5 B $\flat$  A $\flat$  E $\flat$  B $\flat$  B $\flat$

Figure 19. Bass and mandolin comparison. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

What we can hear is a mostly halftime beat from the mandolin, chopping on the 2 of each measure rather than subdividing and chopping on the off-beats. We can also see a relationship between the mandolin and the hook rhythm of the song, observable in measures 2, 4, and 6. In measure 8, the mandolin chops on the first note, the downbeat of the measure, a rarity in bluegrass music, but in this case something that is signifying the end of this 8 bar theme. Meanwhile, in the first recording, the bass and mandolin continue a steady rhythm through bar 8, carrying through the vocals.

This brings us to the spreadsheet breakdowns of these two versions of the songs - a place where we will find some stark differences. So, we first begin with a textural analysis of the Bluegrass Album Band's recording:

per										
2/4		<b>Intro</b>								
bar	<b>Measure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Intro 1</b>	<b>Intro 2</b>	<b>Intro 3</b>	<b>Intro 4</b>	<b>Intro 5</b>	<b>Intro 6</b>	<b>Intro 7</b>	<b>Intro 8</b>
Key:										ends on beat
Bb	<b>Banjo</b>	kickoff	kickoff	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	1
125	<b>Guitar</b>		rhythm	rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm/g run	Rhythm
	<b>Fiddle</b>				enter on fill	fill pt.2	repeat fill pt.1	fill pt.2	hold note	
	<b>Bass</b>		on the beat	hook rhythm	on the beat	hook rhythm	on the beat	hook rhythm	on the beat	on the beat
	<b>Dobro</b>				slide, and of 2		slide, and of 2		slide	
	<b>Mandolin</b>		halftime chop	hook rhythm	halftime chop	hook rhythm	halftime chop	hook rhythm	shuffle/chop	shuffle/chop

		<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>
Continued	<b>Measure</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>Banjo</b>								
	<b>Guitar</b>	Rhythm	Rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm
	<b>Fiddle</b>		Fill	Fill		fill	fill		fill
	<b>Bass</b>	steady 1/5	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.

	<i>Dobro</i>					fill	fill		
	<i>Mandolin</i>	Chop	Chop	Chop	chop	chop	chop	chop	chop

Continued	Measure	Chorus 17	Chorus 18	Chorus 19	Chorus 20	Chorus 21	Chorus 22	Chorus 23	Chorus 24
	<i>Banjo</i>							turnaround lick	turnaround lick
	<i>Guitar</i>	Rhythm	Rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	Rhythm
	<i>Fiddle</i>	Fill		Fill	Fill	fill	fill	fill	Fill
	<i>Bass</i>	steady 1/5	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	hook rhythm	hook 1/5	hook rhythm
	<i>Dobro</i>							fill	Fill
	<i>Mandolin</i>	Chop	Chop	Chop	chop	chop	hook rhythm	hook chop	hook rhythm

Figure 20. Textural analysis. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

One thing that we immediately notice is the absence of textural instruments during the vocal sections. The banjo and dobro are completely absent; the fiddle fills between verses, only for them all to come in at the end of the chorus (bars 23, 24.) Compare this to the same measures of the Galax recording:

per										
2/4		<b>Intro</b>								
bar	<b>Measure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Intro 1</b>	<b>Intro 2</b>	<b>Intro 3</b>	<b>Intro 4</b>	<b>Intro 5</b>	<b>Intro 6</b>	<b>Intro 7</b>	<b>Intro 8</b>
Key:									turnaround	turnaround
Bb	<b>Banjo</b>	kickoff	kickoff	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	cont.	lick	lick
125										
bpm	<b>Guitar</b>		rhythm	Rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	Rhythm
	<b>Bass</b>		steady 2/4	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat
	<b>Dobro</b>		Drone	Drone	Drone	drone	drone	drone	drone	Drone
	<b>Mandolin</b>		downbeat	halftime chop	Chop	chop	chop	chop	chop	Chop

		<b>Chorus</b>			<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>	<b>Chorus</b>
continued	<b>Measure</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Chorus 10</b>	<b>Chorus 11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>Banjo</b>	Backup	turnaround lick	turnaround lick	backup	backup	hammer on	backup	forward roll
	<b>Guitar</b>	Rhythm	Rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	Rhythm
	<b>Bass</b>	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat
	<b>Dobro</b>								
	<b>Mandolin</b>	Chop	Chop	Chop	chop	chop	chop	chop	Chop

continued	Measure	Chorus	Chorus	Chorus	Chorus	Chorus	Chorus	Chorus	Chorus
		17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	<b>Banjo</b>	forward roll	Backup	Lick	Lick	backup	theme lick	backup	theme lick
	<b>Guitar</b>	Rhythm	Rhythm	Rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm	rhythm
	<b>Bass</b>	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat	on the beat
	<b>Dobro</b>								
	<b>Mandolin</b>	Chop	Chop	Chop	chop	chop	chop	halftime chop	halftime chop

Figure 21. Textural analysis. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam

Not only is the banjo present in this recording, but it is *busy*. The dobro is absent much the same, and of course there is no fiddle on this recording. The biggest differences are in dynamics between the two recordings, which will be studied in the next section.

In considering these examples, we can observe strong difference in these interpretations of traditional bluegrass. Though subtle to the outside ear, small rhythmic nuances like this can give the music an entirely new feeling. In this case particularly, we observe how the bass moves against the mandolin in a tighter way than in ‘traditional’ bluegrass, or the distinct ways the guitar might keep time with the ensemble, and how they are different, lending different rhythmic effect. Understanding these subtleties, we can begin to separate mash from traditional bluegrass and look at it as an extension of the genre’s style, and see that there is a tighter clinging to the rhythm, firmer grounding in the downbeats, and a sense of ‘pulse’ surrounding those beats. In the

following sections, we will start to identify the different disruption styles that place even more emphasis on these downbeats.

### *Playing Around the Beat*

A defining feature of Bill Monroe's bluegrass music is how he (and his band) played "around" the beat – this meaning that though the beat was steady, not every instrument was in exactly the same place surrounding the beat. If bluegrass music "drives," according to Rockwell (who also references a jazz study where drive is "an illusion of gaining speed where tempos stay consistent"<sup>32</sup>), and Sammy Shelor suggests that drive is where you place the notes around the beat,<sup>33</sup> then starting this rhythmic conversation by considering Bill Monroe's music is instructive.

In listening to a live recording of Bill Monroe from 1965, he and his Blue Grass Boys perform "Bluegrass Breakdown," at approximately 160 bpm, but it's not just the blazing speed that makes the song drive so hard: it's how Monroe, and the other lead players, play against the steady beats of the bass and guitar (rhythm section). Slowing the recording down to 25% speed, it is easily to delineate where the instruments are: during the banjo break, the banjo's placement on each beat is just a millisecond in front of the bass or guitar. It's not as simple as rushing or dragging however – this divide is consistent, and most importantly it seems intentional as a defining feature of bluegrass music. Additionally, Rockwell explores a "rhythmic division of labor," where in each instrument has a different layer or length of "pulse" to their notes,

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<sup>32</sup> Rockwell, Joti. "What Is Bluegrass Anyway?" 2007. Dissertation. University of Chicago.

