



J Jams Entertainment, LLC Talent Agency
Artist Management, Booking Agent

The Banjocats



Overview

Instrumental and Vocal Ensemble

Genre: Bluegrass

Location: White Bluff, Tennessee

Website: <https://www.banjocats.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/michaelandjennifermclain>

Booking Inquiries: michael@jjamsentertainment.com

Promotional Video: <https://youtu.be/9BaAbs0QgkU>

Husband and wife, Michael and Jennifer McLain, both grew up touring and performing in musical families, are both banjo players, and have been playing together since their first date. Together they have performed in 27 states from New York to California, Canada, and have appeared on the Grand Ole Opry, Kentucky Educational Television, Iowa Public Television, The Nashville Network, Country Music Television, RFD Television, National Public Radio, and the PBS show, Song of the Mountains, which airs on over 180 Public Television outlets across the United States.

Growing up, Michael performed with his family, the McLain Family Band all across the United States in 49 states, Mexico, Canada, Japan and Brazil, including concerts at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Chicago's Orchestra Hall and appearances on NBC's Today Show and the CBS Morning News. For several years he toured and recorded as part of the Claire Lynch Band as well as with Dale Ann Bradley. He was featured on a CD with Claire Lynch that was nominated for a Grammy. For 13 years, he taught guitar, banjo, mandolin and bluegrass ensemble in the School of Music at Belmont University in Nashville, TN.

In addition to recording for Big Pick Productions, Jennifer was an artist on Pinecastle Records and has recorded as a harmony vocalist for other major labels and demos in Nashville. She has performed on the Grand Ole Opry, was featured on PBS-TV's Song of the Mountains, Kentucky Educational Television, Iowa Public Television, and at Busch Gardens - Williamsburg (banjo and saxophone!). She graduated from Elon University with a degree in music performance. She is a member of the Christ Church choir in Nashville, TN.



Husband and wife duos aren't common in popular music as a whole, let alone Americana or bluegrass, but don't let that sway you. Hit the Road and Go isn't a touchy-feely collection of a dozen love songs but, instead, a mini-compendium of the genre's best tunes coupled with some lesser known songs, a couple of instrumentals, and one original track. Its chief distinguishing feature is virtuosity. Given their long history as players and composers, it is no shock they have an astute enough ear to identify other collaborators capable of helping them fulfill their musical vision. Dan Kelly, a superb fiddle player with an impeccable pedigree including stints with everyone from Roy Acuff to Faith Hill, joins them on a number of cuts.

The McLains are top notch players themselves, but never self-indulgent. Instead, their facility fills the dozen songs on their debut with melodic excellence and remarkable energy. Vocalist Jennifer McLain handles the lion's share of vocal duties and her voice does a fantastic and deeply felt job of exploring a variety of emotions and stances throughout this release. The long experience both husband and wife have in the music industry further ensures that this is an immaculately produced outing that presents their overall talents in most compelling fashion possible.

Hit the Road and Go: [Live Video](#)

"This Old Heart (Is Gonna Rise Again)" sends the album shooting off into the atmosphere. There's, naturally, a great deal of timing and years of playing that goes into making music this challenging sound so effortless, but the McLains have mastered their art. There's bright, optimistic melodies woven throughout this song and the mix of instruments work in perfect sympathy with one another. "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind?" is a little closer to traditional country balladry than what you might expect, but it retains enough of the duo's guiding musical spirit to sound consistent alongside the other tracks. McLain turns in a lovingly wrought vocal



on this song. "Jesus, Hold My Hand" is a classic of the genre, performed by innumerable recording artists, but the McLain own this with their unique blend of delicacy and virtuosity. The genuine feeling underlying this song clearly emerges. There's a great universality in the song "Up This Hill and Down" that will appeal to a wide audience without ever cheaply coming by its effects. Jennifer McLain's singing is perfectly tailored for the lyric and she gently embodies the weariness of the lyric. It's a realistic narrative and well written. The title song is a Johnny Cash penned number that, like the duo's earlier stab at covering Carl Perkins, contains whiffs of the original spirit while still sounding very much part and parcel of the duo's creative vision. The added, understated bite the song gains from suggesting some qualities of its author while still displaying all the characteristics common to the duo's musical sound makes it quite a unique number. "Boom Town" is a thoughtful, singer/songwriter slanted track with strong details and a solid, well-constructed musical arrangement. Hit the Road and Go ends with another traditional spiritual from the gospel tradition, "I'm Ready To Go Home". It has all of the complicated, but unquestionably sincere joy implied by the title and lyric and ends the album on a decidedly upbeat note.

This is a classy, top shelf professional release from two supreme stylists in the genre.

Gashouse Radio.com Michael Saulman - December 13, 2016

<http://gashouseradio.com/2016/12/michael-jennifer-mclain-hit-road-go/>

A new project from bluegrass power couple showcases their talented 4-piece Bluegrass Band on newest project. Known for various appearances in shows for artists as diverse as Vince Gill, Claire Lynch Band, Roy Acuff, Faith Hill, and Alan Jackson along with appearances at venues like Arrington Vineyards, Grand Ole Opry and NPR, to name a few, the diverse talent in Michael and Jennifer McLain's band helps the duo craft the simply fantastic Hit the Road and Go album.

