



Cort Armstrong

Mountain Blues & Country Music, Chicken Pickin' Style

"...(his) energetic amalgam of country blues, ragtime and old-time mountain music fits like an IPA-swiller inside a Carhartt." - Mountain Xpress, Asheville, NC

Cort Armstrong's long musical path has always led toward the heart of traditional American music. As a young boy he learned to fingerpick guitar from his mother, who taught him a folk repertoire which reflected her inspiration, the Folk Revival of the sixties. By his college years in Eugene, OR, Armstrong had started a CSN cover band, and was following the Grateful Dead up and down the west coast. Jerry Garcia, another musical influence who was inspired by the Folk Revival, inspired Armstrong to dig deeper into the fertile soil of traditional American music. Soon after college, having relocated to Seattle, WA, Armstrong had become an impassioned devotee of Bluegrass and Old-time Stringband music, a passion which would compel him to migrate to Asheville, NC, where he would become consumed with Appalachian music and the business of running a band in the Southeast.

It was amongst his new musical peers in Asheville that Armstrong was first referred to as "that chicken picker". Armstrong has held onto the moniker through the years, as it aptly describes his guitar picking style, which incorporates a thumb-heavy fingerpicking style, based in Country Blues, but used just as often with Bluegrass banjo and Old-time fiddle tunes. Like many of those musicians who have inspired him through the years, such as Rev. Gary Davis, Doc Watson, Merle Travis, the Stanley Brothers, Jerry Garcia, and others, Armstrong draws from a vast repertoire which defies genre and other naming conventions. An exceptional songwriter, he pulls from such traditional Americana niches as Country Blues (particularly Piedmont Blues, from east of the Appalachians), Bluegrass, Old-time Country, Ragtime, Honky Tonk and Folk music.

Armstrong's path has seen a steady evolution of his musical abilities. Although many years has resulted in a repertoire of traditional songs extending into the thousands and technical mastery of the guitar, his voice and performances have developed the ability to speak directly to his audience's hearts. Songs seem to express themselves "through" him, offering the listener an experience which is perhaps the greatest gift of music. With a musical performance which features his original songs, Armstrong's growing base of fans get a pure, unfiltered folk music experience. His brand new album release of *Chicken Pickin'* (2010), which is a collection of all original songs recorded with guitar and voice, will soon establish Armstrong in his rightful place among Americana music's elite.

Three years of making Asheville home base for his band *Blue Rooster* inspired Armstrong to record three albums... *Sweet Booty Biscuit* (1999), *My Heart Is Fixed* (2001) and *Let's Get Together: A Tribute to Rev. Gary Davis* (2002). *Blue Rooster* toured in the Appalachian region, playing festivals and clubs in West Virginia, Virginia, the Carolinas and Tennessee. The band's fan base and opportunities grew, but fate would bring the run to an end, as Armstrong lost his father to a heart attack, and immediately moved back to the SF Bay Area to be with his mother.

Currently, Armstrong has found a family and home on a farm in Dungeness Valley, on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state. Besides inspiring much of his new original music, the healthy and beautiful environment of Dungeness offers Armstrong a fine pool of musicians to draw from, which supports an intricate and extremely rich arrangement of his original and traditional material. Linda Dowdell, a world renowned pianist, provides a silky smooth counterpoint to Armstrong's guitar, and a rhythm section which includes his wife, Kia Armstrong, creates a perfect support for Armstrong and Dowdell to spin their intimate musical phrasings together. Armstrong is also performing with a Seattle-based trio, *Armstrong Lawton Katz*, which, in its first year, was invited to play at NW Folklife Festival in Seattle, where its performance was included on the festival's CD, *Roots and Branches: Live From Folklife 2009*. Cort Armstrong is a true purveyor of traditional American music, and with his debut solo release, *Chicken Pickin'*, the world will soon know about this great new, and old, sound.

For booking and information:

(206)550-2132 cort@cortarmstrongmusic.com www.cortarmstrongmusic.com
4661 Sequim Dungeness Way, Sequim, WA 98382



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"... (a) treasure chest of acoustic American roots music."

-SingOut! Magazine

"This folks is one Appalachian hoedown that leaves no roots of American music unturned."

-Musicomet

"...the young man's version of the Smoky Mountain sound."

-Asheville Citizen-Times

"... (he had a) wealth of repertory at his disposal, very spirited playing, high good humor."

-student, California Coast Music Camp

"...(his) energetic amalgam of country blues, ragtime and old-time mountain music fits like an IPA-swiller inside a Carhartt."

