

European World of Bluegrass x 10!

By: Rienk Janssen

May 2007 will bring the tenth edition of the EWOB since its start in 1998. Although 10 is just another number, I am often asked what will be "extra" or "special" about this year's event. My honest answer, then, usually is that we have done the very best we could, every single year, and that this will be exactly the same in 2007. If the tenth EWOB will be better and bigger than the ninth—of which I am quite sure—that is no exception, as the ninth was better and bigger than the eighth, and so on....

The European Bluegrass Music Association (EBMA) and its EWOB basically have two goals:

- To create more cohesion and cooperation within the European bluegrass community, and
- To make bluegrass music better known and more popular in Europe.

The first purpose is served by the EWOB by inviting everybody who is active in bluegrass music, in any way, to the EWOB Festival in Voorthuizen, The Netherlands (this year, May 17-19). This event has been growing steadily over the past nine years, to where we now have 87 applications from bands to perform there in 2007 and will probably have well over 1,000 visitors.

We see the growth of this convention as an increase in numbers, but even more as a growing involvement in the bluegrass scene, professional or otherwise.

Features of the EWOB Festival:

No less than 42 bluegrass acts will present themselves on stage, of which 90% are European from all over the continent, and some from the USA.

One of the European bands will be voted # 1 European Bluegrass Band 2007 by the participating musicians. The winner will carry that title for one year and will have the opportunity to represent European bluegrass all

over, and especially at IBMA's World of Bluegrass in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Audience Popularity Award will be given to one of the European bands, based on votes from everyone in the audience.

There will be workshops, seminars and meetings about many bluegrass music-related topics. The number of workshops increases every year; new features this year include a bass workshop and a discussion on IBMA matters.

There is a Trade Show, with merchandise and information of all kinds: musical instruments (including exhibits by leading European luthiers), CDs, magazines, associations, etc.

There will be a program for children, where they can enjoy and take part in the music.

...And yes, there will be an exposition of paraphernalia from 10 years of EWOB!

EWOB throughout Europe

The second purpose of "EWOB" is primarily served by encouraging and supporting new or existing bluegrass events throughout Europe, especially during the month of May, which is Worldwide Bluegrass Music Month. Instead of trying to get everybody to come to Voorthuizen from many hundreds or even thousands of kilometers away, we would rather see that there will be more and more concerts and festivals in all the different countries, so that bluegrass fans can hear the music close to home and more people will get to know bluegrass. In past years we have had approximately 100 events listed in the EWOB period each year—including everything from festivals to house concerts. All events taking part in EWOB 2007 will be listed in the *EWOB Guide 2007*, published by the EBMA, issued to all EBMA members together with *Bluegrass Europe* magazine, and also available on its own.

For more information, please go to: www.ewob.eu and www.ebma.org.

Mideando String Quintet - #1 European Bluegrass Band 2006

The Mideando String Quintet from Italy were the winners of the #1 European Bluegrass Band award at the EWOB Festival 2006. They will represent European bluegrass music at IBMA's World of Bluegrass 2007,



The Mideando String Quartet, voted #1 European Bluegrass Band in 2006

showing their unique brand of music at the convention. Musically and vocally they

are of superb quality, and besides that they are real showmen who capture their audiences immediately wherever they appear. They do have a very free approach to the music; the bluegrass influence shines through in many ways, but they do not sound like any other band. As such they are living proof that international bluegrass is not just trying to copy the American examples, but leads into different directions, with influences from national/regional backgrounds, as well as from other musical styles.