"This Old Heart (Is Gonna Rise Again)" gets Hit the Road and Go going and sets the pace for the twelve spirited songs of roots-y love songs and spirited Gospel and instrumental numbers. Jennifer McLain has a beautiful voice and showcases it on the heartbreaking ballad "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind," and Gospel standard "Jesus, Hold My Hand." "Up The Hill And Down" is spirited bluesy 'grass and the instrumental "McIntosh" is just downright moving in its display of the band's prolific talent. The title tune, "Hit the Road and Go" showcases even more of the band's talent with Bluegrass themes in the lyrics and their expert musicality with the melody.

Busy Bee Café: [Live Video](#)

Hit the Road and Go may just be the perfect Bluegrass album. It blends everything a listener loves about the genre. It's both expanding on the roots defined by Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys decades ago and also showcases where Bluegrass can go in the 21st century.

The long tradition of bluegrass, one of the most popular sub-genres of an overarching Americana musical school, remains alive and well on albums like this. This and classic country formed one of the earliest bonds between the husband and wife duo of Michael and Jennifer McLain, but they came by the bond honestly. Both of them were raised in musical families and Michael has been playing for public audiences since his youth as a member of The McLain Family Band. Jennifer, on the other hands, has shared stages and recording time with some of the biggest names in country and bluegrass music. She's garnered reams of praise as one of the most affecting vocalists working today and her voice dominates the twelve songs on the husband and wife's first full length release under their own banner, Hit The Road and Go. The song selection incorporates fine tracks from lesser known songwriters, a couple of classical spirituals in the bluegrass world, an original composition from Jennifer McLain, and a surprising cover song.

Matt Bjorke - December 9, 2016

<http://roughstock.com/news/2016/12/41185-album-review-michael-jennifer-mclain-hit-the-road-and-go>



The album's opener "This Old Heart (Is Gonna Rise Again)" has the sort of feistiness listeners will expect from a song about being disappointed in love and marshals those emotions to a lively tempo and kinetic instrumental exchanges between the fiddle, acoustic guitar, and mandolin. Banjo plays a crucial role on many album tracks, but its influence here is muted some. The dominant instrument on this track is violin and it streaks over the top with colorful flair. The ballad "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind?" brings out the guitar more and the fluent melodic runs unfurling from the six string, but it's never overcooked. Instead, the artistry they are capable of manifesting reaches one of its zeniths with this song. Hearing a bluegrass duo who's willing to tackle songs from the late great Carl Perkins is a little surprising, but the more surprising fact is that the McLain's cover of "Restless" is so good it makes you forget, a little at least, that Perkins' version even exists. Conjuring that rockabilly spirit in this setting is no small feat, but they do it with considerable panache and a lively sense of playfulness. "Jesus, Hold My Hand" is a familiar song to anyone who's a devoted fan of the genre and has seen numerous covers over the years in a variety of styles. It sounds a little safer than it should here, but it's wholly consistent with the musical mood dominating much of the album. Jennifer McLain's voice does a particularly good job of conveying her longing for the restorative influence of God in her life.

The title song is a cover of a lesser known Johnny Cash song and it's quite possible to still hear the rockabilly/country roots peering throughout their solidly bluegrass treatment. The duo has a wont for relying a little more heavily on acoustic guitar

than most bluegrass albums do and this song is no different, but rather than pulling them away from their roots, the added influence of acoustic guitar merely helps to distinguish their material from the typical. One of the album's two instrumentals, "Lady of Spain" is the album's penultimate song and a jazzy bluegrass track that rushes past the listener without sacrificing any of its style or nuance. The last track is particularly affecting – "I'm Ready to Go Home" brings Hit the Road and Go to a very considered and beautiful conclusion.

Sledd Ridin': [Live Video](#)

Official Website - [Click Here](#)

The dozen songs on this album reaffirm the traditional values of this music while providing listeners with a revealing glimpse of the performers behind the songs. It's an all-around winner.

Hit the Road and Go, the debut release from the duo of Michael and Jennifer McLain, features a dozen songs pulled from some of the usual suspects, but also some instrumentals, surprises, and lesser known tracks from this style in traditional Americana. Decades of experience playing and teaching music at a variety of levels ensures that Hit the Road and Go is a completely professional and thoroughly artistic experience capable of entertaining longtime fans of the genre and newcomers alike. Casual listeners will, also, find something here for them. Hit the Road and Go is spotlessly produced and utterly accessible to its intended audience from the first note to last. It also varies the tempo enough to keep listener's on the edge of their seats and contains an abundance of instrumental fireworks for those interested in bluegrass music's traditional interplay.

