

# ROUNDER RECORDS ARTIST BIO

## Blue Highway

### *Some Day: The Fifteenth Anniversary Collection*

Street Date: January 19, 2010

Creating compelling contemporary bluegrass is a delicate balancing act. Artists must retain the music's time-honored elements while imparting their own fresh take on the music to arrive at a sound that is both timeless and timely. It is a balance that Blue Highway executes with an acrobat's sense of grace and daring, expanding the expressive boundaries of bluegrass through an unrivaled ensemble sound forged from fifteen years of performing together.

Formed in 1994, Blue Highway has, from the start, featured a deep bench of songwriters and lead vocalists, stellar harmonies, dynamic arrangements, and flat-out instrumental virtuosity. Composed of Jason Burselen (banjo, guitar, mandolin), Rob Ickes (Dobro and Weissenborn-style slide guitars), Shawn Lane (mandolin, fiddle, guitar), Tim Stafford (guitar), and Wayne Taylor (bass), they have developed a robust contemporary take on the bluegrass tradition that makes them among the most influential bands in the genre today. Each member is among the most distinguished performers on his instrument of choice, and the band has garnered numerous awards from IBMA, SPBGMA, two Grammy® nominations and a Dove Award.



With *Some Day: The Fifteenth Anniversary Collection*, the same five individuals celebrate their many years of playing, writing and singing together. The album features songs from each of the band's four Rounder albums along with one from an album by Rob Ickes, and also includes three brand new tracks. With the exception of Mark Knopfler's "Marbletown" and two traditional songs, all of the songs on the album are written or co-written by band members. Reflecting the depth of talent and experience the musicians bring to Blue Highway, the songs on this album range from bluegrass breakdown to stirring gospel, from contemporary ballad to traditional story song. The resulting collection exemplifies the power of the flexibility that modern bluegrass has come to embrace.

The album opens with a new song - "Cold and Lowdown Lonesome Blues," a hard-driving indictment of a love gone bad. "Through the Window of a Train," the 2008 IBMA Song of the Year, follows. Darrell Scott is the guest lead vocalist on "Bleeding for a Little Peace of Mind," the powerful debut recording of a song co-written by Scott and Tim Stafford. Pairing unsettling imagery of mental depression with a robustly beautiful arrangement, it stands as a hallmark of contemporary original bluegrass.

In the clean-up spot, the instrumental "Monbro," penned by Rob Ickes and Aubrey Haynie, is a tour de force of bluegrass musicianship, offering each player a turn in the spotlight. The title track "Some Day" is a new recording of Blue Highway's most-requested song, featuring rich a cappella harmony and an outstanding bluegrass gospel original. Tim Stafford's classic "Still Climbing Mountains," the title track from the band's first Rounder album, follows, telling its timeless tale of restlessness.

Shawn Lane draws "The Seventh Angel" directly from the Bible. With vocal collaboration by Alison Krauss, the track shimmers with its urgent message. The instrumental "Elzic's Farewell" follows, with its banjo and fiddle grooves

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evoking the early days of bluegrass. “Sycamore Hollow” masterfully captures that early-day feeling, but in fact is another Blue Highway original, with a compelling story of a Civil War-era love that will not be denied.

“Seven Sundays in a Row” is an uplifting tale of redemption, invoking a divine winning streak that seems to have a good chance of continuing. One more story song “Wild Urge to Ramble” convinces us of the pitfalls of a wayward live. With its unexpected chord changes and oblique lyrics, Mark Knopfler’s “Marbletown” might seem an odd choice for a bluegrass band, but it sounds right at home in the hands of Blue Highway. They savor every twist and turn, completely in control.

It’s back to church for the final track. The Sacred Harp hymn “Wondrous Love” opens simply with strummed mandolin – and then progresses from one voice, to two, to four and finally to the glorious sound of five voices joining for a celestial round.

Artfully balanced between tradition and innovation, poised to enter their sixteenth year as a band that is creatively at the top of its game, Blue Highway remains at the forefront of contemporary bluegrass music.