<sup>33</sup> Laney, Jordan. *Recreating and Deconstructing the Shifting Politics of (Bluegrass) Festivals*. 2018, Dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

representing this in standard notation. Yet, he doesn't go as far as to explore this phenomena as it pertains to the musicians playing "on top of" or "in front of" the beat.

In listening to the Lonesome River Band's "Money in the Bank" via the same method, we can hear some differences and similarities. While the mandolin's kick off does push the beat, the banjo seems to be fairly unified with the bass, which is most firmly grounded in each beat. Especially by listening to Sammy Shelor's pickup notes on the banjo before the chorus at 0:43, they are less propulsive and more grounded in the "pocket" (or firm groove) of the meter. It's not just Sammy Shelor's approach to the banjo around the beat that defines mash – this same laid back, firmly grounded style is also present in Ron Block's kickoff and backup (notably 2:11) to "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers" (Alison Krauss and Union Station), and many of our other mash selections that we explore throughout this work.

In comparing mandolin styles, Monroe's mandolin playing parallels that of the banjo, as it pushes in front of the beat in an anxious manner creating that "drive." In examining Adam Steffey's mandolin break on the same AKUS selection, we can hear that he is firmly rooted in the beat, so much that he is nearly behind it. His break also consists of all single notes, unlike Monroe's typical "double stop" style (playing two notes at once, with either drone strings or added harmony notes).

What this brief look at the mash "groove" gives us is an idea of its difference from traditional bluegrass, with a deep pocket (concentrated on the beat itself) replacing the propulsive energy of what drive is historically. This gives us the understanding that in mash, drive is less a "propulsive energy," and more what Shelor suggests, as both styles of "drive" are where the notes are around the beat. This thesis is not nearly long enough to give this styling the attention

that it deserves, though a larger work should in the future be dedicated to bluegrass and “the notes around the beat.”

### *Rhythmic Disruption*

We continue our analyzation of mash rhythm by looking at the “band coordination” of the Lonesome River Band’s performance of “Money in the Bank.” In his presentation to the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Bidgood emphasizes this coordination with a 1993 live example of the song (which was first released on *Carrying the Tradition* in 1991): “...in the mandolin kick-off, the triplets disrupt the flow of the rhythm, and then the guitar’s g-run [a common set of notes played by the guitarist in a bluegrass song out of a G position, often at the end of a solo or vocal line, first made popular by Lester Flatt] brings the whole group together,”<sup>34</sup> This rhythmic disruption is exemplified in the following figure:

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<sup>34</sup> Bidgood, Lee. 2018. Towards a Definition of the ‘Mash’ Approach to Bluegrass: Sound, Style, and Gesture. *International Association for the Study of Popular Music*, Nashville, TN.



The image displays a musical score for the rhythm section of "Money in the Bank" by Lonesome River Band. The score is written for Mandolin, Guitar, and Bass in 2/4 time. It is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 5 through 8. The Mandolin part begins with a steady eighth-note pattern, but in measure 4, it introduces a triplet of eighth notes. In measure 6, it features a complex 16th-note figure. The Guitar part maintains a steady eighth-note accompaniment throughout, with a notable 16th-note figure in measure 6. The Bass part provides a simple, steady quarter-note accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4.

Figure 22. Rhythm section example. "Money in the Bank," Lonesome River Band

Notice in this example the musical happening that Bidgood refers to—starting in measure 4 with the triplets in the mandolin part, which disrupt the steady rhythms of the guitar and bass—only to meet together in measure 6 at the conclusion of the 16<sup>th</sup>-note figure in the guitar.

Another rhythmically disruptive element in this transcription is the half-measure, or single beat, in measure 4. This rhythmic idea of 1, 2, 1, 1, 2 happens throughout the song in both the choruses and solos. If mash is made via emphasizing the downbeat (especially on the 1-chord), this odd measure surprises the listener by an early (unexpected) 1-chord from the 4-chord in the chorus:

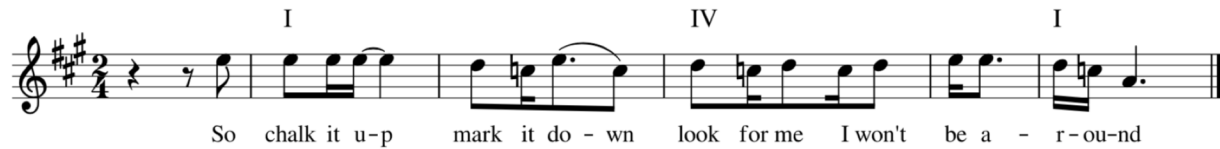


Figure 23. Vocal example. "Money in the Bank," Lonesome River Band

In this case, measure 5 is the short measure with “r-ou-nd” falling directly on the downbeat, creating the early transition back to the 1-chord, emphasizing the downbeat beat by playing it prematurely yet still in perfect time.

We can observe the same half-measure, rhythmically disruptive phenomenon in Alan Bibey’s recording of “County Fool” from 2000. The song, with its lyric and form notated below, is a common selection in mash jamming:



Figure 24. Vocal example. "County Fool," Alan Bibey

In the first verse of Bibey’s recording, sung by Del McCoury, we hear this same shortened measure (measure 6) before returning to the downbeat on the 1-chord. The pattern continues throughout the song, in both the verses and instrumental breaks, creating a disruption in the expected even beat of 1, 2, 1, 2, grounding itself each time it returns to the downbeat at the end of the form. Further evidence of this rhythmic trend can be observed in Jason Davis’ 2013 recording of “Oh Death,” a song made famous by Ralph Stanley and the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Davis’ version, notated below, uses this rhythmic idea firmly throughout the song, in both the verses, choruses, and breaks.



Figure 25. Vocal example. "Oh Death," Jason Davis

Another example comes from Mountain Heart’s recording of “Twister (Devil’s Dance),” a band who are worthy of their own study in the next chapter, and a song which has become a staple in the subgenre:



Figure 26. Vocal example. "Twister (Devil's Dance)," Mountain Heart

Though further examples can be heard, such as the Boxcars “Born and Raised in Covington,” or Jim Mills’ “Are You Waiting Just For Me,” this handful of songs serves well in considering this element of rhythmic disruption in mash. This recurring rhythmic figure is something that we can trace over a span of more than 20 years, and can pin as a mash styling, and part of the “downbeat” phenomenon.

It’s important to note that “crookedness,” which Rockwell defines as a rhythmic irregularity (using an extra or odd number of beats) is a common feature among old-time, and some bluegrass, music (he cites 67% of the Carter Family’s recordings as featuring some sort of rhythmic disruption). He asks: “Is crookedness more an aspect of predetermined compositional strategy or moment-to-moment improvisational choice?”<sup>35</sup> Banjoist Tony Trischka adds that

<sup>35</sup> Rockwell, J. (2011). Time on the Crooked Road: Isochrony, Meter, and Disruption in Old-Time Country and Bluegrass Music. *Ethnomusicology*, 55(1), 55-76. doi:10.5406/ethnomusicology.55.1.0055

these time quirks are the products of the old players, who would add to remove beats “because that was just the way they heard it in their heads.”<sup>36</sup>

Rockwell does however refer to historical “straightenings” of crooked old-time tunes done in bluegrass style, stating that they are “too numerous to mention.” So what does this mean for our study in particular, one in which crookedness and rhythmic disruption are major factors? First, it appears that in Rockwell’s particular study of old-time music (centering around the Carter Family), crookedness is a melodic feature, whereas in our findings its function is that of a rhythmic device. Second, if there is a historical straightening of crooked songs in bluegrass (such as Rockwell’s transcription of the Carter Family & Nitty Gritty Dirt Band performing “Keep on the Sunny Side”), then this shift back to crookedness and disruption in the mash style is intention, and as suggested, a device.