Scott Wigley - December 15, 2016

<http://www.indiemusicreviews.net/michael-and-jennifer-mclain-hit-the-road-and-go/>

This Old Heart (Is Gonna Rise Again)" is textbook bluegrass, page one, and delivered with the gusto that defines the best the genre has to offer. The various string instruments weave together without a single discernible bum note and, tied together, achieves a greater, much larger sound than they are capable of otherwise generating. "Restless" finds them branching off into slightly surprising territory with a Carl Perkins cover, but they stake out new territory by inventively remodeling Perkins' rockabilly style for their purposes. McLain manifests enough bite in her voice to make the lyrical content plausible and the added backing vocals, like elsewhere on Hit the Road and Go, are expertly handled without ever announcing themselves too loudly. Their cover of Albert E. Brumley's "Jesus, Hold My Hand" is the latest revamping of this classic gospel track. It isn't the first bluegrass version, by far, but the McLains put their stamp on the song thanks to the generous guitar work and their penchant for sweetening things with excellent vocal melodies and harmony work.

Michael McLain takes his sole lead vocal on the album with the cover of Doc and Merle Watson's "Southbound". His voice has just enough muscularity and grit to make this convincing vocally, but instrumentally is where it shines brightest. One of the album's two instrumentals, "Mcintosh" has propulsive forward movement and a lot of energy while still retaining some melodic delicacy. They cover Johnny Cash for the album's title song and it remains a recognizable Cash track throughout its entirety, but the McLains do a great job of infusing this with a bluegrass character and their own personalities. "Boom Town" is the album's sole original, co-written by Jennifer McLain, and it's a glimpse of our modern world set to traditional musical structures. It succeeds because it's such a successful blend. The McLains end Hit the Road and Go with the classic spiritual "I'm Ready To Go Home". It's one of the album's best performances thanks to the complete understanding of the song's emotional weather that they demonstrate and they really do an exceptional job of capturing what the feeling of inviting death with the faith in a better afterlife must look and sound like. It's a fitting conclusion for a release steeped in tradition, but there's enough of the McLains here and elsewhere through Hit the Road and Go to remind us that this isn't a tribute album, but rather bluegrass is the vehicle through which the McLains express themselves.



Up This Hill and Down: [Live Video](#)



Michael and Jennifer McLain bonded, in a significant way, because of music. The husband and wife team have played music together since their first date and both hail from musical families who toured as performers across North America. The McLains are highly skilled banjo players and their debut full length studio recording, *Hit the Road and Go*, brings these two talented musicians under the same banner for their first extended studio project working together, but they both have fantastic individual reputations within the music community. Jennifer has earned widespread recognition as a talented singer who has lent her talents to major and indie label recordings as well as sharing stages with performers like Vince Gill and Lionel Cartwright. Michael's traveling career as a musician began early in life and he's graced stages from Japan to Brazil as a member of the McLain Family Band. He spent thirteen years as a music instructor employed at Belmont University. They surround themselves with top flight collaborators like fiddle player extraordinaire Dan Kelly and bassist Kori Caswell and this twelve song debut brings together the sum of these experiences and will appeal to bluegrass fans and novice listeners alike.

Lance Wright - December 13, 2016

<http://www.bandblurb.com/michael-jennifer-mclain-hit-the-road-and-go/>

The album's first song, "This Old Heart (Is Gonna Rise Again)", has a breezy mood and tasteful, underplay vocal harmonies adding much to the airy emotional tenor. The acoustic guitar work on this song is particularly sharp and really brings a lot of flair to the song's melodic value, but the fiddle work isn't too shabby either. The fiddle takes on an even more prominent role with the second track "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind?", but there's new musical elements introduced that double down on the song's bluesy feel. The dobro never takes over a big role in the mix, but it makes for excellent color in this languid, uncluttered ballad. "Jesus, Hold My Hand" is a gospel classic courtesy of writer Alfred E. Brumley that gets a smooth, loving rendition from the McLains and their collaborators. The acoustic guitar work, once again, is sparkling and has great interplay with the other string instruments, particularly the mandolin. Doc Watson's "Southbound" pulls Michael McLain in front of the microphone for a rare solo vocal, but Jennifer McLain contributes some key supporting vocals at scattered points throughout the track. "Mcintosh" is a crackling instrumental with great exchanges between the various string instruments they bring to bear. The title track covers a relatively obscure Johnny Cash song, but the McLains lace it with so much of the bluegrass and blues influences that they own the song as their own. Jennifer McLain does quite an exemplary job with her vocals. McLain co-wrote the track "Boom Town" and this bit of thoughtful social commentary, sans any overt commentary, likely rates as one of the album's underrated gems. Don't overlook it - the lyrical content is sharply observed and well-tailored for the music. The finale, "I'm Ready To Go Home", could be rather dreary in some hands, but the McLains give it a rather celebratory, joyful treatment that finds no sadness in leaving this world.

This is a purist's album, in some ways, when you consider the song selection, but the McLains consistently present this material in the most accessible light. *Hit the Road and Go* has a lot to offer traditionalists, but there's something here for anyone who loves good, melodic music played by a band.

Jason Hillenburg - December 13, 2016

<http://skopemag.com/2016/12/13/michael-jennifer-mclain-hit-the-road-and-go>

Gracie: [Live Video](#):

Michael and Jennifer McLain & The Banjocats

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Thank you for viewing and have a Banjo Picking Day!

