

Nothin' Fancy

**IBMA Nominees, Emerging Artists of the Year
SPBGMA's 6 Time "Entertaining Group of the Year"!
(2014, 2013, 2012, 2010, 2009, and 2008)
2015 Inductees, Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame**

From the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, comes one of the most entertaining bands in the bluegrass genre, Nothin' Fancy. As a matter of fact, they've won the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America (SPBGMA) award for Entertaining Group of the Year six times!

Nothin' Fancy was formed as a bluegrass band in 1994 to compete in a bluegrass competition. Ever since then, they have grown in popularity, released 17 full length albums, and continue to perform at festivals across the United States, Canada, Holland, and Norway. Some of our previous venues include the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, TN, the Lincoln Center in New York City, and the Birchmere in Alexandria, Virginia. They have successfully hosted their own Nothin' Fancy Bluegrass Festival every year since 2001 in Buena Vista, Virginia (with 2020 and 2021 excluded due to the pandemic years). Their full-time touring schedule has earned them one of the most loyal fan bases in all of bluegrass music.

Nothin' Fancy recorded four independent albums before signing to a record label. The founders of the band were mandolinist and primary lead singer/songwriter Mike Andes, Guy Carawan on fiddle, Mitchell Davis on banjo and bass vocals, Gary Farris on guitar and tenor (and occasional lead vocals), and Tony Shorter playing an upright bass and singing baritone vocals and usually being featured on a few show-stopping lead vocals. Guy parted ways with the band after their first album *Bluegrass in a Plain Brown Wrapper*, and Chris Sexton stepped in as a session musician in 1998 and was eventually hired on board after recording the albums *Earn Your Ticket* and *Field of Dreams* with the other four founding members. The band recorded *Now and Then* with the lineup they retained for a remarkable 18 years. In 2002 they released their debut recording for Pinecastle Records, *Once Upon A Road*. This album earned them a showcase at the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) Convention and two nominations for the IBMA Emerging Artist of the Year Award in back-to-back years. The title track "Once Upon a Road" been written for the band by legendary songwriter Tom T. Hall and his wife Dixie Hall and was recorded at the Halls' personal recording studio at their home outside Nashville. Their second CD, *Reflections*, received innumerable accolades and proved that they were one of the new powerhouses in the genre, and while it has many powerful and emotional songs, it ends with a twist of humor with the Mike Andes original, "I Met My Baby in the Porta-Jon Line." Their 3rd project with Pinecastle, *Album #7* (featuring a future Doyle Lawson long-time sideman Eli Johnston on bass and vocals while Tony Shorter was on a hiatus) continues to receive rave reviews from disc jockeys and fans alike, and it features a fan favorite, "The Touch of Your Hand," written by Martha Trachtenberg. Tony Shorter returned on bass, and it was time to release an album at the request of gospel fans. *Lord Bless This House* captures Nothin' Fancy's

