

2011 BIO

Through the years, Nu-Blu has worked hard to develop a group that would give the listener a diverse experience. By mixing their original songs along with traditional material, and even incorporating songs from other genres, the group has certainly created a unique and driving blend of music that keeps audiences coming back for more.



Nu-Blu was founded by husband and wife team, **Carolyn and Daniel Routh**. Carolyn, on bass, provides her trademark lead vocals with impressive clarity and vocal range and Daniel, on guitar, brings his songwriting and vocal talents to the group. The two young guns, **Levi Austin** (banjo and vocals) and **Austin Koener** (mandolin) fill out the ranks providing the band with a solid and talented backbone.

In May 2010, Nu-Blu released their first album, *NIGHTS*, along with the single, "*Spin on the Red Brick Floor*." Radio immediately welcomed the album as evidenced by its debut at #10 on the Euro Americana Chart, reaching as high as #7 on the Roots Music Bluegrass Report, and spending more than 5 weeks on the Americana Music Association's Top 40 chart as an indie release. Several months later, the band was awarded the "2010 Country Band of the Year" by the Carolina Music Awards.

In September 2010, Pinycastle Records announced it was beginning operations again, and Nu-Blu would be the first artist signed to the "new" label. The following month, the label released the group's new single, "*Christmas in Dixie*," an 80's cover song made famous by the country band, Alabama. Just a few short weeks after the song was released, it hit #1 on the Airplay Direct Top Bluegrass Album Chart.

To close out such an eventful year, Nu-Blu made history as the first bluegrass band to launch a smart phone APP - yet again expanding their audience, but more importantly introducing bluegrass music to the masses. Their smart phone APP provides live feeds from the popular Bluegrass Blog, WorldWideBluegrass.com, BluegrassTV, Napster, Last FM and Nu-Blu News.

In 2011, Nu-Blu was again nominated by the Carolina Music Awards as "Bluegrass/Americana/Country Band of the Year" as they geared up for their new album, *THE BLU-DISC* releasing August 8, 2011 on Pinycastle Records. The label has released the first single, "*Other Woman's Blues*" written by Kira Small and providing a unique twist on Dolly Parton's hit song "*Jolene*." Nu-Blu is joined on the song by special guests, Christy Reid (harmony vocals), and Rob Ickes (Dobro.)

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Carolyn (bass) and Daniel Routh (guitar)

Carolyn and Daniel Routh, the founding members of Nu-Blu, make up half of this “hard-driving” band. Carolyn began taking the stage at the age of 7. Even though she attended many bluegrass events, the “bug” never really bit her. In high school she was introduced to Broadway style musicals where she gained much knowledge and experience under the direction of Dr. Joanne Bowman. In the years that followed, Gospel, Country, Blues and Rock and Roll all shaped and expanded her vocal style and achievements. It was while fronting one of her bands, *Faithful Journey*, that she met Daniel Routh.

Daniel began playing guitar at the age of 15. Banjo soon followed, which he played in the bands Different Directions and The Donna Hughes Band. It was while playing in Donna’s band that he and Carolyn met. After a chance meeting in Wal-Mart, Daniel learned that Carolyn was in need of a bass player, so he agreed to learn bass to fill the spot. After *Faithful Journey* disbanded, and a short time playing together in a classic rock band, they attended a festival that Carolyn’s long time friend John Wade was performing at. It only took till the second song by Lonesome River Band to bring Carolyn back to her roots. “I have told Sammy Shelor many times that he is directly responsible for my bluegrass addiction,” Carolyn says.

Together they started Nu-Blu in the fall of 2003. Through the music, the pair had become best friends. During Thanksgiving weekend in 2003, Carolyn suffered two strokes and nearly lost her life. She lost her speech and the use of her right side. Daniel was her constant companion through it all and never left her side in the months of rehab that followed. On June 16, 2006, Daniel and Carolyn married and Carolyn often states, “There is nothing sweeter than taking the stage with your best friend and love standing right beside you. I’m having the time of my life.”

Daniel now back to playing guitar, focuses on different styles of guitar and incorporates them together in his playing. Not only does he add his guitar talents to Nu-Blu, but he also contributes lead and harmony vocals.

With Carolyn playing bass, handling lead vocals, and most of the tenor, her vocal range and clarity are what put the “NU” in Nu-Blu., she gives the band flexibility and a driving edge that sets them apart from the rest.

Levin Austin (banjo)

When Levi Austin was 9 years old, he was not a big fan of bluegrass music, at least not until a Sunday evening church service that included a bluegrass gospel group. After watching and hearing the banjo during that concert, Levi instantly fell in love with the instrument. After the show, he spoke with the banjo player, who advised him to take lessons. He asked his Dad for a banjo and was told “If you can live without it for two weeks, then you don’t need it!” The continued nagging for the following month resulted in him getting a Washburn B-12 from Harold Chriscoe.

Soon after he began lesson from Jerry Stuart, Levi was ready to make the upgrade to a Gibson Mastertone. His father promised he would buy him one if he learned the theme song to “The Beverly Hillbillies.” Only a couple of weeks later, Levi had his Gibson. Levi said, “After a few months of lessons from Jerry, I started with Stan Brown who provided me with the basis I needed to go out on my own and develop my own style.”

After winning becoming the NC State Banjo champion, he toured with the Cagle Family Band for several years. Levi was asked to join Nu-Blu in the fall of 2005. During his four years with the band, he has added to his titles by winning the Galax Fiddler’s Convention Banjo award, along with numerous banjo and guitar awards at some of the nation’s longest running fiddler’s conventions. He truly has developed his own style on banjo and guitar, and continues to impress his audiences with his abilities.

Austin Koener (mandolin)

Austin didn't grow up in a musical family; however he was interested in learning music since he was a kid. During middle school, he learned to read music and play the trumpet and french horn in his school band. After that, he picked up the drums, got into hardcore and metal music for about three or four years and eventually joined a metal band. The played a few shows here and there, but nothing serious. He then began exploring different idioms of music like Latin and jazz and even country.

Austin's grandfather took him to see Al Batten when he was around 11 years old and he immediately fell in love with the mandolin. By the age of 13, he got his first mandolin but only played for a few months. At this time he was still playing drums in metal bands. In in the spring of 2007, he started playing mandolin regularly and began learning theory at that time too. The mandolin came so easy to him and he really favored the more traditional sound of bluegrass playing Bill Monroe, Stanley Brothers and Jimmy Martin songs. In 2009, Austin bought a Clark 2 point mandolin, performed in the band, Carolina Tradition, and continued to expand his bluegrass influences to more modern styles of music like that of Don Stiernberg, and David Grisman. Austin and his friends started playing jazz in a trio and he learned about chords, form and improvising. Austin's multi-instrumental talents and performing in various music genres has certainly made him an asset to Nu-Blu.