Another example of the creation of tension and rhythmic disruption with a melodic element employed to accent a downbeat can be found in a popular guitar motif, one that has nothing other than various slang terms (like “Virginia Bump”) to identify it. For my purposes, I will coin it as the “mash bend.” This idea works through both pitch and rhythm: the guitar plays a bass note on an off-beat, bending that note down a half step and slowly back up, releasing on the downbeat of the next measure with a full chord. This “mash bend” creates a rhythmic and melodic tension that is resolved in the measure that follows.



Figure 27. Guitar rhythm example. "Mash Bend"

<sup>36</sup> Rockwell, J. (2011). Time on the Crooked Road: Isochrony, Meter, and Disruption in Old-Time Country and Bluegrass Music. *Ethnomusicology*, 55(1), 55-76. doi:10.5406/ethnomusicology.55.1.0055

In a typical example, the rhythm of every instrument comes to a halt, the guitar being the only one continuing, making the following downbeat all the more impactful when each instrument returns in unison. This motif can be found in numerous songs across mash, like “Theme Time,” from Jim Mills’ *Hide Head Blues* (01:56), “How Many Times” from Dan Tyminski’s *Wheels* (00:01 and 02:04), “I’ll Remember You Love, In My Prayers,” from Alison Krauss and Union Station’s *So Long So Wrong* (02:29), and “Let Me Fall,” from Adam Steffey’s *One More For the Road* (00:22, 00:39, 01:02, and finally 01:18). These selections are just the most obvious and accessible ones, however – this idea can be found both near and far in listening to mash, commercial recordings and jams alike.

Listening to and reading these examples of rhythms in mash, it becomes clear that tension and release play a large part in making the sound: tension of rhythms, such as a disruption in a steady flow of eight-notes or the bass groove, released by a unified downbeat. Or when the guitar creates a tension by pulling its bass note down a half step, released once again by a unified downbeat on the following measure. Or how a melodic line will bring the listener to an early downbeat, which creates an immediate tension and release without ever breaking the steady flow of rhythm, instead just changing up its count. Tension and release, question and answer, yin and yang, the formula plays a part in nearly every example of music one could present. In this case, once combined with the results of our earlier departure from traditional bluegrass norms, the result is mash, a more and rhythmically intense and particular execution of bluegrass ideas, employing these elements (such as the guitar bend or half-measure) to further its unique impact.

## CHAPTER 3: DYNAMICS, MELODIES, AND HARMONIES

### *Considering Dynamics*

Dynamics in music are key to the way any piece comes across. From *crescendos* to *decrescendos*, *fff* to *ppp*, changes in volume make the music breathe, and can help the listener to focus on particular voices or instruments. Imagine if all the instruments and voices in your favorite song were performed at the same volume, continuously throughout the piece! In considering music, and attempting to define it musically, dynamics are a critical component.

To begin, I'll compare two versions of the song, "Devil in Disguise," this time in relation to dynamics. As described in the methodology, a portion of each version of the song is presented, detailing the dynamic intensity of each instrument per measure. Though we can establish dynamics with the more empirical standard notation, this system is better suited for a visual comparison of the portions of the song I am studying in this research.

Once again I find it important to reiterate the differences in these two musical performances. Not only are they made for two different purposes – a commercial recording and a late night jam session – but the musical lineup creates differences in each performer's role, like how J.D. Crowe stops playing banjo in order to sing baritone on the original recording, yet Jason Davis continues to play in the Galax video because he is not singing. This raises an unanswerable (at least within the scope of this research) question – did Crowe not play over the chorus because he was busy singing, or because it sounded better that way? Why does Jason Davis play over the chorus?

## Devil in Disguise - Dynamic Graph

Bluegrass Album Band - 1983

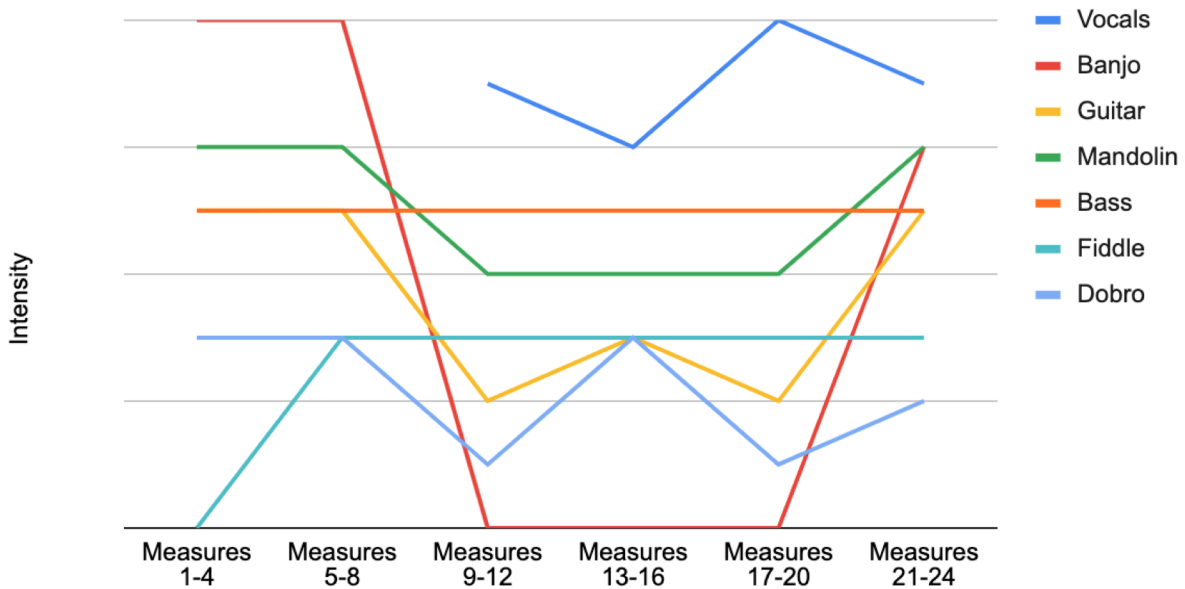


Figure 28. Dynamic example. "Devil in Disguise," Bluegrass Album Band

In looking at this first chart, two things are clear: the banjo is gone for the majority of the vocal line, and the vocals take precedence over the rest of the instruments. While the bass remains steady, the mandolin drops enough in the mix to let the vocals glide on top, with the guitar doing the same. The result is group action in terms of dynamics, all of the instruments making their necessary dynamic changes together, all relating to the main idea of what is in the forefront, whether it be the banjo and rhythm of the intro, or attention to the vocal line.

