Although he admits a certain discomfort with the moniker “King of Newgrass,” Sam Bush has more than earned it. As co-founder and leader of the seminal progressive bluegrass band New Grass Revival through 18 years during the 1970s and 1980s, Bush may not be the only person responsible for newgrass, the wild bluegrass stepchild that features rock ‘n’ roll grooves and extended virtuosic jams, but since New Grass Revival’s dissolution in 1989, Bush has certainly been one of the most brilliant of newgrass’s many bright lights. In addition to leading the ever-popular Sam Bush Band, featured on the upcoming release _Laps in Seven_, the mandolin prodigy from Kentucky has been a prodigious influence on musicians young and old. Bands like Nickel Creek, Yonder Mountain String Band and String Cheese Incident, to name just a few, are indebted to Bush’s example, not only in his wide-ranging choice of material and rock-based acoustic grooves, but by his captivating, high-energy live shows, which have made him an in-demand headliner and fan favorite at important festivals like Telluride and MerleFest.

When he hasn’t been directing his own band, Bush has spent the past 15 years as a super sideman with the likes of Emmylou Harris, Lyle Lovett and the Flecktones; spearheaded boundary-stretching collaborations with Edgar Meyer, Mark O’Connor and David Grisman, and driven nearly every bluegrass supergroup imaginable with his inimitable mandolin playing.

“I wanted to try something different,” Bush says of how he approached the new record, inadvertently defining his lifelong approach to music. “I wanted to shake things up a bit while still displaying the live sound of the road band.” Bush’s band is a tight crew of Nashville’s most in-demand studio musicians, including guitarist Keith Sewell, Byron House on bass, Chris Brown on drums and banjoist Scott Vestal. Stephen Mougin, guitar picker/harmony vocalist, has joined the band since the recording was made.

Vestal’s presence marks one of the striking differences that Bush was aiming for. His dynamic, inventive playing will certainly remind listeners of the last days of New Grass Revival, which featured a young Béla Fleck. “I can’t tell you how much I love playing with Scott,” Sam says of his most recent banjo buddy. “He can play everything, but he doesn’t feel compelled to put it in every song.”

In addition to giving his band room to romp, the “something different” that Bush was looking for often occurs when one of his many special guests joins the proceedings. For example, the opening track, Julie Miller’s _The River’s Gonna Run_, features Bush’s old boss, Emmylou Harris, in a duet vocal with Bush, as well as the electric and acoustic guitar playing of Buddy Miller. “Buddy gets a sound out of an acoustic guitar that bluegrassers don’t get,” says Bush. “He’s all about painting the landscape. He doesn’t try to stand out; he just tries to make a big wall of sound, and boy he really does on this track.”

Such a powerful, rockin’ and emotional opener needed a strong follow up, and it got one — probably the most traditional-sounding bluegrass cut on any of Bush’s solo CDs, the Charlie Monroe classic _Bringing in the Georgia Mail_, which features the Sam Bush Band doing what they do best, throwing down the bluegrass gauntlet and waiting to see if anyone is brave enough to pick it up. Not many who hear this rousing rendition will be so bold.

After establishing both his rock and bluegrass credentials, Bush spends much of _Laps in Seven_ paying tribute to old friends and musical influences. John Hartford’s _On the Road_ gives worthy respect to his dear, departed cohort and is a natural for Bush’s flexible band.
“New Grass Revival used to play that song with John a lot,” Bush recalls. “For a few years, 1975–80 or so, we played a lot of shows with John. And that was one of the more fun ones to jam on.” Though the song is in 5/4, the rhythm flows naturally from Hartford’s lyrical phrasing, creating the kind of complex yet accessible song that Bush and company revel in.

I Wanna Do Right, a rendre hommage to Gulf Coast hurricane survivors, was co-written by Bush and Jeff Black, a favorite writer on previous Bush recordings, and features an R&B duet with Little Feat’s own Shaun Murphy (who also arranged back-up vocals of the Do-Right Singers). Darrell Scott, another talented former guitar picker in the Sam Bush Band, contributes yet another of his extraordinary songs, a lyrical and haunting version of River Take Me. Other Bush friends and favorites include Leon Russell’s Ballad For a Soldier, as timely a song now as it was years ago when he wrote it, and Robbie Fulks’s Where There’s a Road, a story for touring musicians everywhere.

