

Kentucky Thunder Band Member Bios

"This group of guys meets my approval every night," Ricky says. "Each and every one of the pickers in Kentucky Thunder totally amazes me in every show...and that, to me, outweighs any award we could ever win." The all-star lineup of Kentucky Thunder includes Paul Brewster (tenor vocals, rhythm guitar), Russ Carson (banjo), Jake Workman (lead guitar), Mike Barnett (fiddle), Dennis Parker (baritone vocals, guitar) and Jeff Picker (bass).

PAUL BREWSTER



Knoxville, Tennessee's Paul Brewster began his music career with the band Knoxville Grass, singing lead and tenor vocals and playing rhythm guitar. After ten years with the Osborne Brothers and brief stints with the Pinnacle Boys and Dollywood bluegrass band, True Blue, he was asked to become a member of Kentucky Thunder. In addition to lending his unmistakable tenor to countless Ricky Skaggs albums, Brewster is also an accomplished songwriter and solo artist. In 2001, he teamed up with former band-mate Mark Fain to co-produce *Everybody's Talkin'*, his first solo project for Skaggs Family Records.

RUSS CARSON



Kentucky Thunder.

Russ Carson grew up in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and came by his passion for bluegrass and the banjo, in particular, honestly. His father, Glenn, made handcrafted banjos along with playing the fiddle and Clawhammer banjo since the early 1970's. As a result of the never ending string of live music while growing up, Russ started taking banjo lessons at age 10. He was a previous bluegrass band member with Gold Heart and Audie Blaylock & Redline. During that time period, he was able to work with and learn from industry legends such as Del & Ronnie McCoury, Bobby Osborne, Carl Jackson, Glen Duncan, Lou Reid and many more. Russ plays banjo in

JAKE WORKMAN



Jake Workman, hailing from Draper, Utah, began playing the guitar when he received one for his 13th birthday in 2001. Jake's introduction to bluegrass music came 1 ½ years later when he received a banjo from his parents for Christmas. With his growing love for bluegrass, he entered many instrument contests and won many titles on guitar, banjo and mandolin. In 2007 while attending the National Flat Pick Guitar Championship in Winfield, Kansas, Jake met other musicians that later would help form the Midwest-based band, Driven. He has also played in Salt Lake City based groups Cold Creek, The Aaron Ashton Band, and the Jake and Rebekah Workman Band. Jake has a degree in jazz guitar performance from the University of Utah. His playing showcases his extensive knowledge in rock and jazz genres, but is mostly influenced by traditional bluegrass. When not performing, he teaches many private lessons, writes music and works in the studio. Jake was recently featured on the cover of the May/June 2015 issue of Flatpicking Guitar Magazine and is the lead guitarist for Kentucky Thunder.

MIKE BARNETT



Mike Barnett was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee, and has a special place in his heart for bluegrass and country music. At age 14, Mike recorded his first CD, *Lost Indian*, a collection of traditional fiddle classics. At 15 years of age, he was invited to teach alongside fiddle greats Vassar Clemens, Buddy Spicher, and Bobby Hicks at the Vanderbilt Blair School of Music International Fiddle Camp. In 2009 while attending Berklee College of Music in Boston, Mike joined the David Grisman Quintet (DGQ) to form a sextet. He has also toured with bluegrass icon Jesse McReynolds and the Virginia Boys, banjo player Tony Trischka, the Gordon Stone Trio, Northern Lights--one of New England's renowned folk bands--along with mandolinist Joe Walsh, the band The Deadly Gentlemen, guitarist Bryan Sutton, and has shared the stage with banjoists Bela Fleck, comedian Steve Martin, and Greg Liszt. Mike was the recipient of the 2007 Daniel Pearl Memorial Violin created by Jonathan Cooper, awarded at the Mark O'Connor String Conference. He has recorded with numerous musicians as well as on his own, with the most recent being *One Song Romance*, a compilation of all original music. Mike is the fiddle player for Kentucky Thunder.

DENNIS PARKER



Dennis Parker is no stranger working with Ricky Skaggs, being a former member of Kentucky Thunder and sharing a GRAMMY win on Ricky Skaggs' *Bluegrass Rules!* album with guitar, mandolin and vocal credits on the successful release. Dennis has also played professionally with Lee Ann Womack, Tracy Lawrence, Joe Diffie, and Mark Chesnutt, among others. He is equally at home playing blues, soul, country, gospel, pop, and contemporary Christian music styles. Dennis is a master at multiple instruments including fiddle, banjo and mandolin, but favors the guitar. As a musician full of soul, it is revealed in his playing style, his vocals, and at times in his right leg! Dennis is a previous state contest winner on fiddle, banjo and guitar and has won multiple other contests in many states. As a baritone vocalist and guitarist for Kentucky Thunder, we welcome Dennis back working with Ricky and the band.

JEFF PICKER



As the newest member of Kentucky Thunder, Jeff Picker plays the double bass. His unique blend of bluegrass, folk, western swing, and jazz influences has made him a highly in-demand sideman and an exciting creative voice on the roots music scene. As a teenager, Jeff immersed himself deeply in the jazz idiom, and at the age of 18 was awarded the title of Presidential Scholar in the Arts in Jazz by the U.S. Department of Education. In his early 20s he fell in love with bluegrass and roots music, and has never looked back. Since then he's had the pleasure of working professionally with a wide variety of roots artists in New York City and beyond, including several years on the road with GRAMMY-winning singer/ songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Sarah Jarosz. Jeff was raised in Portland, Ore. and Dallas, Texas and lately has been based in New York City for 11 years. He's excited to be joining Ricky and the guys as the new bassist in Kentucky Thunder.