Moving to the Galax version of the song, we find that while some of the same ideas are present, the dynamic result is much different:

## Devil in Disguise - Dynamic Graph

Galax Jam - 2015

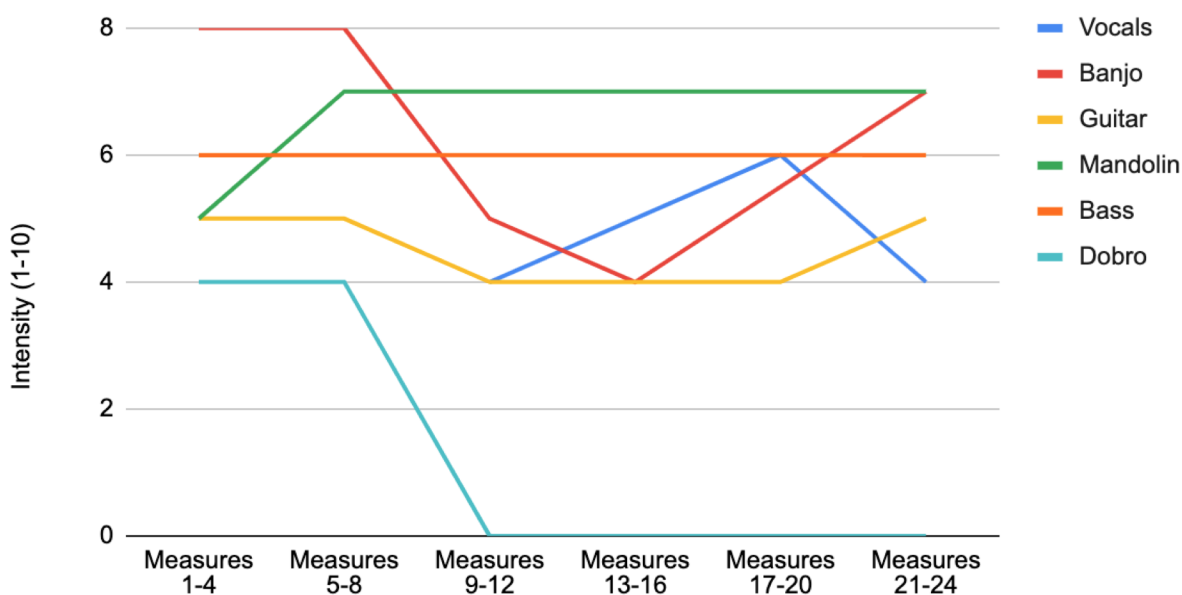


Figure 29. Dynamic example. "Devil in Disguise," Galax jam

In this graph, we hear the mandolin volume actually going *up* during the vocals, the only thing that drops out is the dobro, and the vocal line is buried. While the banjo does drop, it is present through the vocal line, rising and falling with fills. The guitar remains much the same, minus the dynamic bounce in the middle of the original version.

Going back to our comparison of "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," we find a similar happening. In comparing the recordings by Ralph Stanley and Alison Krauss & Union Station, we can observe a vocal/instrument relationship much the same as the last example.



## I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers

Alison Krauss & Union Station - 1997

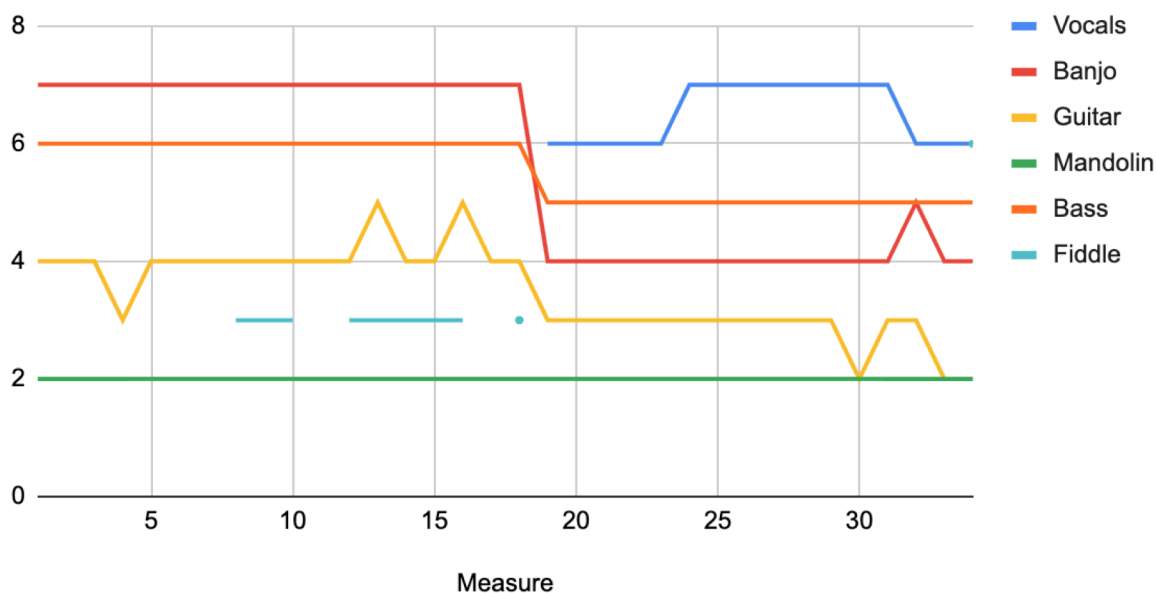


Figure 30. Dynamic example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," AKUS

In the more modern example, the vocals are at the forefront dynamically. The bass reduces just enough to let the vocals take over, and the guitar goes down alongside it. While the fiddle completely drops out for the vocal section, the mandolin is unphased. We can observe some similarities here to the Galax recording of "Devil in Disguise," notably the relationship between the banjo and vocals. Though the banjo drops down from its lead role, it is still quite present in the mix accompanying the vocal sections. We have a similar relationship here to Ralph Stanley dropping his banjo dynamic because he is singing, whilst Ron Block (AKUS) is not singing, and therefore free to continue playing. But how intentional is this? Is it out of necessity or the longing for a particular musical texture?

## I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers

Ralph Stanley - 1971-1973

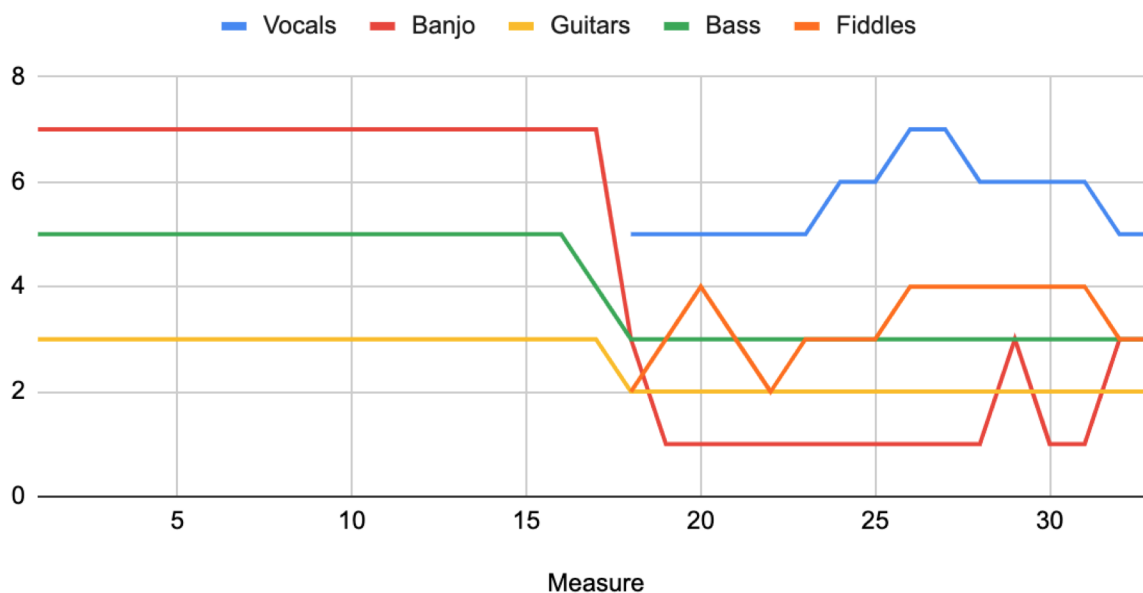


Figure 31. Dynamic example. "I'll Remember You Love, In My Prayers," Ralph Stanley

