

Monroe Crossing

www.monroecrossing.com

FULL LENGTH BIO (560 words)

Named in honor of Bill Monroe, “The Father of Bluegrass Music,” **Monroe Crossing** dazzles audiences with an electrifying blend of classic bluegrass, bluegrass gospel, and heartfelt originals. Their airtight harmonies, razor sharp arrangements, and on-stage rapport make them audience favorites across the United States and Canada. Based in Minnesota, the group plays an average of 125 shows a year at major venues and festivals, frequently for non-bluegrass audiences — and people often comment that they’d never really liked bluegrass music until they attended a Monroe Crossing concert!

The band’s creative arrangements of classic bluegrass songs by Bill Monroe, the Stanley Brothers, Flatt & Scruggs, the Osborne Brothers, and Jimmy Martin honor the bluegrass tradition while keeping it fresh. Monroe Crossing also “crosses” over to new songs and styles as well, as evidenced by their original treatments of songs like the doo-wop hit “My Girl” and “At Last” by Etta James. Their own songwriting talents are showcased in exciting new material by lead singers Lisa Fuglie and Art Blackburn.

Monroe Crossing’s style of bluegrass and gospel music appeals to all ages and all walks of life. In recent years, bluegrass has experienced a major resurgence, and Monroe Crossing is at the forefront of this new wave of popularity. Working close around a single microphone in a style reminiscent of old-time radio shows, their world-class musicianship and choreography wins over audiences wherever they go. One of the group’s visual trademarks are the 1940’s vintage ties worn by the four men in honor of the decade in which bluegrass music — a uniquely American musical genre — was born.

Among their many honors, Monroe Crossing was selected to showcase at the 2007 International Bluegrass Music Association Convention and they were inducted into the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame in 2007. The only bluegrass band ever nominated as “Artist of the Year” by the Minnesota Music Academy (MMA), Monroe Crossing won the 2003 MMA “Bluegrass Album of the Year” award. The group also took home four awards — for Female Vocalist, Guitar, Mandolin, and Banjo — at the Minnesota Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Association’s 25th Anniversary Awards Banquet.

The quintet tours constantly across North America, with events coming up as far afield as Ontario, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Montana and closer to home in Iowa, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Minnesota. They are frequently featured at top venues including the legendary Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, Arkansas; Branson’s Silver Dollar City; Wisconsin’s Big Top Chautauqua; and the annual Bell Buckle Bluegrass Cruise in the Caribbean.

The band has released nine CDs of their own music, most recently “Heartache and Stone,” described as “fresh and creative... an enjoyable project loaded with satisfaction” by the *Louisville Music News*. Monroe Crossing is also featured on the world premiere recording of *The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass*, a chamber/choral work that was specifically composed for Monroe Crossing and VocalEssence, a Minnesota-based professional choral group led by Philip Brunelle. Choirs from Texas, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Iowa, California, Indiana, and Washington, DC have brought Monroe Crossing in to perform *The World Beloved*.

Monroe Crossing is Mark Anderson on bass, Art Blackburn on guitar, Benji Flaming on banjo, Lisa Fuglie on fiddle, and Matt Thompson on mandolin. Although each member comes from a unique musical background, they combine their talents to entertain with a style that leaves audiences asking for more and wins new fans for bluegrass music everywhere they go.