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"On The Record" With James Reams

Listen to **Jimmy Martin** and **Paul**

The Masterclass of Music

*Howdy, Folks, Howdy. I'm **Bill Monroe**, and this is my Master class in "Staying Power in the Blue Grass Music."*

If you were scrolling on Instagram, and suddenly saw an ad featuring Bill Monroe's Master Class in Bluegrass, I wonder what his course would include?

Let me conjecture. I'm sure he would talk about the less glamorous, but more realistic aspects of life in a bluegrass band. He'd probably talk more about riding around in a beat-up bus that breaks down in the worst situations, and perhaps most importantly, the value of staying power. I'm sure he wouldn't be trying to make you not become a Bluegrass musician, as we all know live music is a treasure and the high points certainly outweigh the low. Yet, I'm sure he wouldn't want you to embark on your musical journey without knowing a few of the facts. I can hear him now, "Now son, I just got to tell you how to keep the music real and mighty powerful, and it ain't always gonna be easy."

Say goodbye to spending your evenings at home and a five-day work job.

Bands need to practice. According to Jimmy Martin, one of Bill's many successful protégés, "a band needs to have five practice sessions weekly as a minimum to show results." While that seems a bit overboard, there's a balance that needs to be found in order to have a healthy relationship with the band. Just as you would treat a new puppy, getting a degree in school, or playing for your local softball team as an unshakable commitment, so should you treat practicing with your band. Any endeavor worth undertaking requires practice to make it successful, and music is no exception.

Sacrifices must be made if we want to achieve great things in music. Enjoying going to the movies on Friday night? How about band practice or playing a show? Meet up with your band club on Wednesday evening? Band practice

Williams on our first episode of "The Roots and The Recording Low-Down" Available now on [iTunes](#)

would be a good idea. Enjoy playing video games? Not anymore. Now you use spare time for band duties, practice, and traveling.

It's important to become familiar with your local music community is such an important aspect of being a musician. Spending time to other bands and their shows is just as important as your own projects. This is common courtesy even though it may prove difficult to persuade another local band to attend your show, if you share no interest in them. Bands and musicians that seem

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Social Media

Bands have been using websites and email newsletters such as this one to reach fans and friends for decades now, but there's been a new kid on the block for the past decade or so. Most musicians are present on social media platforms like *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. However, there are other platforms designed specifically for music, like *Band Camp*. These platforms can help you attract attention for your project, so get ready to have your phone filled with notifications. The use of social media can be a burden for some people; hence, everybody in the band or project should be part of the media bandwagon. Also don't be afraid to designate time away from social media obligations. Overwhelming as it may seem at times, social media is one of the most effective tools for audience engagement.

Stay in Shape

You don't have to be the most athletic guy or girl, but a big part of being a musician is moving and lifting things. Moving heavy sound equipment, merch, or tables and chairs are tasks that fall on musicians working events. Being willing and able to help your bandmates helps build bonds that sitting idly by would never build. If you don't know how to drive, it's a good time to learn how to take a turn behind the wheel. A helping hand is always wonderful, and the more ways you're able to serve your bandmates, the more likely you are to continue your tenure in the group.

New friends

Playing bluegrass at festivals means a large community of musicians, promoters, venue owners, and staff will be involved with the performance, almost as if they are part of the band. If you're from a small town without much of the music scene, you may have to look beyond your current pool of friends for potential collaborators. When it happens, you may find yourself so overwhelmed with the complexity that you would rather have simpler days of watching TV and tiddlywinks. It's important to find middle ground between following your musical ambitions and maintaining the relationships surrounding it. An artist needs to step back to regain a sense of him or herself within the community at large.