In notating the Ralph Stanley recording of the song, we find that the banjo drops out significantly more than in the modern version. There are measures throughout the verse where the vocal can only faintly be heard. The vocal separation is more accented in this version, but not just in the overall dynamics - the instruments in the prior version which were closest to the vocals (banjo, guitar) are the lowest two, allowing the vocals to occupy that frequency range without competition (though the fiddle is much more involved here). We see a similar connection to the bass and vocals as in the AKUS version, as well as a similar graph for the vocals themselves.

In relating these graphs and trying to understand the differences between these songs, it appears that there is a calculated overall difference in dynamic approach. The banjo in the mash sound is so much more active underneath the vocals, and serves as a main backup instrument, as compared to it almost disappearing in the earlier recordings. While at some points it may seem that mash is all about the rhythm, note that while the banjo most often seems like a lead

instrument, it is nearly the opposite – a subdividing machine gun of notes that does just as much to establish the groove as anything in the rhythm section. Considering the way a masher like Jason Davis plays underneath the vocals as opposed to Ralph Stanley highlights these dynamic and rhythmic differences. And further, considering how the subdividing grooves are combined with melody and harmony brings to light some distinctive textural/arrangement approaches that tend to characterize the mash approach.

Dynamically, what we can discern from these examples is a difference in approach toward the ‘lead’ instrument, be it an instrumental passage or the vocal line. Observing that in a mash example, the vocals fall somewhat lower in the dynamic mix than the traditional version (“Devil in Disguise”), or how the banjo is overall busier in both mash examples as compared to their predecessors. What emerges here is a clear difference in dynamic attitude, shown by how the group either carries the lead voices or walks alongside (or on top) of it. Mash is much more than just being ‘loud,’ though that loudness is part of the dynamic – in the way that the explored examples are, overall, dynamically higher than their earlier recordings.

### *Melody and Harmony*

In considering what makes mash unique, melodic and harmonic structure is also an important element to discuss. The way in which songs are formed or changed from their original structure helps to define identifying features of mash. There are multiple instances in which a bluegrass song is changed from its original harmonic or melodic structure to another, more modal tonality, such as Doug Dillard’s recording of “Clinch Mountain Backstep,” the Highland Travelers’ arrangement of “East Virginia Blues,” or the Bluegrass Outlaws’ recording of “Down the Road,” (which, incidentally, also includes a shortened measure at the end of the verse like the

examples in the last chapter):

A  $\frac{2}{4}$  ♩ = 106 **Down The Road**

---

V 1 1  $\flat$ 7 1 5 1  
 1 1  $\flat$ 7 4  $\overset{\cdot}{4}$  1 1

Figure 32. NNS example. "Down the Road," Bluegrass Outlaws

The same reharmonization phenomenon can be found in the same Jason Davis recording of "Oh Death," that we studied earlier. While Ralph Stanley's major-key version features only two chords as well as a short acapella section, Davis' recording is performed out of a modal E, and has a reharmonized chord structure throughout the song. We'll begin our analyzation by notating a Nashville Number System chart for the same first verse portion of each song:

F  $\frac{2}{4}$  ♩ = 65 **Oh Death (Stanley)**

---

V 1 1 1  $\overset{\cdot}{5}$  1 1  
 1 1 1  $\overset{\cdot}{5}$   $\diamond 1$

Figure 33. NNS example. "Oh Death," Ralph Stanley

This chart, from Ralph Stanley's *Clinch Mountain Gospel* recording, is a fairly simple chord structure, with the exception being the half-measure occurring on each 5 chord. Comparing to the more modern example, however, we see some stark differences:

ⓔ  $\frac{2}{4}$  ♩ = 90 Oh Death (Davis)

Ⓥ 1 ♭3 4 ♭6  
1 1 1 5̇- 1

Figure 34. NNS example. "Oh Death," Jason Davis

No matter being in a different key, this version is harmonized almost completely in a different manner, the exception being the second line - which though closer to the original format does use a minor five chord. The rhythm is made straight throughout the first line, omitting Stanley's half-measure, saving it until the end of the verse where it can make the largest impact – further evidence for the rhythmic disruption we examined in the previous chapter. The chords on the top bar take us away from the singular tonality of the original version, while bringing in a modal element using minor tones like the flat 3 and flat 6.

This reharmonization (or remelodization) continues into the choruses, where we can observe harmonic differences in the vocal parts and harmonization (by both chord and vocals). This section of the two songs compares quite differently, as one is mostly a capella and without form while the other is firmly a continued rhythm of the verse.

(sung freely without meter)

Lead Vox

o-o-h-h dea-th o-o-h-h d-e-e-e-a-a-th wont you - spare-me-o-ver-til-a - n-o-ther year

Tenor Vox

Figure 35. Vocal example. "Oh Death," Ralph Stanley

The first thing we observe in this example is the acapella section of the first two phrases, sung without meter. The lyrics quickly meet the meter of the song, however, in the last line, accompanied by a 1 to 5 turnaround in the accompaniment. This turnaround occurs throughout the song, and is the only time that the song departs from the 1 chord.

In the following Jason Davis example, however, we find little in common. The rhythm is pronounced and repetitive per each vocal line (with the absence of both the acapella style and vocal harmony), and the song is harmonized in a modal fashion following a chord structure of 1, b3, 4, 1, 5-, and 4.

Figure 36. Vocal example. "Oh Death," Jason Davis

This example brings us to another phenomenon - the use of a four chord at the end of key phrases in a song, which builds harmonic suspense for an upcoming downbeat on the 1 chord. We'll continue this analysis with a few Nashville Number System charts and notations from the band Mountain Heart – all of which show us this phenomenon of a line resolving on a 4 chord, creating suspense for the upcoming downbeat on the 1 in the beginning of the next section. In this first example, the instrumental tune, “Devil’s Courthouse,” we can observe a landing on the 4 chord at the end of the A-section form, with an odd ninth bar, helping to build the momentum before the tune either repeats the A-section or moves on to the B-section.