-Mountain Xpress, Asheville, NC

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Info Sheet

Recordings

- **Cort Armstrong, *Chicken Pickin'*** (2010)

Recorded in 2009 at Cort's home in Dungeness, this recording features all original material, most of which was written in 2009. The combination of the quality of songs, singing and guitar playing is hard to beat. (*see separate sheet, "Chicken Pickin'", or website for more details*)

- **Blue Rooster, *Let's Get Together: A Tribute to Rev. Gary Davis*** (2002)

Recorded in Asheville in 2002, this recording features a collection of Rev. Gary Davis gospel and instrumental songs arranged for stringband. The band includes Cort Armstrong (guitar, vocals), Adam Tanner (mandolin, fiddle, vocals), Don Rawson (upright bass, vocals) and John Mulholland (percussion). (*see website for more details*)

- **Cort Armstrong & Blue Rooster, *My Heart Is Fixed*** (2001)

Recorded in Asheville in 2001, this recording features a driving bluegrass band alongside Cort's "chicken pickin'" guitar. The material ranges from Armstrong's originals, to traditional Country Blues, Ragtime and Old-time Country songs. The band includes Cort Armstrong (guitar, vocals), Daniel Coolik (mandolin), Sean Foley (piano), Andy Pond (banjo), Cailen Campbell (fiddle), Jay Sanders (upright bass) and John Mulholland (percussion). (*see website for more details*)

- **Blue Rooster, *Sweet Booty Biscuit*** (1999)

Recorded in Seattle in 1999, this recording presents Cort's first original alongside Country Blues, Bluegrass and Old-time Country songs. The legendary Seattle bluegrass band, *78 RPM*, lent a couple of their ringers to join a band which featured a strong guitar and harmonica collaboration, with very interesting results! The band includes Cort Armstrong (guitar, vocals), Sean Divine (harmonica, vocals), Ross Anderson (fiddle), Jeremy Rudo (guitar, vocals), Adam Tanner (mandolin), Tim Barrett (banjo, vocals) and Kevin Sandri (upright bass, vocals). (*see website for more details*)

Regular Side Musicians

- **Linda Dowdell** (piano and vocals) - Recently transplanted from New York City, to Dungeness Valley, WA, Dowdell brings a wealth of touring experience and musical virtuosity to Armstrong's stage show. She was the original music director for the Mark Morris Dance Group, as well as Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project, and has toured the world with these groups, and with guest artists such as Yo Yo Ma and Michelle Shocked.
- **Ethan Lawton** (mandolin and vocals) - Perhaps the most sought after mandolinist in Seattle at the moment, Lawton and Armstrong have developed a musically very intimate relationship, which is the heart of their collaborative band project, *Armstrong Lawton Katz*. Lawton performs with many local Seattle bluegrass and country bands, including Zoe Muth and the Lost High Rollers.
- **Nancy Katz** (upright bass) - Nancy Katz followed the trail of old time fiddle music from the east to the west coast, and is widely recognized for her driving bass playing, particularly in the northwest old time music and dance scene. She is best known as a member of Ranch Romance, with whom she toured nationally and recorded for 7 years. She's played bluegrass with the Jo Miller-Laura Love Connection, The Coots, and Williams-Bray, and been a trusted side person for Patsy Montana, Rose Maddox, Tiny Moore, and John Reischman,. These days she mostly plays for squares and contras with Minnie Pearl Jam and other hybrid Seattle old time string bands.

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Festivals & Notable Venues

- **Stompin' 99** (Capon Bridge, WV) - Blue Rooster shared the stage with Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, the Nashville Bluegrass Band, Acoustic Syndicate and many others.
- **Deerfield's Bluegrass Festival 2001** (Mills River, NC) - Blue Rooster shared the stage with Rhonda Vincent and the Rage and many others.
- **Bele Chere 2002** (Asheville, NC) - Blue Rooster shared the stage with Foghat, Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, and many others.
- **Brewgrass Festival 2002** (Asheville, NC) - Blue Rooster was the closing act of a star-studded lineup, including The Steep Canyon Rangers, Tony Trishka and the Kruger Brothers.
- **NW Folklife Festival 2006, 2007, 2008 & 2009** (Seattle, WA) - Armstrong's bands, *Jangle Bones* and *Armstrong Lawton Katz* have been regularly invited to one of the largest folk festivals in the world.
- **The Down Home** (Johnson City, TN)
- **The Grey Eagle Music Hall** (Asheville, NC)
- **The Tractor Tavern** (Seattle, WA)

Shared Stage With

- Ralph Stanley & The Clinch Mountain Boys
- The Nashville Bluegrass Band
- Rhonda Vincent and The Rage
- Tony Trishka
- The Kruger Brothers
- The Freight Hoppers
- The Larry Keel Experience
- Acoustic Syndicate
- The Steep Canyon Rangers

Description of Sound

Cort Armstrong performs original songs, as well as traditional music which draws from Country Blues, Old-time Mountain Stringband music, Ragtime, Bluegrass, Honky Tonk, and what might be best described as Appalachian Folk music. Perhaps best described simply as *Acoustic Americana*, Armstrong's distinctive style of guitar picking, which he calls *Chicken Pickin'*, and his emotional vocal delivery, has the power to capture his audience's ears and hearts, keeping them on the edge of their seats, wanting more. Armstrong employs his unique guitar picking style, which draws its techniques from the Country Blues pickers, with a "heavy-thumb" fingerpicking style which has a pulse and swing that suggests more than one player, but extends into the world of Country music, delighting in banjo and fiddle tunes.

Similar Sounding Artists

Rev. Gary Davis, Blind Boy Fuller, Doc Watson, Merle Travis, The Delmore Brothers, The Stanley Brothers, Howard Armstrong, Jorma Kaukonen (Hot Tuna), Jerry Garcia, Lefty Frizzell, Merle Haggard

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