Bush has written a number of songs with songwriter John Pennell, and the latest is Riding that Bluegrass Train, which gives a nod to bluegrass/newgrass music, horse racing, and Baltimore banjoist Walter Hensley, whose 1960s recording Pickin’ on New Grass, was the first place Bush heard the words that would come to define his music. To give it that high-lonesome sound, Bush called on Tim O’Brien to sing the high harmony vocals. “Tim and I play the same instruments so we hardly ever get to play on the same records,” Bush says. “Tim just nailed the harmony; it was effortless.”

Though Bush is most often known as a mandolinist, he’s also a champion fiddler and on two tracks he pays tribute to two violinists who helped push his fiddle playing into the rock arena when he was a youngster. On the rock classic White Bird, Bush and Andrea Zonn update violinist David LaFlamme’s enduring composition, both vocally and in a soaring violin arrangement that expands and improves on the original.

The recording of Jean-Luc Ponty’s New Country, which has been a live Sam Bush Band favorite, includes a scintillating performance by Ponty himself, playing twin fiddles with Bush. This track is the result of a meeting at last summer’s Telluride Bluegrass Festival, at which Ponty sat in with Bush and company. “I’ve been a fan of Jean-Luc since his first record, Sunday Walk, came out in America,” says Bush. “He is the king of jazz-rock violin. He was at Telluride playing with another trio, so I asked him if he would play New Country with us. To be standing there looking over at him right beside me was a dream come true, something I never imagined could happen. So I thought it would be great to get him to record it, too. We recorded the track and sent it to him in France. When we got it back and I heard the beauty of his playing, tears just streamed down my face. It was as joyful a moment as I’ve ever had. It’s nice to be 54 years old and still be totally overwhelmed by something,” says Bush of recording with Ponty. “I was just as excited as I would have been if it happened when I was 16, when I first heard him.”

Two of Bush’s signature instrumentals round out this musical adventure. This recording features The Dolphin Dance, and Laps in Seven, a drinking tune written by Sam, Byron and Scott and inspired by Bush’s dog, Ozzie.

Sam Bush’s ability to be continually touched and amazed by new music may be the quality that makes him such a successful and virtuosic performer and band leader. He helped create newgrass music almost 35 years ago, but Laps in Seven is evidence that he’s still as vital a presence on the acoustic music scene as ever: still making new sounds, still rockin’ out on great songs, and still pushing the bar higher for the legions of his protégés, fans and friends.
Jerry Douglas

Although his new album is titled *The Best Kept Secret*, multi-talented musician/composer/producer Jerry Douglas’ talents are widely known, both to his musical peers and to an enthusiastic audience that spans the musical spectrum. Widely acknowledged as America’s foremost master of the dobro, the 12-time Grammy® winner is a freewheeling, forward-thinking, recording artist whose output draws upon a bottomless well of musical inspiration, incorporating elements of bluegrass, country, rock, jazz, blues and Celtic into his distinctive musical vision.

In addition to his solo releases, Douglas’ stellar fretwork has graced more than 1,000 albums encompassing a dizzying range of musical styles. As a sideman, he’s recorded with artists as diverse as Garth Brooks, Ray Charles, Emmylou Harris, Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton, Paul Simon, Ricky Skaggs, James Taylor, Randy Travis and Trisha Yearwood, as well as performing on the landmark *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack. As a producer, he’s overseen albums by such esteemed acts as the Del McCoury Band, Maura O’Connell, Jesse Winchester and the Nashville Bluegrass Band. He’s been part of such notable groups as the Whites, J.D. Crowe and the New South, the Country Gentlemen and Strength in Numbers. Since 1998, he’s been a key member of Alison Krauss and Union Station, touring extensively and playing on a series of platinum albums.

The Ohio-born Douglas was seduced by music early in life. At the age of eight, he was taken by his father, a steelworker who played bluegrass in his spare time, to a Flatt and Scruggs concert, where he was immediately attracted to the sound of the dobro. He began playing the instrument in earnest soon after. “I just liked the sound it made,” he recalls. “It can be real lonesome, or it can be really brash and percussive. It’s such a vocal instrument; you can do so many things on it, because of the sustain, and because there’s all these different voices you can get out of it.”

After several years of playing with his dad’s group, the West Virginia Travelers, the 17-year-old Douglas joined the pioneering newgrass band the Country Gentlemen in 1973. The following year, he became a member of the seminal J.D. Crowe and the New South, which also included future stars Ricky Skaggs and Tony Rice. In 1976, Douglas and Skaggs co-founded the now-legendary bluegrass combo, Boone Creek. In 1979, Douglas launched his solo career with his recording *Fluxology*, and became a full-time member of the beloved family group the Whites. He remained with the Whites until 1985, but still found time to play on such now-classic albums as Emmylou Harris’ *Roses in the Snow* and Ricky Skaggs’ *Don’t Get Above Your Raising*.