distinguished sound, vocal harmony, spirituality, and friendly charisma, and was produced by the acclaimed Rhonda Vincent and her brother Darrin Vincent (of Dailey and Vincent fame) and showcases vocal appearances by both producers. In 2011, under their new label, Virginia Dreams Records, they released their latest self-titled CD, *Nothin' Fancy*. This album holds true to their Nothin' Fancy sound while introducing a few new pieces to the Nothin' Fancy puzzle. Following the departure of Gary Farris (replaced by Justin Tomlin from the Deer Creek Boys), Nothin' Fancy was honored to record their first Christmas album, *A Nothin' Fancy Christmas* as a collaboration with National Media Services out of Front Royal, VA. Their love of traditional Christmas music can be heard in each self-produced, self-arranged song under the direction of fiddler and multi-instrumentalist Chris Sexton. Already with 18 years and 10 full-length albums completed, Nothin' Fancy released *Most Requested, Volume 1* in 2013. Justin Tomlin eventually retired from Nothin' Fancy and returned to the Deer Creek Boys and was replaced by Jesse Smathers, who went into the studio with Nothin' Fancy for the last Virginia Dreams recording *The Test of Time* (a collection of traditional bluegrass songs and songs considered part of the standard repertoire). Nothin' Fancy then signed to their current label, Mountain Fever Records in 2015, which was an auspicious year with the band's then-members being initiated honorarily into Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia (a national music fraternity) and being honored as the 2015 inductees into the Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame by the Virginia Folk Music Association (VFMA), which features notables such as Roy Clark, Patsy Cline, Tony Rice, Ralph Stanley, the Statler Brothers, and Jimmy Dean. Jesse was soon asked to join the Lonesome River Band and he was replaced by Caleb Cox. Under the guidance of Mark Hodges and the skillful production of Mountain Heart alumnus Aaron Ramsey, Nothin' Fancy returned to the charts with *By Any Other Name's* lead track "Love, War, and Games." The album *Where I Came From* introduced the songwriting talents of Caleb Cox to radio audiences with his heart-wrenching song "Bus Fare." That album would be Tony Shorter's last recording with Nothin' Fancy as the band and Tony parted ways in 2017, and Caleb's brother James Cox became the new bassist. The next project *It's a Good Feeling* marked James' debut and featured a few more contributions from Caleb Cox paired up with Mike Andes' prolific output of original material. In 2018, the next album *Time Changes Everything* became a summation of Mitchell Davis' history as he retired from the road. The album was a reflective collection of mostly cover songs with four songs being contributed by Andes and Cox. Replacing the veteran Davis on banjo fell to Jacob Flick, a longtime fan of Nothin' Fancy and a student in the East Tennessee State University's Appalachian studies program. The group returned to the Mountain Fever studios for an all-original album featuring seven Mike Andes originals, four from Caleb Cox, and reworked instrumental from Chris Sexton. This 2019 album, *Undeniable*, got notable airplay from the track "Diggin' Coal" by Andes. Caleb left the group at the end of 2020 at the height of the pandemic (and eventually joined the US Navy Bluegrass Band a.k.a. Country Current), and the group made a bold move to do auditions via Zoom and hired Jacobe Lauzon from Ontario, Canada as the new guitarist, making Nothin' Fancy an international act. The next album, which is due to officially be released in October 2023, is a tongue-in-cheek title: *Here We Go Again*, which both nods to the pandemic and having to adjust to change. It featured songs by Mike Andes and James Cox and featured a tribute to the late songwriter John Prine, who was among those who perished from the COVID pandemic, in a unique rendition of Prine's song "Paradise," which has become a fan favorite despite not being an original. By the end of 2022, both Lauzon and James Cox had left the group. Nothin' Fancy was fortunate to audition Curt Gausman, a veteran of bluegrass from the 1980s and 1990s when DC was a big bluegrass destination, at the 20th annual Nothin' Fancy Bluegrass

Festival. In search of a bass player and using substitute bass players for the opening months of 2023, Nothin' Fancy found a bass player that had what they were looking for in a single-named bass player named "Jenkins." Now with a complete band, Nothin' Fancy has been amazing crowds with tight intense harmony and dazzling instrumental prowess and are very excited about 2024 as the 30-year anniversary approaches. Festivals and venues are anxious to have Nothin' Fancy be part of a 30-year anniversary celebratory tour, and for all the great things the band has done, the best may still be yet to come for the future of the band.

In 2014, 2013, 2012, 2010, 2009, and 2008, the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America (SPBGMA) honored Nothin' Fancy with the prestigious "Entertaining Group of the Year" award. The band has also been nominated for SPBGMA's Vocal Group of the Year and various band members have been nominated for individual awards as well. In addition, Nothin' Fancy has hired and/or discovered talented musicians who are still making a mark in the music of their own, and we were blessed to have them while they were among our numbers.

Their strong vocals, powerful instrumentation, and energetic stage presence, along with their friendly down-to-earth charm keeps people coming back for more. Nothin' Fancy is not just carrying on the tradition of bluegrass music; they are contributing to the creation of a new tradition within the acoustic music genre. The band has weathered much in their 30 years of existence from major personnel changes to surviving through a pandemic, and yet the band of brothers that make up Nothin' Fancy are stronger now than ever, and we look forward to bringing the energy and excitement to a festival or venue near you!

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Members

Mike Andes, born and raised in Timberville, VA, is the remaining original founder of the band. He began performing publicly at age 14. Mike will tell you his music ability is God-given. He plays by ear and has never had any lessons or professional training. Several family members, including his brothers and uncles, influenced Mike with their musical abilities. In the early 1980s, Mike formed his first band, The East Coast Bluegrass Band and in 1994 joined the four other founding members of Nothin' Fancy to create a new act. Mike always wanted a full-time career in music and Nothin' Fancy has given him the opportunity to fulfill this goal. During his time with Nothin' Fancy, Mike has been nominated for Mandolin Player of the Year, Male Vocalist of the Year, Individual Entertainer of the Year and Songwriter of the Year through the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America (SPBGMA). Mike has become well known as an exceptional MC for the band and keeps the show rolling from song to song with his wit and charm. Mike has always considered Charlie Waller to be his bluegrass hero. He learned his trade by Charlie Waller and the Country Gentlemen's example. The Seldom Scene has also been a huge influence on Mike's music, along with the work of Sam Bush, David Grisman, and other mandolin greats. When Mike is not touring with Nothin' Fancy, he enjoys building mandolins, fiddles and woodworking in general. He also enjoys the outdoors and gardening with his wife, Becky, at their home in Pataskala, OH. Together, Mike and Becky have three sons, one daughter, a son-in-law, and four beautiful grandchildren.