ⓑ  $\frac{2}{4}$  ♩ = 156 **Devil's Courthouse**

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ⓐ  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{1 } \flat 7 \ \flat 7 \ 4 \\ \flat 6 \ 1 \ \flat 7 \ 4 \ 4 : \end{array} \right]$

Figure 37. NNS example. "Devil's Courthouse," Mountain Heart

In this example, the 4 chord in the first bar is not nearly as impactful as at the end – in part, this is due to its role in the first line as a passing tone, rather than as a resolving (“home chord”) tone at the end, even if it is building suspense and longing for the 1. I remember a mandolin lesson from my teens with Nick Dumas, who at the time was playing with Special Consensus, a seasoned mash group. After he taught me “Devil’s Courthouse,” I commented how I loved how those Mountain Heart songs all ended on the 4 chord. “It’s suspense!” he said.

The next example – “I’m Just Here to Ride the Train” is one of many instances where this pattern is used in a verse, building suspense after the lyrics stop and before the next line begins:

ⓑ  $\frac{2}{4}$  ♩ = 156 **I'm Just Here To Ride Th...**

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ⓐ  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{1 } \flat 3 \ 4 \ \flat 6 \\ \flat 3 \ \flat 7 \ 4 \ 4 : \end{array} \right]$

Figure 38. NNS example. "I'm Just Here to Ride the Train," Mountain Heart

Here, we can observe a very similar use to that in “Devil’s Courthouse.” Earlier in the form, the song passes over the 4 chord briefly, and not until the end of the second line does it land on the 4 in a suspenseful manner.

The last example in this set requires the most explaining, as well as the most listening. In “Mountain Man,” the 4 is used in the same spirit but a in a different tonal direction. The first 4-chord comes when the song is harmonically (and rhythmically) directing us back to the 1 chord. Then, as the 4 chord is directing us back to the 1 in the same manner, another downbeat on the 4 chord occurs, reinforcing its tonality once again.

The image shows two lines of musical notation for the song "Mountain Man." The first line contains the lyrics "I-live - on - a-moun - tain - si - ide I've - raised-a-fam-ily and i've - made-a - li - i - fe I" with chord symbols 1, b7, and 4 above the staff. The second line contains the lyrics "Ne-ver - known-no-oth - er - way-y - y - y-y the - moun-tain-man - is - here-to - stay" with chord symbols 4, b7, and 1 above the staff. The music is in a 2/4 time signature with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Figure 39. Vocal example. "Mountain Man," Mountain Heart

Though this is a different use of the pattern, it has a similar effect on the listener, creating a suspense and longing for the 1 chord a total of three times per verse. Another important footnote in this example is the use of half-measures, as discussed in chapter 2, throughout the verses.

We find another example in the chorus of “Mountain Man.” The 4 chord hits at the end of the first line, creating a suspense much like “Devil’s Courthouse,” or “I’m Just Here To Ride the Train.” But, it continues and holds on the 4, even when the harmonics of the tune suggest that it is going back to the 1 chord, only to return to the 1 chord on the last word of the chorus, releasing all of that tension built up by the suspense in an enormous downbeat.



Figure 40. Vocal example. "Mountain Man," Mountain Heart

Where a normal bluegrass song might just use a 1-5-1 turnaround (which works with this modal melody of the bottom line), Mountain Heart continues to harmonize over the 4 chord, dancing in the suspense.

Mountain Heart is an important group to consider when it comes to defining the mash trailblazers. They began in 1998, with musicians including Adam Steffey (who had just left Alison Krauss & Union Station), alongside Steve Gulley, Barry Abernathy, Clay Jones, Jason Moore, and Jim VanCleve. Over the years, the band has seen tremendous turnover (none of the musicians listed here are still members), and a shift in sound. But, from their beginning to the 2010s, the band was a textbook example of mash, doing it in a new, and more intense way. Adam Steffey explains: “We were leaning more towards like traditional songs and lyrics and things were leaning more towards that. And then as it progressed, they were wanting to hit a different demographic, they were wanting to hit young people. ...that band was one that certainly in the early 2000s I think had somewhat of an effect on what was going on.”<sup>37</sup> The band shifted from being a traditional bluegrass band, to one which used clip on microphones (so they could move around in their stage show), played 8-minute instrumentals, and put on more of a rock

<sup>37</sup> Bidgood, Lee. 2018. Towards a Definition of the ‘Mash’ Approach to Bluegrass: Sound, Style, and Gesture. *International Association for the Study of Popular Music*, Nashville, TN.

show than anything traditional bluegrass had witnessed, all with one thing in common: every member came from a steeped traditional bluegrass background, and they were using the traditional bluegrass characteristics of mash to forge this new sound.

In listening to their 2007 release, *Road That Never Ends (The Live Album)*, the energy is clear. From the roaring audience noise to the blazing instrumental jams on this album, it's a unique piece of recorded bluegrass. And most importantly for our purposes, it's mash. 5 of the 13 songs are in B, and many contain the stylistic features which I have identified and will continue to do. Though they were not transcribed above, both "While the Getting's Good" and "#6 Barn Dance" (from *Road That Never Ends*) follow the same suspenseful 4 chord idea explored with the previous three examples. This live album is important to consider as it is a link between recorded mash, and the live, jamming approach that many in this era were after in mash jams. In the same spirit, this album follows Mountain Heart's 2004 *Force of Nature*, the next example.

An obvious place to start in tracing Mountain Heart's contribution to this sound is one of their most popular early releases: "Twister (Devil's Dance)." Unlike typical traditional bluegrass examples, this song starts with a hook line on the mandolin, which includes an odd measure like we explored earlier, allowing the band to come in on the downbeat and vamp until the vocals begin. Continuing this departure from the traditional norm, there is no "kickoff melody," but only the instruments vamping over a few modal chords.



Figure 41. Mandolin example. "Twister (Devil's Dance)," Mountain Heart

The mandolin plays this hook, with the rest of the band pounding in on the downbeat of measure four. The vocal line in the chorus is much the same:

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line in 2/4 time, key of D major. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. Above the staff, Roman numerals indicate the chords: I, IV, iii, I, vii, I. The lyrics are written below the staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across measures. The lyrics are: "no - where to go no-o where-to-h - iii - de in the - place where the earth-and-the - sky-col-l - ide".

Figure 42. Vocal example. "Twister (Devil's Dance)," Mountain Heart

That crooked measures that we explored in the previous chapter happen twice here, building suspense before each transition back to the I chord (measure three and seven). Additionally, there's one more important footnote when it comes to representing the intensity of this example: the subject matter. This song is literally about a tornado - surely, that is in part responsible for a lot of the musical ideas here, to make them aggressive and unforgiving, as well as the idea that the aggressive music would be informing the lyrics.

In considering the melodic ideas communicated by mash, we begin to distinguish what separates it from typical bluegrass. With more chords than just 'three chords and the truth,' as many old bluegrassers say, mash presents a new and expanded harmonic idea of traditional bluegrass, often centering on modal tonalities like the flat 3, 6, and 7 chords in a major key. These chords often create harmonic tension and release, like the frequent landing on the four chord, which creates suspense that leads us back to the most important point of all: the downbeat. Everything that we have learned about so far point us to this ever-important characteristic of the genre that nearly every musical aspect serves. Mash is the downbeat.