By the time he left the Whites, Douglas had become Nashville’s busiest session dobro player, while continuing his solo career with such albums as 1982’s *Fluxedo* (for which he won his first Grammy®, for Best Country Instrumental), *Under the Wire* (1986), *Changing Channels* (1987), *Everything Is Going To Work Out Fine* (1987), *Plant Early* (1989) and *Slide Rule* (1992). In the late 1980s, he formed the acoustic supergroup Strength in Numbers with Sam Bush, Bela Fleck, Edgar Meyer and Mark O’Connor; the quintet debuted with 1989’s *The Telluride Sessions*.

It was around that time that Douglas chose to abandon his lucrative session career, which had ceased to offer new musical challenges. “I did so many sessions for so long, and it wasn’t really doing anything for me anymore,” he explains. “I was making a fine living playing on people’s records, but the music changed, and I didn’t really like where mainstream country was going. It started to really bother me, so I had to stop.”

At around the same time, Alison Krauss asked Douglas to fill in on a Union Station tour. The shows went so well that Krauss offered him a permanent slot in the group. “I really love playing with Alison; it’s a creative atmosphere, and the music is coming from all of us, so it’s a dream gig.” Since then, he’s managed to balance his Union Station work with his solo career and a variety of collaborative efforts. One such project was the surprise hit *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack, for which Douglas helped to recruit musicians and played on three songs, including the Soggy Bottom Boys’ *I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow*. He also made a brief onscreen appearance in the film.

In 2002, Douglas released the solo album *Lookout for Hope* and won three Grammy® Awards for his work with Union Station and Earl Scruggs, as well as receiving five Grammy® Award Acknowledgements for the *O Brother* soundtrack and its live sequel *Down From The Mountain*. He was also named Musician of the Year by the Academy of Country Music and the Country Music Association’s Musician of the Year, as well as the Americana Music Association’s Instrumentalist of the Year. Summer 2003 found Douglas on stage with Norah Jones and her band for sets at the Montreal Jazz Festival and at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. That fall, he was honored with his second Instrumentalist of the Year title from the Americana Music Association. In 2004, the National Endowment for the Arts awarded Douglas a National Heritage Fellowship.

When The Big Apple hosted Country Music’s Biggest Night in November 2005, the Country Music Association honored Jerry Douglas with his second Musician of the Year Award. Douglas also performed with Alison Krauss + Union Station during the awards ceremony from Madison Square Garden, which was broadcast worldwide to more than 36 million viewers.

Grammy® Week 2006 was a busy one for Douglas. With his fellow NARAS Board Members, Douglas honored his friend James Taylor, MusiCares’ 2006 Person of the Year. Douglas teamed with Alison Krauss to deliver *Carolina In My Mind* during the musical tribute, and, at the honoree’s request, joined Taylor and band to finish out the show. Douglas also was on the Who’s Who list of guitar slingers invited to perform at a concert paying homage to legendary guitar player Les Paul at the Gibson Amphitheatre.

Capping off the week was the Grammy® Awards Show, with Jerry Douglas receiving three Grammys® for his work with Alison Krauss + Union Station on *Lonely Runs Both Ways*. This brings Douglas’ Grammy® count to 12. The band picked up the prestigious Best Country Album Award as well as winning Grammys® for Best Country Instrumental Performance for the Douglas composition *Unionhouse Branch* and Best Country Vocal Performance, Duo or Group, for *Restless*.

Look for Douglas with his own band to grace the stages of Bonnaroo, Telluride Bluegrass Festival, Rocky Grass, Winnipeg Folk Festival, Vancouver Island Folk Festival and MerleFest, where he will be inviting music lovers everywhere to know more about *The Best Kept Secret*.

The restless creative spirit that’s the common thread in his eclectic discography continues to propel Jerry Douglas forward into new musical adventures. That spirit is prominent
through every moment of *The Best Kept Secret*. “It’s important to me to keep stretching,” Douglas concludes. “This year I am 50, and I don’t feel any different or any less motivated than when I was 19 or 20. It’s still an evolving process for me, and I feel like I’ve still got things to learn. When you stop learning, you’re dead.”