Chris Sexton, multi-instrumentalist, is usually seen with a fiddle (but sometimes a viola or a cello and in rare instances behind a piano), and now usually sings the baritone vocals. He debuted with the band in 1998 at the Maury River Fiddler's Convention, where the band won first prize in the bluegrass band competition – he still has the ribbon. He appeared as a guest on the band's second and third self-released albums and joined the band in the summer of 2000. His dad, “Buster” Sexton who played banjo in several bands in the 70’s and early 80’s, introduced Chris to bluegrass. Although his first instrument was a mandolin, Chris soon focused his energies on the violin. Throughout middle and high school, he grew as a violinist in symphony orchestras, the All-Virginia Orchestra, and the National Symphony Orchestra Youth Apprenticeship Program, while keeping his bluegrass roots. Chris attended Shenandoah University in Winchester, VA, graduating with a Bachelor of Music in Music Performance. Soon after, he found himself fiddling with the East Coast Bluegrass Band with his father and working alongside Mike Andes, and he joined Andes in Nothin' Fancy soon after. He also has appeared in the Maryland Symphony Orchestra, is a regular sub for the first violin section of the Roanoke Symphony, served as the assistant principal violist and acting principal violist with the Loudoun Symphony, the assistant principal violist of the Piedmont Symphony Orchestra, and he also served for five years as a co-director leading string students in the American Children of SCORE, a children’s ensemble based in Warrenton, VA. His violin work could also be heard on several TV specials in the early 2000s that were featured on the Discovery Channel, the Learning Channel, PBS, and the National Geographic Channel. In 2008, Chris returned to Shenandoah University for a master’s degree in violin pedagogy (the methods of teaching violin in private lesson settings) and graduated with the MM in 2010 – all while maintaining a busy touring and teaching schedule. When Chris isn't playing bluegrass, he’s teaching violin, viola, cello, piano, and bluegrass fiddle in his own studio in old-town Manassas, VA. He also routinely does work for DC-area recording studios as a session musician with over 60 appearances in his discography, and he is also an adjunct professor of violin, viola, and cello at the Woodbridge Campus of the Northern Virginia Community College. In the fall of 2005, Chris released his first solo disc on Pinecastle Records, *Coffee at Midnight* and he released a second, all-classical solo album entitled *Proof* in 2013. His hobbies include cooking, composing music, and traveling.

Jacob Flick is Nothin' Fancy's banjo man. He is a graduate from East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, TN with a major in Appalachian studies (concentration in bluegrass) and is among a new generation of bluegrass musicians who are pursuing the study of the music in institutes of higher learning. Now living in Johnson City, TN, he originally calls Singers Glen, VA his stomping grounds. Jacob has been a fan of Nothin’ Fancy for years and considered playing with Nothin’ Fancy “a dream job” ever since. The crew of Nothin’ Fancy are happy to make that dream a reality! He is an avid fisherman, collects vinyl records, spends time with friends and family, and of course spends a lot of quality time with his banjo and has recently been seen with Nothin’ Fancy at the helm of a pedal steel guitar and one might catch him with a dobro as well.

Curt Gausman joined the band in late 2022. Curt lives north of Charlottesville, VA in a town called Ruckersville with his wife Lori. He is returning to bluegrass after stint off the road after working with bands based out of northern Virginia in the 1980s. He was part of Hobbs and Partners, led by Arnold Hobbs and included John Paganoni (a renowned mandolin maker that built mandolins for Doyle Lawson), John’s son Chris Paganoni (who has been a substitute guitarist and tenor with Nothin’ Fancy in recent years), and the banjo virtuoso Mark Delaney.

From his work with Hobbs, he formed the Hazel River Band, which he led through 1996 and recorded two albums with the Hay Holler label. When that group disbanded, he enjoyed success as a charter bus tour coordinator operating his own tour bus until the pandemic of 2020. Curt came to the Nothin' Fancy festival in 2022 and delivered impressive tenor harmony with strong rhythm guitar to back it up. The band had Curt join in performances starting in October 2022 in West Virginia, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Florida. The responses from the crowd over Curt's seasoned vocals and affable boyish grins were more than enough to earn his bandmate's respect, and he was soon asked to take his place onstage with Nothin' Fancy as a regular. Since then, he and his wife Lori have been actively posting a "Friday Fancy Feature" on the band's Facebook page and garnering attention to clips old and new and helping fans and musicians discover or rediscover what the band can do. He is thrilled to be playing and singing once again, and the band is thrilled to have him as an integral part of what makes our band special and unique.

