

Nationally-known Tennessee band brings rich music to Colby another year

By Christina Beringer

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colby.society@nwkansas.com

Delivering powerful bluegrass vocals, beautifully blended harmonies and tight pickin’, Cody Shuler and Pine Mountain Railroad is one of three headliners at the 17th Annual Pickin’ on the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival in Colby this year.

Over the course of 10 years, the bluegrass-gospel band from Knoxville, Tenn., has gained much national attention, especially after coming off a No. 1 song on XM Radio’s Bluegrass Junction in February.

The band features the main vocalist and mandolin player, 25-year-old Cody Shuler, vocalist Bill McBee on bass, vocalist and fiddle player Matt (Scooter) Flake, guitar player and singer Jerry Cole and banjo player Dale Thomas.

Among its many awards and recognitions, the band recently had its first No. 1 single and first Top 5 bluegrass album. The group is a frequent guest at festivals and concerts in the U.S. and abroad.

In a 2007 highlight album review, *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine said, “this band really has everything you could ask for ... but their vocals are truly something rare.”

Through the leadership of Shuler, they’ve been known to perfect the “high-lonesome” sound and place it in a contemporary setting.

The group has multiple International Bluegrass Music Association award nominations, have won the Singing News and Front Porch Fellowship’s Bluegrass-Gospel Song of the Year award, have performed four times at the international association’s Annual Fan Fest and was selected by California Bluegrass Association as the Emerging Artist of the Year 2004.

The band has released three independent albums and three label-sponsored albums, including their most recent, a self-titled album available from Steeltown Records.

Shuler grew up in a small town in North Carolina, in a region rich in musical history. He learned about harmony singing from his father and received his first mandolin when he was 12.

He joined the band in 2004, singing tenor and playing the mandolin. Then, in 2006, he took over ownership and management.

Flake also joined the band in 2004. At age 9, he began playing the mandolin and soon started fiddle lessons, too. His talents on the mandolin, fiddle and guitar led him to win state contests in Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee and Indiana.

Instilled in a heritage of bluegrass music, Jerry Cole of Sharps Chapel, Tenn., contributes lead, tenor and baritone vocals, and shares his bass and rhythm guitar skills.

Seth Taylor is the youngest of five children in his family from North Carolina, and the



Cody Shuler and Pine Mountain Railroad has been perfecting its music for many years and earning national recognition. The band has been coming to Pickin’ on the Plains for several years now as one of the headline acts.

only one who plays music. At 14, his talents won him the Doc Watson Guitar Contest at Merlefest in 2008. Then in 2009, he won the Merle Watson Banjo Championship. He began playing guitar at the age of 3 and banjo at 8.

The group performs traditional and gospel classics. Their depth, driving rhythms and songs of devotion can be heard from about 9 to 10 p.m. on Friday. They will perform twice on Saturday, from about 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. and from about 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Join us at the Festival!

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