

# Bill Emerson's String Time, reissue from Patuxent Music

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Marvelous news from [Patuxent Music](#)!

The Maryland label run by Tim Mindte has brought back some classic tracks from the late, and ever so great, Bill Emerson. Originally released as a series of three budget-priced LPs in the early '60s as *Banjo Pickin'* & *Hot Fiddlin'* by Bill Emerson & His Virginia Mountaineers on the Coronet label, Mindte has culled the best from those three albums and issued it as [String Time – Early Recordings](#) by Bill Emerson.

These records were cut during the time that Bill worked with Jimmy Martin, and include a number of banjo tunes that he recorded as a Sunny Mountain Boy, though under different names. This was a fairly common ruse at the time to avoid copyright problems, one Martin himself employed on his *Big and Country Instrumentals* album released in 1967, which featured both Bill and J.D. Crowe on banjo.

Playing with Bill in the studio for these Concord titles were Red Allen, Charlie Waller, and Bill Harrell on guitar; Frank Wakefield and Buzz Busby on mandolin; Carl Nelson on fiddle; Kenny Haddock on reso-guitar; and Tom Morgan on bass.

It would be hard to overstate how important these records were to young banjo players in the '60s, learning to play before most of today's familiar learning tools were available.

Alan Munde makes this clear in his masterful liner notes.

“In these early performances Bill Emerson demonstrates all the things one looks for in a model of superb bluegrass banjo playing. His performance is immaculate, with surprising and creative

banjo arrangements of many standards, and a few originals that have become classics. Emerson's powerhouse picking is accompanied by a stellar group of supporting musicians. Of special note is the atom-splitting mandolin of Frank Wakefield. When I was an aspiring banjo player, I listened to these recordings with great attention and pleasure as I attempted to learn the tunes, arrangements, and the subtle mysteries of the bluegrass banjo roll.

As I made my way in the bluegrass music world I found others who admired these early recordings. In the late 1960's when I joined with Sam Bush and Wayne Stewart in forming Poor Richard's Almanac, they were both aware of the Coronet releases of Emerson's music and cited them as influential recordings. Not surprising Sam was interested in the mandolin playing of Frank Wakefield, although we only assumed it was him at that time, as the accompanying musicians were not listed. We also had to guess at the titles as many listed on the Coronet recordings were incorrect or fictitious. What is listed as *String Time* on the Coronet cover is actually *Theme Time*, *Honeysuckle* is *Little Maggie*, and so on."

Mindte remastered these tracks from the vinyl LPs themselves, and includes 20 tracks from the original recordings:

- *Old Joe Clark*
- *Lonesome Road Blues*
- *Baby Sue (Old Spinning Wheel)*
- *String Time (Theme Time)*
- *Weepin' Willow (Bury Me Beneath the Willow)*
- *Big Maggie (Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party)*
- *Lighnin' Banjo (Lonesome Road Blues)*
- *Runnin' Wild (Cumberland Gap)*
- *Home Sweet Home*
- *Sweet Dixie*
- *The Chicken Reel*
- *Jesse James*
- *Push and Shove (Back Up and Push)*
- *Honeysuckle (Little Maggie)*
- *Banjo Harp (Little Darling Pal of Mine)*
- *Hogwash (Hey Mr. Banjo)*
- *Rainbow Blues (Fireball Mail)*
- *Fingers On Fire (John Henry)*
- *Party Time (When You and I Were Young, Maggie)*
- *Banjo Pickin' Time (Rainbow)*

*String Time* from Bill Emerson is available now on CD or by download from the [Patuxent Music web site](#). It doesn't seem to be offered elsewhere. This belongs in the collection of every serious bluegrass fan or banjo player, especially those who have an interest in the history of the music.