

Band returns to Pickin' after 10 years

By Kayla Cornett

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High Plains Tradition may seem new to the concert lineup for Pickin' on the Plains this year, but it is no stranger to the festival.

Kenny Pabst, acoustic bass player, said the band attended the festival 12 years ago and was one of the initial bands to play the festival when it began.

The bluegrass band is based in Denver. According to the band's website, www.highplainstradition.com, they "style their music after the forefathers of bluegrass, with a little Rocky Mountain flair."

The band has performed from the Pacific Coast through the Rocky Mountains to the High Plains and all the way to Kentucky.

The members performed at Pickin' on the Plains in either 1996 or 1997 and played the festival off and on for the next four or five years.

The group has released five CDs since 1987, although the first one is now out of print. Their most recent album is "Milestones," a compilation of High Plains' best hits from 1987 to 2009.

Pabst said this is a special year for the group.

"This year is our 25th anniversary together," he said.

"Doug Elrick's fine lead singing and songwriting are at the core of the band's performance," the website says. "Our shows are filled with original material as well as the best of the music of the masters, including Jimmy Martin, Ralph Stanley, Bill Monroe, Country Gazette and the Country Gentlemen favorites."

The website also lists a biography for each of its members.

Elrick is hailed as one of the top bluegrass songwriters in the Rocky Mountain region, it says. Singing in the traditional style brought him recognition as the "Songwriter of the Year" and "Male Vocalist of the Year" at the Rocky Mountain Bluegrass Awards shows. Elrick, who claims to be one of the world's foremost gravy connoisseurs,



High Plains Tradition, a bluegrass band based in Denver, played at the Pueblo Bluegrass on the River Festival last June in Colorado. The band will be performing at the Pickin' on the Plains festival this weekend for the first time in almost 10 years.

is a Denver firefighter and has a Dalmatian.

Pabst provides the heartbeat for High Plains Tradition with "rock-solid" acoustic bass. Pabst's abilities earned him the title "Bass Player of the Year" at the Rocky Mountain show. He is the band's self-appointed driver; the website says his nickname "Nana" derives from his driving slowly for great distances in the left lane with a blinker on.

Bobbie Vickery, the band claims, is one of

the finest fiddle players in the central U.S. He brought a whole new dimension to the band with his innovative fiddling, and he's a "fabulous" singer. Vickery is known as the "Jam King" because he will stay up until the last picker drops at most festivals.

Mark Leslie, on banjo, brings a true bluegrass background to the group, incorporating solos and stellar back-up work into his playing. He also works for the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Steve Gilmore, a collector of "bad" music, is a driving force of the High Plains sound with his guitar and his vocal harmonies and leads. He also plays with the Nebraska-based band Turtle Creek. He brings vast musical knowledge and a tremendous bluegrass background to the band. When not playing bluegrass, you'll find Gilmore fishing on the many lakes, rivers and streams of Wyoming.

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