

Uncle Earl – Bio

Uncle Earl was originally formed during 1999 in Dearborn, Michigan, and the current line-up features Kristin Andreassen [guitar, vocals], Rayna Gellert [fiddle, guitar, vocals], K.C. Groves [mandolin, guitar, vocals] and Abigail Washburn [banjo vocals]. Sharon Gilchrist [bass, mandolin, vocals] joined Uncle Earl after the **“She Waits For Night”** album was recorded.

In 1999, two, at the time, Michigan based players, K.C. Groves and Jo Serrapere [guitar, vocals], began working together as Uncle Earl. Assisted by Tahmineh Gueramy [fiddle, vocals], they subsequently cut an album titled **“She Went Upstairs”** that mostly featured traditional material, and the recording was produced by Lyons, Colorado based bluegrass musician Sally Van Meter. Bluegrass musicians Laurie Lewis, Jean Ballhorn and Pooh Stevenson also contributed to the recording sessions, and the album appeared on the Detroit Radio Company label. Although they didn't see themselves as a long term performing duo, let alone a band, Groves and Serrapere subsequently put a group of musicians together for CD release shows they had booked in Colorado and Michigan. In concert they enjoyed such a great reaction from the public that they decided to continue as a band, although Serrapere eventually departed to pursue her solo career, and is currently based out of Ann Arbor. Groves kept Uncle Earl alive with a continually evolving line-up of players.

The current members of Uncle Earl hail from diverse musical backgrounds. Although raised in Michigan, K.C. Groves' family [and musical] roots lie in West Virginia. Prior to the Uncle Earl recording, Groves cut a solo album in 1999 titled **“Can You Hear It.”** Groves' album was produced by Charles Sawtelle of the band Hot Rize, and the session players included Tim O'Brien and Tony Furtado. Sawtelle passed away later that year. The album went on to pick up a Detroit Music Award for best bluegrass album, and Groves was a finalist in the Y2K Telluride Troubadour Bluegrass competition, and a showcase artist for the International Bluegrass Music Association in Louisville, Kentucky in early 2003. Her sophomore release, co-produced by Jim Hurst, is titled **“Something Familiar”** [2004]. These days Groves makes her home in Colorado.

Kristin Andreassen currently hails from Washington D.C., and is a clog and step-dancer with Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble, and she has also worked with **Tim O'Brien, Lunasa & The Duhks**. Her debut solo recording, produced by Mark Schatz, the bass player in Nickel Creek [and also a member of Footworks], is due for release in late 2005. Raised in Oregon, and of Scandinavian stock, Kristin's grandmother taught her Norwegian folk dancing and also to play the piano. Following college, for a short time Kristin worked on Cape Breton Island in Community Economic Development and it was there that she witnessed a strong connection between traditional music and the community. Relocating to West Virginia, Andreassen met Groves, and in December 2003 became a member of Uncle Earl. Kristin has also worked with Pierce Woodward [The Mammals] and Laura Cortese [Halali, Laura Cortese Band] as The Jolly Bankers, and their 2003 mini-album was titled **“Death & Taxes.”**

Nettwerk Records released Abigail Washburn's debut CD **“Song Of The Traveling Daughter”** during August 2005. Nashville based Washburn joined Uncle Earl in May 2003. The following year she won second place in the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest at MerleFest. Raised in Northern Indiana, following graduation from high school, Rayna Gellert went on to study at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina. Gellert is currently based out of Asheville, North Carolina, and her most recent recording was **“Starch & Iron”** [2005] an album of duets with Susie Goehring [guitar, vocal]. Gellert's debut solo album was titled **“Way Of The World”** [2000]. Rayna joined Uncle Earl in September 2003, and she has also toured with the Freight Hoppers, and been a featured artist at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

Newcomer Sharon Gilchrist, was born in Texan and raised there. She is an adept mandolin player as well as a bassist, and currently performs with the Peter Rowan & Tony Rice Quartet and Rowan's Acoustic Trio. Gilchrist joined Uncle Earl in the Fall of 2004, and prior to that was a member of Santa Fe based trio Mary & Mars who cut a couple of albums, **“Mary & Mars”** [2003] and **“Live At The Old Blinking Light”** [2004]. New Mexico remains Sharon's base, and she has also worked with singer/guitarist Bill Hearne, a Kerrville Festival regular, who makes his base in the state.

Respectively released by Uncle Earl during the Spring of 2004 and in December the same year, **“Going To The Western Slope”** and **“Raise A Ruckus”** were limited edition, mini-albums. **“She Waits For Night,”** a Rounder Records release in mid-July 2005, was produced by Dirk Powell [Balfa Tujours,

solo] and the disc was recorded in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana. Although bearing the name Uncle Earl, this female five-piece, old-time string band is often referred to as the g'Earls.

Discography : **“She Went Upstairs”** [2002] ; **“Going To The Western Slope”** six song limited edition EP [2004] ; **“Raise A Ruckus”** seven song limited edition EP [2004] ; **“She Waits For Night”** [2005] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 09/05

[810 words]