**Edgar Meyer**

Prominently established as a unique and masterful instrumentalist, Edgar Meyer delights his audiences both as a vibrant performer and an innovative composer. Hailed by *The New Yorker* as, “… the most remarkable virtuoso in the relatively unchronicled history of his instrument,” Meyer’s unparalleled technique and musicianship, in combination with his gift for composition, have brought him to the fore, where he is appreciated by a vast, varied audience. His uniqueness in the field was recognized by a MacArthur Award in 2002.

Meyer’s most recent album is a self-titled solo recording released in April 2006, on which he wrote and played all of the pieces on instruments including piano, guitar, mandolin, dobro, banjo, gamba and double bass. As a solo classical bassist, Meyer has released a concerto album with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra featuring Bottesini’s Gran Duo with Joshua Bell; Meyer’s Double Concerto for Bass and Cello with Yo-Yo Ma; Bottesini’s Bass Concerto No. 2 and Meyer’s Concerto in D for Bass. Just prior to that, he released an album with three of Bach’s Unaccompanied Suites for Cello.

As a composer, Meyer has carved out a remarkable and unique niche in the musical world. In the 2006-07 season, he premiered a triple concerto for double bass, banjo, and tabla (written with Bela Fleck and Zakir Hussain) for the opening of the Schermerhorn Symphony Center in Nashville, as well as a piece for double bass and piano to be performed with Emanuel Ax. During the 2005-06 season, he premiered the revised version of his Double Bass Concerto No. 2 with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and was commissioned to write a piece for violin and piano to be performed by Joshua Bell at the Montalvo Arts Center and New York’s Lincoln Center. Meyer premiered his Double Bass Concerto No. 1 in 1993 with Edo de Waart and the Minnesota Orchestra, and in 1995, he premiered his Quintet for Bass and String Quartet in collaboration with the Emerson String Quartet, which was later recorded on the Deutsche Grammophon label. Also, in 1995, he premiered his Double Concerto for Bass and Cello, in collaboration with Carter Brey, cello and Jeffrey Kahane conducting the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival Orchestra. Mr. Meyer has also performed with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa, featuring the premiere of one of his own works, the Meyer Double Concerto for Bass and Cello with Yo-Yo Ma. In October 1999, Mr. Meyer’s violin concerto written for violinist Hilary Hahn was premiered and recorded by Hahn with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra led by Hugh Wolff.

Fruitful collaborations are also an important part of Meyer’s work. His inventive performing and recording projects as a duo with Béla Fleck; a quartet with Joshua Bell, Sam Bush and Mike Marshall; a trio with Béla Fleck and Mike Marshall; and a trio with Yo-Yo Ma and Mark O’Connor have been widely acclaimed. Meyer also works with pianist Amy Dorfman, his longtime accompanist for solo recitals, featuring both classical repertoire and his own compositions. Meyer’s vast musical interests have also led him to be a widely sought after guest bass player for an assortment of recording artists, such as Garth Brooks, Bruce Cockburn, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Hank Williams, Jr., Emmylou Harris, James Taylor, Lyle Lovett, T-Bone Burnett, Reba McIntyre, the Indigo Girls, Travis Tritt and the Chieftains.

An exclusive SONY artist who is ever-involved in imaginative projects, Meyer and colleagues Yo-Yo Ma and Mark O’ Connor have been widely acclaimed for the Sony release of *Appalachia Waltz*, which soared to the top of the charts and remained there for 16
weeks. *Appalachia Waltz* toured extensively in the United States, and the trio was featured both on the *David Letterman Show* and the televised 1997 *Inaugural Gala*. Joining with Yo-Yo Ma and Mark O’Connor for a second time, *Appalachian Journey*, the follow-up to *Appalachia Waltz*, was released in March 2000. This time, their tour took them not only to major venues across the United States but also to Europe and parts of Asia. *Appalachian Journey* won the Grammy® Award that season.

Meyer began studying bass at the age of five under the instruction of his father, and later continued to study with Stuart Sankey. He is the winner of numerous competitions. In 1994, he became the only bassist to receive the Avery Fisher Career Grant, and in 2000, became the only bassist to receive the Avery Fisher Prize.

A frequent guest at music festivals, Meyer has appeared as performer and composer at Aspen, Tanglewood, Caramoor, Chamber Music Northwest and Marlboro. At the Sante Fe Chamber Music Festival, he was a regular guest from 1985-1993, and composed six works for the festival during that time. In 1994, Meyer joined the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and continues to perform regularly with this ensemble. Currently, he is also visiting professor of double bass at the Royal Academy of Music and at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.