

More about Ragged Union:

They might call themselves Ragged Union, but there's nothing ragged about the bluegrass produced by this Boulder, Colorado-based band of accomplished players. Chief singer, songwriter, and guitarist, Geoff Union is joined by National Champion mandolinist/vocalist Jordan Ramsey, award-winning banjo player Chris Elliott, and fiddler extraordinaire Justin Hoffenberg. Together, they form dynamic and cohesive unit that puts on memorable and exciting shows for dancers, listeners, traditionalists and progressives alike.

Like many bands these days, there's something borrowed and something new about Ragged Union's approach to bluegrass music. There are recognizable melodic and (country) lyric themes alongside non-traditional ones; breakneck grassy duet numbers, and slower 'country-funk' tunes; traditional arrangements alongside composed ideas and the occasional 'jam' section. As **Dry Branch Fire Squad's Ron Thomason** put it, the "tunes are "traditional" in their approach and in RU's presentation, but the subject matter of the lyrics is wholly modern... and that's entirely different than how bluegrass music has been "updated" to date. It is beyond appropriate; it is fresh and innovative while preserving through their instruments the things one likes about bluegrass music."

'One of the coolest bluegrass bands in Colorado' (Durango Telegraph), Ragged Union has performed their exciting and memorable 'update' of bluegrass music across the country since late 2013, when the band came together after Geoff and his wife (and until recently co-lead singer) Christina moved to Colorado from Austin, Texas. The personnel eventually coalesced around the current lineup, and the band quickly became a sought-after act in the Colorado scene. Performances at renowned national events such as NorthWest String Summit, John Hartford Memorial Festival, and IBMA's Wide Open Bluegrass have followed. From the Pacific Northwest, to Colorado, the MidWest, the Southeast, and all the way over in the UK, the band continues to earn fans' respect and admiration for their original songs and quality shows.

Their latest album, ***Time Captain***, released in October 2017, represents an evolution in the songwriting and sound of the band. The album reached #8 on the RMR Americana and Country album chart, and was one of KBCS Seattle's 'Best of 2017' albums. While 2015's ***Hard Row to Hoe*** stayed closer to the traditional boundaries of bluegrass, their new effort expands things in several directions. There are fast duets, such as the original, 'If You Don't Love Me', and cowboy classic, 'Diamond Joe', alongside progressive pieces like the Geoff Union/ Jim Harris co-write, "Rented Room", which kicks off with a guitar-and-vocal build up, and moves between bluegrass time and non-bluegrass rhythms throughout. 'Leaving Town', is a traditional waltz, while Christina's "Half Lit Parking Lot' freight-trains along with a solid minor-keyed drive until it hits a ¾ time bridge, where the band gets to stretch out in the jam space at those hippy club gigs (!). 'Time Captain", another Geoff creation, utilizes the half-time mandolin chop for that 'country-funk' feel, while 'Leaving Louisville' and 'Moonshine Boogie' have rootsy melodies that seem immediately familiar. All in all the CD is twelve tracks, tied together by the underlying bluegrass feel and traditional instrumentation.

'Hard-driving modern bluegrass at its absolute best' (Maggie Loughran/ MEWL Music, Leeds, UK), their shows are "A Scorching live Proposition" (Kevin Bourke, R2

Magazine). As Lloyd Brown from Fatea Magazine put it, Ragged Union “get it oh so right”, and are, “impossible to resist”.

The players:

Geoff Union (guitar, vocal; Fayetteville, North Carolina) has been performing in bluegrass bands for almost 20 years - most notably with the nationally touring Two High String Band (2002-2009). THSB played major festivals in the US including Rocky Grass, Merle Fest, Spring Fest, concert series and clubs all across the country. Union is a powerful flat pick guitarist and singer, and writes in an "outsider" lyric style, eschewing standard country themes of love and loss for darker material including moonshiner, obscure history (mostly related to moonshine) and desperate fiction.

Jordan Ramsey (mandolin, vocal; Knoxville, Tennessee) 2016 Walnut Valley National Mandolin Champion and 2008 Rockygrass Mandolin Champion. He studied under Raymond McLain and Jack Tottle at East Tennessee State University, and has shared the stage with the likes of David Grisman, Porter Wagoner, Ralph Stanley, Curley Seckler, Tater Tate, Alison Krauss, Dan Tyminski, Hunter Berry, and Adam Steffey.

Chris Elliott (banjo; Huffman, Texas) studied banjo at South Plains Community College with Alan Munde. He won the Rocky Grass banjo competition in 2007, and is well known for his work in the popular band Spring Creek Bluegrass, and more recently the Blue Canyon Boys. He has appeared on many national stages with those bands, and also teaches.

Justin Hoffenberg (fiddle, Boulder, Colorado) has been a mainstay of the Colorado bluegrass scene for a decade. He fronts his own band (currently on hiatus), Long Road Home, which had featured Pete Wernick on banjo before his return to Hot Rize. Justin is also a resident instructor at the Rocky Grass Academy.