

Jim Rooney DAA Presentation by Art Menius

IBMA World of Bluegrass Awards Luncheon September 29, 2016

Jim Rooney did me a big favor, writing. *In It for the Long Run: A Musical Memoir*, so that I could do this presentation. That's being a friend.

Jim is a man who has done it all while enjoying being in it for the long run in many relationships. Think of Bill Keith, Eric von Schmidt, or his eventual spouse Carol Langstaff.

At Owensboro I remember Jim, tall and commanding, as his left hand powered the rhythm on a kick ass rendition of Six White Horses." Not that he limited himself to Monroe covers. His interpretation of the Stones' "No Expectations" became a go to song.

His love for bluegrass began back in Massachusetts in the 1950s when he heard on a band called the Confederate Mountaineers at radio station WCOP. Inspired by the Lillys, Tex, and Stovepipe, it wasn't too long before Jim was on WCOP himself and hooked on performing.

At Amherst he met Bill Keith who would be a friend and musical partner for much of the next 60 years. In 1962, they recorded "Devils Dream" and "Sailor's Hornpipe," the first documentation of Bill's chromatic style shortly before he joined the Blue Grass Boys. The tracks appeared on their Living on the Mountain LP. Their many collaborations would include the revolutionary Blue Velvet Band whose music spread worldwide person to person Mud Acres, and concerts and tours with many different aggregations and combinations.

Jim enjoyed sharing a heritage award from the Boston Bluegrass Union and brought us to tears at Bill's induction into the Hall of Fame.

Like I said, Jim Rooney has done it all.

As a presenter, he managed the legendary Club 47 in Cambridge, bringing folks like Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, Jim & Jesse, and Frank Wakefield & Red Allen to northern, urban audiences, while giving the Charles River Valley Boys a place to play for a listening audience. He helped program the Newport Folk Festival, while starting the event which evolved into New Orleans' Jazz & Heritage Festival.

He grew into a strong songwriter, but long after he had established himself as a prose writer.

*Bossman* was the first biography of both Bill Monroe and Muddy Waters. *Baby Let Me Follow You Down* with von Schmidt was the first history of the Boston folk scene.

Did I tell y'all that Jim Rooney has done it all.

Jim fell into producing backwards and sideways, then became a studio engineer when encouraged by his mentor Cowboy Jack Clements. As a producer or engineer he has worked on projects with John Prine, Hal Ketchum, Peter Rowan, Iris Dement, The Nashville Jug Band, Ian Tyson, Don Edwards, Carl Perkins, and Nanci Griffith.

As a partner in Forerunner he helped build a successful, artist first publishing house with writers like Pat Alger, Shawn Camp, Barry & Holly Tashian, and Tim O'Brien turning out numerous hits topping the country charts.

I need to close and get Jim on a plane to Nashville to play at the Station Inn tonight Rooney's Irregulars, who have included Shawn, Richard Bailey, Stuart Duncan, and Gene Libbea.

Jim has a saying, "If you don't live life, it will live you." With his love of music and being of service to others, Jim Rooney has done just that. I am moved to add to his Americana Music Association Lifetime Achievement Award, the IBMA Distinguished Achievement Award.