## CHAPTER 4: IN SEEKING A DEFINITION OF MASH

### *Understanding Where It Comes From*

From the first popular use of the word in the 1990s by Alison Krauss to the slang definition years later, we can identify some variation in the term *mash*. The word shifts from describing Krauss' idea of an emotional response (“Yeah, he mashed me down.”<sup>38</sup>) to Stuart's more musical definition, “to play fast or with great drive.”<sup>39</sup> From the latter we have the beginnings of a musical definition of this sound and style of bluegrass music. However, as our findings indicate – mash isn't just about playing fast or loud. The drive, or as Shelor suggests, “where you are placing the notes around the beat,”<sup>40</sup> is the main finding of this research. “To play fast or with great drive” points us in the direction of drive itself, which leads to close inspection of the rhythms of this style. As Laney suggests in her research, the two terms – mash and drive – are in many ways synonymous. Even though these mentioned writings were helpful to this research, in their own existence they provide us with no real definition for what mash is – something that this research changes.

Through this research, we see that much of mash's background stems from an earlier redefinition of traditional bluegrass – most notably, the Bluegrass Album Band. What John Hartley Fox called “the perfect bluegrass album”<sup>41</sup> was instead a reimagination of the traditional repertoire and sound, sneaking in more progressive ideas like Tony Rice's guitar breaks, or a unified rhythm section like we observed on “Devil in Disguise.” Since each member of the BGAB had “his own muse to follow,” as Fox put it, the resulting album is seen through a

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<sup>38</sup> Goldsmith, Thomas. *The Bluegrass Reader*, 78.

<sup>39</sup> Bluegrass Today, *Blue Yodel #5: Dictionary of Bluegrass Slang*, 2012. <https://bluegrasstoday.com/blue-yodel-53-dictionary-of-bluegrass-slang/>

<sup>40</sup> Laney, Jordan. *Recreating and Deconstructing the Shifting Politics of (Bluegrass) Festivals*. 2018, Dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

<sup>41</sup> Fox, Bluegrass Unlimited magazine, October 1982.

different lens than if the same songs were performed by someone like Bill Monroe or Ralph Stanley.

The ‘conservators’ generation (b. 1963-1976), as dubbed by Bartenstein, is home to many of the musicians who formulated the mash sound. These musicians – such as Adam Steffey, Dan Tyminski, or Sammy Shelor – grew up in a time when the Bluegrass Album Band was at the forefront of popular bluegrass, rather than artists like Bill Monroe or Ralph Stanley. Locating these musicians in time helps us to understand how exactly mash began to form. None of this is helpful to our definition, however, without ample evidence (provided via transcriptions) that documents mash as a modern style of bluegrass music, with its own unique sounds and approaches that extend from the traditional bluegrass playbook.

### *Rhythm*

Our first examples of relating more traditional bluegrass songs to the mash versions are the formulations of this understanding. “I’ll Remember You Love, In My Prayers,” or the convenient BGAB comparison of “Devil in Disguise,” show us a divergence from the norm with mash, a re-grounding in the meter, tonality, and dynamics of the songs. In these examples, the mash versions had flatter dynamics while the instruments favored meter over melody (such as the bass example to “I’ll Remember You Love In My Prayers”). Such is the case across the board with our mash examples.

We briefly observed that in the mash style, the meter is approached differently from the “drive,” or propulsive energy, of traditional bluegrass. Whereas the music of Bill Monroe sits on top of the beat, pushing like a train, the examples we explored in mash ground themselves firmly in the beat itself, almost closer to the back end of the beat. Such was the case in the Lonesome River Band’s “Money in the Bank,” or AKUS’ “I’ll Remember You Love in My Prayers,” where

the banjo was rooted in the pocket, rather than pushing forward, ahead of the beat. This small nuance of meter makes a big difference in the mash sound.

Rhythm seems to be the most prominent feature of mash's identity. Even melodic or harmonic happenings can be understood to serve one goal – the drive to the downbeat. With, “I’ll Remember You Love, In My Prayers,” the lack of note movement used by Barry Bales on the bass (fig. 13) presents us with this emphasis on the beat, while the mandolin steadily chops the offbeat and the guitar provides a conclusive run that unifies the band once again. We find the same true on “Money in the Bank,” where the mandolin uses triplets to disrupt the steady flow of rhythm with the bass sticking to the beats, with the guitar, again, playing its ‘g-run’ to tie the whole ensemble together on a downbeat (fig. 22). In “Devil in Disguise,” we observe that rather than playing along with the rhythmic hook that identifies the song (like the BGAB did), the bass moves steadily on the downbeats while the mandolin accompanies each beat with a chop (fig. 16). This brings about the idea of “bluegrass-ness,” the inclusion of traditional bluegrass stylings such as the g-run or Scruggs style banjo, which lend a certain authenticity in the approach of playing this music. Using the outlined examples from this research, we gain a sense of what might be called “bluegrass-mash-ness,” utilizing the same outline but including these defining stylings of the mash approach.

These examples of rhythmic disruption work in more ways than one. It is the disruption of the lead instrument against the rhythm section (“Money in the Bank”), the firm grounding of the bass and mandolin against a syncopated rhythmic hook (“Devil in Disguise”), the use of odd or half-measures which bring the listener to an early downbeat (“County Fool”) without ever breaking the steady flow of the rhythm section, or a simple guitar motif that creates suspense and unifies the ensemble on a downbeat (fig. 22). The examples explored, along with the ones listed

but uncharted, serve as more than enough evidence to see a common thread: all of these disruptions of rhythm, as different as they may be, lead to the downbeat, by creating anticipation for the downbeat or an early resolution. Both have the same effect on the listener: a satisfying alignment of rhythm, melody, and harmony, with the satisfaction met by a cohesive ensemble.

### *Melody and Harmony*

Rhythm isn't the only tension-builder in the mash arsenal. In the examples explored in this research, we have come to understand how things like modality, reharmonization, and chord structure affect the music. In "Oh Death," "Devil's Courthouse," and the many Mountain Heart recordings, we see how a 4 chord is used as a false resolution, taking the listener to an unexpected chord which intensely anticipates the return to the 1 chord on the following downbeat. Or how in "Mountain Man," the first 4 chord comes at a time when the listener expects the 1 chord, only to be fooled again when the 4 chord is reinstated in the following measure (fig. 40) In the chorus to follow, Mountain Heart extends the suspense of the 4 chord over four measures, where a normal bluegrass song might use a 1-5-1 turnaround (fig. 39). In this case, the 4 chord is stretched out with extreme suspense, building and building for the return of the 1 chord. Even in these cases where the focus is on the melodic structure of the song, these examples show us that the melodic motifs are contributing directly to the downbeat. In mash, even the melodic happenings are considerate of the meter, providing the downbeat with another way to be even more impactful.

We can also observe reharmonizations of bluegrass songs, much like Jason Davis' "Oh Death," which uses a modal chord structure of 1, b3, 4, 5-, and b6. Where the more-traditional version from Ralph Stanley uses two major chords and an acapella section, the Davis recording reharmonizes chords like b3 or b6 over lyrics where there normally would be a major 1 chord. In

doing so, the chord structure carries the listener through a suspenseful build of minor and major intervals that eventually re-grounds to a 1 chord on the downbeat (fig. 34). The Bluegrass Outlaws recording of the Flatt & Scruggs-pinned “Down the Road,” is another example of note, as it replaces each 6- chord with a b7, adding a 4 chord to follow (fig. 32).

