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AN OUTSTANDING VALUE
Florida State is ranked No. 9 in the nation among public universities that offer high-quality education at an affordable price, according to Kiplinger’s annual list of Best Values in Public Colleges.
Old Salt Union is a bluegrass band that offers a renewed take on a traditional roots group. Their music incorporates influences from jazz, rock, classical and pop for an eclectic sound that can be enjoyed by music lovers of all genres.

The group was featured in the 30A Songwriter’s Festival three years in a row, and their songs can be heard on Spotify’s Grass Roots and Indie Bluegrass playlists. Their distinctive sound and high energy performances always leave audiences amazed.

June holds the last two performances of the season: Veronica Swift on June 10 and An Evening with Billy Dean on June 17.

Veronica Swift is an amazing young jazz vocalist who has been performing professionally since the age of nine. She’s performed with Michael Feinstein, Benny Green and Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Veronica’s smooth voice is sure to make for an unforgettable night.

We close out the season with country music star Billy Dean. In this intimate evening, Billy will perform new arrangements of his hit songs from the 90s accompanied by an eight-piece section of musicians from the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra. Local Tallahassee doctors and song writers Hugh and Cody VanLandingham will join Billy Dean and open the show with songs from Billy’s recently released extended play record, Gadsden County Line.

Mark your calendars for July 8 when we will announce the full 2021-22 Season lineup. Keep an eye out for some additional sneak peeks about what is to come.

We hope you’ll join us.

Michael Blachly
Director, Opening Nights at Florida State University
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UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

MAY
27 Old Salt Union
bluegrass

JUNE
10 Veronica Swift
jazz, vocal
17 An Evening with Billy Dean
country, singer-songwriter
Sponsored by Ajax Building Company

JULY
8 2021–22 Season Announcement
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ON-SALE DATES
JULY 9 Sponsors
JULY 15 Producer’s Circle Members
JULY 19 Partner Members
JULY 22 Friend Members
JULY 26 Associate Members
JULY 28 Debut Members
JULY 30 Solo Members

AUGUST
2 General On-Sale
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Old Salt Union

Old Salt Union has the groove and the chops of a great string band, balanced with captivating rock and roll energy. The high-energy group features banjo, mandolin, violin, bass and guitar to create a bluegrass and folk sound that incorporates jazz, classical, and pop elements for a well-rounded performance and eclectic music. Despite coming from varied musical backgrounds, Old Salt Union’s collective melting pot of styles and musical vocabularies inform their fresh approach to modern string band music that has helped carve a unique niche for this St. Louis, Missouri and Belleville, Illinois roots group. The band includes Ryan Murphey (banjo), Justin Wallace (lead vocals and mandolin), John Brighton (violin) and Jesse Farrar (lead vocals and bassist). The quartet has continued to hone and develop their sound through relentless touring, which has cultivated a steadfast fanbase drawn to their high-energy shows.

Continued on pg. 21
Dr. Linda J. Smith

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Old Salt Union
Continued from pg. 17

Old Salt Union is a string band founded by a horticulturist, cultivated by classically trained musicians, and fueled by a vocalist/bass player who is also a hip-hop producer with a fondness for the Four Freshmen. It is this collision of styles and musical vocabularies that informs their fresh approach to bluegrass and gives them an electric live performance vibe that seems to pull more from Vaudeville than the front porch.

In 2015 they won the FreshGrass Band contest and found the perfect collaborator in Compass Records co-founder and GRAMMY® winning banjoist and composer, Alison Brown, whose attention to detail and high standards pushed the group to develop their influences from beyond a vocabulary to pull from during improvisation and into the foundation of something truly compelling in the roots music landscape.

The band pulls its influence from musicians like Darol Anger, Edgar Meyer, Mike Marshall and Mark O’Connor. Primary vocalist and bassist, Jesse Farrar brings an alternative rock spirit as well as his unique formative experiences as a hip-hop producer and bass player for a national tour of The Four Freshmen. The band’s self-titled debut album combined instrumental proclivities with pop melodies and harmonies into a coherent piece of work that carves out a road-less-travelled for the band in the crowded roots music genre.

Though the band had established themselves as a growing festival act with performances at LouFest, Stagecoach Festival, Bluegrass Underground, Winter Wondergrass, FreshGrass, Wakarusa, Yonder Mountain String Band’s Harvest Festival, and the 2014 Daytona 500, it was their breakout track on Spotify, “Madam Plum” that seemed to amplify awareness of the band beyond the bluegrass bubble.

Old Salt Union enlisted GRAMMY-winning banjoist and Compass co-founder Alison Brown to produce the follow-up to their self-titled Compass Records debut. The resulting album, Where the Dogs Don’t Bite, builds on this non-traditional string band’s varied musical backgrounds for a wildly entertaining, eclectic batch of songs.

Farrar, nephew of Son Volt’s Jay Farrar, kicks off the album with “God You Don’t Need,” a hook laden ode to a relationship gone bad set against a tapestry of strings and an eerily compelling banjo melody. Label mate Bobby Osborne guests on “Tell Me So,” a nod to the bluegrass side of the band’s musical sensibilities featuring lead vocals and songwriting by mandolinist Justin Wallace. Violinist John Brighton delivers the gypsy-tinged instrumental “Johann’s Breakdown,” which pulls from jazz and classical progressions, and Wallace delivers the haunting title track, “Where The Dogs Don’t Bite.” The dark, but heartfelt song features triple-layered guitar harmonies, stacked vocals and a group sing-along that recalls last call at a corner pub in the rust belt, a fitting closing to this musically diverse and compelling release.

While they look like a bluegrass band, Old Salt Union’s musical sensibilities run much deeper and broader, borrowing as much from indie rock and jazz fusion as from Bill Monroe.

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2021–22 Season Announcement

JULY 8
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