

LIVING: THE BAND, NOT THE NATURAL DISASTER

# The 1937 Flood

After more than 25 years together, local jugband releasing first recordings

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**HUNTINGTON** — These days, you put a couple of guys, a couple of computerized instruments and a digital recorder in a garage, shake and rattle a bit and out rolls a new band and new CD ready to shop around for a record deal.

But the local jug and string band blues group, The 1937 Flood, has not been in a recording rush. The band — not the natural disaster — has been aging its music in time's oak barrel like a fine bourbon.

For more than 25 years, the Flood's solid core of fiddler Joe Dobbs, guitarist Charlie Bowen and auto-harpist Dave Peyton has been making musical magic live on the spot and just about anywhere and everywhere in the region.

Until now, though, the group somehow never has made music together with the tape rolling.

After a quarter of century, the band is making up for lost time — and being true to its name — and is releasing a tune deluge of near biblical or at least local newspaper proportions.

The 1937 Flood is releasing not one but two recordings: a self-titled CD and a second CD, "Fiddle in the Flood," which is a CD of Dobbs' fiddling backed by the latest incarnation of the nearly legendary band.

### Summer flood

Glenville resident Buddy Griffin, who plays fiddle with Grand Ole Opry legends Jim and Jesse (McReynolds), recorded the band during two rather painless sessions in Charleston this summer.

Bowen said that although he and Dobbs had recorded before separately, they liked each other too much to confine their weekly homemade jam band into the often surly

### A flood of jugband blues

Hear 'em, read about 'em, talk to 'em, see 'em (if you aren't too scared) and for heaven's sake, give these boys a job. Do all that and more at the Web site <http://www.1937flood.com>.

The band will have a Huntington CD release party at 7 p.m. Friday at the Huntington High Renaissance Center (the old Huntington High School).

Here's a little bit about the history of the almost legendary local jugband. "I met Dave (Peyton) and Charlie (Bowen) at the Dogwood Festival a hundred years ago," Joe Dobbs said.

Bowen said he'll never forget the first day he and Peyton played with Dobbs, who has an incredible four new CDs coming out soon: the two Flood CDs and two re-issue fiddle CDs including "Fiddle, Friends and Favorites" with Buddy Griffin and "Joe Dobbs Plays Old-Time Fiddle Tunes."

"I still remember that day at Dave's house," Bowen said.

"Joe started playing his fiddle and we said, 'Man, it's a whole new day.' The three of us played from then on. We have probably had several dozen people in the band at one time or another, and we would go into hibernation for a while, but we were always coming back to the Flood."

studios where the tick of time's expensive clock can put a licking on even the tightest band.

"It was never something that sounded like fun to us," said Bowen of Huntington, who makes his living doing a radio show and writing computer books and most recently novels about the Delta Queen steamship.

Please see **FLOOD/3D**



The 1937 Flood fiddle player Joe Dobbs can be seen through a window during a recent performance at the YWCA in Huntington. Randy Snyder/The Herald-Dispatch



The 1937 Flood plays during a recent concert at the YWCA. The group is comprised of harmonica player Sam St. Clair, left, fiddle player Joe Dobbs, Dave Peyton on autoharp and Charlie Bowen on guitar. Randy Snyder/The Herald-Dispatch

Women concerned a...



# Flood

Continued from 1D

"I had recorded with a band called Front Royal, and that was such a miserable experience. You take people who you really like and by the end of the evening you never want to see them again," Bowen said.

"I didn't want to do that with these guys."

These guys, the core of Dobbs, Bowen and Peyton, have been joined by a new flood of fellow kindred musical spirits: doghouse bassist Doug Chaffin of Ashland and Huntingtonians Sam St. Clair on harmonica and former West Virginia legislator Chuck Romine playing tenor banjo.

As Romine, the Dixieland band man, found out, it's easier to join the Flood than it is to leave. Romine, laughing, said he joined by osmosis.

"After about four months of coming to jam sessions, (Bowen) said, 'By the way, we got some new business cards for the band,' and my picture was on it," Romine said. "I said, 'Nobody ever asked me to be in the band.' Charlie said, 'Well, this band is awful easy to get into, and it's awful hard to get out of.'"

Recording has done something good for the band, Bowen said.

"I think what it has done is solidify us as a musical group," Bowen said. "When you play live, no matter how much you are trying to hear everybody, the sound of your instrument and your voice is right there. You are not hearing it the way it sounds to someone else. I think the band has gotten better at listening."

### Homemade string band jam

Built around Wednesday night living room jam sessions (usually at Bowen's house), the Flood has honed its music, an ever-morphing blend of steamboat jazz, Appalachian and

Scotch Irish fiddle tunes, early folk blues and jump blues, modern-day folk revivalist material (John Prine, Gordon Lightfoot and Dylan) and swing.

Many of the more than 100 songs the band knows come rolling right off the riverboats that traveled up and down the Ohio River — and that still do sometimes.

Bowen explained how folks on the shore would hear the songs being played on the riverboat and adapt those distant tunes to the instruments that they had on hand. Not unlike the Flood, which rolls out everything from Peyton's kazoo solos and autoharp to Romine's antique, short-neck tenor banjo.

The Flood's selections range from a Memphis Jug Band song to a song by the late, great guitar picker Dick Justice of Logan County, who recorded in the 1920s and 1930s.

That stuff is interlaced with the likes of old popular tunes done the

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**Charlie Bowen**  
guitarist for The 1937 Flood

Flood way such as "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Way Downtown," "Mack the Knife" and (the West Virginia anthem of sorts) "West Virginia You Are My Home" by West Virginia's treasured songwriter/mountain mama Hazel Dickens.

Everything (audience, songs, band members, hecklers and life) gets addressed with a good slab of humor

## Life

when the Flood plays. When Romine missed a recent gig because he was in South Carolina, he took a few waves of good-natured ribbing from his fellow bandmates and the audience in his absence.

"Chuck had a golfing emergency," Dobbs said with a straight face, getting a roar from the crowd.

And in a fine role reversal — the audience itself got heckled a bit from the stage.

"Everybody's clapping except Tom Preston," Bowen said, pointing out the door with his wife and sat down.

"He's waiting for the good stuff," Dobbs said.

Later in the show, like the Flood would want, Preston got a good shot back at the band between songs.

"I'll tell you this is the best Chuck has ever sounded," Preston said, getting a roar from the crowd.



Randy Snyder/The Herald-Dispatch

The 1937 Flood's Dave Peyton, left, on the auto harp and Doug Chaffin on the bass join Charlie Bowen, right, in a recent performance at the YWCA.

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