Jenkins is Nothin' Fancy's newest member. Going only by a single moniker as a stage name, he comes to us from the swampy midlands of the Palmetto State of South Carolina. He refers to his instrument as a "largemouth upright bass," but even while being a jokester who asks of his audiences "if you're going to throw tomatoes, remember to take them out of the can first," Jenkins certainly takes his music and his bass playing very seriously. He "carries a torch of bluegrass music in his heart" in his own words and has done so for several decades. He has performed on three continents with Frank Solivan and recorded on a project with Frank Wakefield. Audiences have come already in his short time with the band to know and respect his unique and innovative approach to the Nothin' Fancy repertoire, and his impromptu bass solos are calculated to elicit a roar of applause from any audience.

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Quotes

"...Nothin' Fancy maintains a high level of proficiency and professionalism that unquestionably establishes them as a force to be reckoned with in the world of bluegrass music. Indeed the future for Nothin' Fancy is boundless and filled with enormous expectations."

-Bluegrass Unlimited

"...A Unique sound that vacillates between smooth, progressive bluegrass and country-tinged Americana."

-Cary Virgin, Bluegrass Now

"Impressive is one of the many synonyms for the word fancy. Despite their name, 'impressive' describes Virginia based Nothin' Fancy to a 'T'..."

-Sing Out!

"Group members have developed a strong blend that features tight harmonies and evocative solo performances. The band's chemistry with each other is superb. Of course, it doesn't hurt that they have a great deal of musical talent and vocals thrown in there, too."

-Maverick

“This bluegrass band personifies the definition of "antithesis" with its name Nothin' Fancy. It is the opposite, very fancy. Stellar vocals along with impeccable bluegrass harmonies are just the starting point. The instrumental prowess of the group members also likens itself to some of the old pros that have traveled this road before them...When these guys play, it is everything but nothing fancy. Their name may not be indicative of their music, but I would rather a group use their vocals, instrumental skill, and songwriting abilities speak for them in lieu of their name doing all of the talking.”

-Bluegrass Works

“Nothin' Fancy is the act that America needs to see.”

-D. A. Callaway, music coordinator at Silver Dollar City (ret.)

“Nothin' Fancy is the most entertaining band in bluegrass. For 29 years, they've been pounding the pavement and putting smiles on bluegrass fans' faces the world over.”

-Mark Hodges, owner of Mountain Fever Records

“Nothin' Fancy delivers a show that is authentic to their brand of music. It's always sure to be fun and entertaining!”

-Rhonda Vincent

“One of the industry's most entertaining shows!”

-Randy Graham

For Booking Nothin' Fancy Contact:



Booking Information

Graham Talent Group

Randy Graham - Agent

236 McGee Road

Benson, NC 27504

(859) 421-7718

randy@grahamtalent.com

www.grahamtalent.online

Website Information

www.nothingfancybluegrass.com

<https://www.facebook.com/nothingfancybg>

Nothin' Fancy

www.nothinfancybluegrass.com

<https://www.facebook.com/nothinfancybg>

www.grahamtalent.online

Region of origin: Shenandoah Valley, VA

Musical Genre: Bluegrass

Latest CD: Here We Go Again (September 29, 2023)

Members/Instruments:
Mike Andes, *mandolin/vocals*
Jacob Flick, *banjo/vocals*
Jenkins, *bass*
Curt Gausman, *guitar/vocals*
Chris Sexton, *fiddle/vocals*

Points of Note: Awarded SPBGMA's Entertaining Group of the Year three consecutive years (2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2014). Band members during those years have been nominated for individual awards for their respective instruments, vocals and songwriting talents and the band has also been nominated for Vocal Group of the Year.

Nothin' Fancy was formed as a bluegrass band in 1994. Ever since then, they have grown in popularity, released 11 full length albums, and continue to perform at festivals across the United States, Canada and Norway including the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, TN, the Lincoln Center in New York City, and the Birchmere in Alexandria, Virginia. They have successfully hosted their own Nothin' Fancy Bluegrass Festival every year since 2001 in Buena Vista, Virginia.

Booking:

Graham Talent Group
Randy Graham - Agent
236 McGee Road
Benson, NC 27504
(859) 421-7718

randy@grahamtalent.net

Record Label:

Mountain Fever Records
1177 Alum Ridge Road NW
Willis, VA 24380
540-789-7403 (Office)
540-267-5978 (Cell)

radio@mountainfever.com

Business Manager & Festival Coordinator:

Robyn Wines
PO Box 248
Catawba, VA 24070
Phone: 540-529-0568

nfbgf11@comcast.net