In all of these examples, the melodic and harmonic motivations continue to boil down to the downbeat. In every instance – where the four chord is drawn out and extends the resolution to the following downbeat, or how the chord structure takes the listener for a suspenseful loop only to return them to a 1 chord on the downbeat – these characteristics of the song are first and foremost placing their focus on the meter, the rhythm, and the downbeat.

### *Dynamics and Intensity*

The dynamics of these pieces show us another difference in approach between older and modern (mash) versions. By ranking the intensity and flow of each instrument’s volume on a line graph (such as fig. 4), we can observe a very linear representation of how this music works on a dynamic level. Through this research, we can see this difference in approach – like how the banjo does or doesn’t lay out for a vocal section (fig 30), how the vocals take precedent over the rhythm section (fig 29), or how there are fewer competing frequencies to the vocal as there are in a mash version – noted by the support under the vocals in the traditional version, to the mash intensity behind the vocals. In the graphs of these modern recordings, like “I’ll Remember You Love, In My Prayers,” we see higher, flatter lines.

Specifically, in our examples, we observe a busier presence underneath the vocals than in non-mash recordings. In both “Devil in Disguise,” and “I’ll Remember You Love, In My Prayers,” the banjo is the primary backing instrument under the vocals (minus the rhythm section, of course). Remembering that the banjo, often regarded as a melodic instrument, actually



subdivides more than any other in the ensemble, this points us yet again to the importance of rhythm – the banjo never breaks its groove, its drive, its pocket, even underneath the vocal line.

These characteristics all contribute to an intensity – an intensity of rhythm, dynamics, tonal range – one that is sharp and aggressive, making it even more impactful to the listener. With a band like Mountain Heart, intensity was the name of the game, in every capacity. With the rhythmic intensity of the ‘Camp B-Chord’ Galax Jam, or Alison Krauss & Union Station’s famous *So Long, So Wrong*, we keep returning to our focus on the downbeat. With every note played, the intention remains – to create a suspenseful longing for the downbeat and carry out the most effective downbeat possible – over, and over, again.

### *To the Future*

This work was originally meant to be ethnographic. My intentions were to focus solely on Galax’s ‘Camp B-Chord,’ researching not only the music, but the social and cultural themes that surround the place. I began research in early 2020 at the Ole Smoky Moonshine Distillery in Gatlinburg, TN – a place where many of the Galax frequenters work as performers during the remaining 51 weeks of the year. My primary research – conducted as a soundscape in a spring 2020 Ethnomusicology in Appalachia course<sup>42</sup> – was a step into understanding the surrounding themes of this style. This is something that I intend to continue, though so many factors have changed.

Laney’s claim that “‘drive’ has gathered attention largely from male audiences and was observed as being most widely used in all-male jam sessions, typically surrounded by all male

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<sup>42</sup> Cassell, Thomas. 2020. “Mash at Gatlinburg’s Ole Smoky Moonshine Distillery,” Ethnomusicology in Appalachia Class. East Tennessee State University. <https://appalachiansoundposts.wordpress.com/2020/04/25/mash-at-gatlinburgs-ole-smoky-moonshine-distillery/>

audiences,”<sup>43</sup> should be explored more thoroughly in an academic context. Though presenting it was not the goal of this research, in my hours of listening to and observing mash, there are so many undertones of gender, race, class, etc., which should be considered.

As Bidgood’s 2017 student suggested, mash jams are elitist: “...jams like these are the ones that if you were to just walk up and break out your mandolin and start playing you would most definitely get glares and it would be made very clear that you are not welcome to ‘ruin’ their ‘perfect’ jam.”<sup>44</sup> This phenomena alone should be investigated, as is something I touched on in my research at Ole Smoky, striking on Amy Suzanne Wooley’s work with old-time jams at the Galax Fiddlers Convention:

Not all musicians are aware of jam etiquette, and I have never heard it discussed as such during a jam, but I have heard musicians discuss it in other settings, and I have also observed the effects of a musician breaching the code, ranging from quiet tolerance to gentle correction to downright ostracism.<sup>45</sup>

The same themes of ostracism and etiquette are present in the mash tent at Galax. Striking on these social issues surrounding mash, there is a clear observation of competition between the musicians. In reading Bill Hardwig’s work on masculinity and competition in the music of Bill

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<sup>43</sup> Laney, Jordan. *Recreating and Deconstructing the Shifting Politics of (Bluegrass) Festivals*. 2018, Dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

<sup>44</sup> The Class/Bidgood, *Super Hot Picker Syndrome*, 2017. <https://surveycb2017.wordpress.com/2017/09/25/super-hot-picker-syndrome/>

<sup>45</sup> Wooley, Amy. 2003. *Conjuring utopia: The Appalachian string band revival*. UCLA Doctoral dissertation. Chapter 1 (1-31) and Chapter 6 (209-242)

Monroe,<sup>46</sup> this is a clear pathway for future research regarding mash. Michelle Kisliuk's work on bluegrass jamming is another notable jumping point for a fuller study on mash jams.<sup>47</sup>

Though explored in this research, there is incredible potential for study regarding the intensity and progressivism of mash, mostly to do with the recordings and performances of Mountain Heart, with their non-traditional performance style, long jams, and use of keyboard. In a write up for the Bluegrass Situation, Justin Hiltner traces the history of mash's identity:

In the past, mash was generally relegated to the much more traditional-leaning spheres of bluegrass, but in recent years musicians and pickers from other circles such as old-time, Boston's chamber-influenced bluegrass scene, and the Pacific Northwest and Colorado's string-band vibes have championed mash as their own as well.<sup>48</sup>

Understanding this, one should ask how mash transitioned from a traditional identity to one adopted by those 8-minute instrumentals or keyboard solos of Mountain Heart, the chamber-esque string bands of Boston, or the progressive scene in Colorado. Surely one of the biggest results of the emergence of the mash style is how widely adopted the idea of being or sounding mash is. It seems to be an identity in some spheres, as much as a musical style. Perhaps it all boils down to Terry Baucom's statement that 'drive' is, "a state of mind?"<sup>49</sup> Surely, this is ample evidence for continued research on the topic.

Lastly, my hope is that the research brought forward by this thesis, though only formative and brief in its definition of mash, will be of assistance to those who research the topic in the

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<sup>46</sup> Hardwig, Bill. 2001. "Cocks, Balls, Bats, and Banjos: Masculinity and Competition in the Bluegrass Music of Bill Monroe." Vol. 39, no. 4. 35-48.

<sup>47</sup> Kisliuk, Michelle. "A Special Kind of Courtesy:" Action at a Bluegrass Festival Jam Session. TDR, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Autumn 1988). Cambridge University Press.

<sup>48</sup> Hiltner, Justin. "Hard Drive, 'Missouri Road.'" The Bluegrass Situation, August 6, 2019. <https://thebluegrasssituation.com/read/hard-drive-missouri-road/>

<sup>49</sup> Laney, Jordan. *Recreating and Deconstructing the Shifting Politics of (Bluegrass) Festivals*. 2018, Dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

future. Only by first understanding the musical phenomena of mash can we speak with more specificity about the themes and identities that might be projected or contested with it. Just as mash continues to exist in musical spheres, those researching or interested in understanding it, I hope, will be following closely behind.

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