
FROM THE PRO:

Wyatt Ellis



I was drawn to music at a young age. I began playing piano when I was five but always found my way to stringed instruments whenever one was around. My mom would hide my toy guitar when I was a baby so I would take a nap! Looking back now, it's easy to see my love for music has been there all along. When I was nine, I heard Bill Monroe for the first time and fell in love with bluegrass music and the mandolin. Shortly after that, I talked my dad into buying me a used mandolin off the wall at a big box music store. So it's easy to say that Bill Monroe is my biggest musical inspiration. He created a whole vocabulary for the mandolin, that few people can accurately reproduce. The first time I heard him I knew that's what I wanted to do.

ASIDE FROM BEING OUR YOUNGEST ENDORSING ARTIST, WYATT IS ONE OF OUR MOST RECENT. WYATT IS NOW 13 YEARS OF AGE, AND WE ASKED HIM TO SHARE HIS EXPERIENCES GETTING INTO MANDOLIN PLAYING AND BLUEGRASS

Unfortunately, I spent the first six months playing mandolin with a twice broken wrist, in a cast. After the cast came off, I told my parents I wanted to play music with other people so we found a bluegrass jam in the fall of 2019. I was hooked after the first night. Although, I didn't even know my mandolin needed a strap! Before the pandemic, I was spending up to three hours a day just traveling to Boy Scouts, Taekwon-Do, and soccer practice. I had games on the weekends. The best I could do musically was squeezing in a weekly 30-minute mandolin lesson: When all of that stopped, I was left home, fortunately, with my mandolin. There was a big problem, I don't have any musicians in my family. I started using the internet and found an entire mandolin community online. I had time and so many resources at my fingertips. In 2020, I was chosen for a Tennessee Folklife apprenticeship with Sierra Hull. That was the spark that changed everything. I knew I wanted to work as hard as I could with Sierra on my side. Sierra opened my mind to many other styles of mandolin playing. We worked on fundamentals and even co-wrote an instrumental. In addition to working with Sierra, I've sought out the best players alive today, who were also stuck at home, and taken private lessons, online platforms and workshops from them. I set to learning hundreds of fiddle tunes and most of Monroe's tunes over the past two and a half years. I have currently written or co-written over 60 instrumentals since the pandemic began. I am working on my first album of all original tunes that were inspired by or co-written with some of my mandolin heroes! I also began playing guitar and fiddle in 2021, and I feel that being a multi-instrumentalist has helped my mandolin playing. The biggest challenge I am facing today is, with everything starting to happen again, where did all that time go?



STRAIGHT UP STRINGS