



## **Musical instruments & Jack Danielle's Band**

- Rob I'm in an amazing music shop in Carhaix. I'm speaking to the owner, Richard Donan. Richard, what kind of things have you got here in your shop?
- Richard Ah ... I have guitar, I make guitar, banjo, I make banjo, I have mandolin, I have bazooki, I have mandole, all you need for the music.
- Rob A lot of these stringed instruments are ones that you have made?
- Richard Yes. Yes, I have what I made, the instruments I made and I have the other for if you are not professional, you do not need a professional guitar. You just have a guitar good quality, a cheap guitar and a I have these too.
- Rob So the instruments that you make, the guitars and so on that you make, they are for professional players?
- Richard Yes, because, or, not professional only but it cost some money more some others they do not make with me, they make in China or, I don't know, Dutch, they are a good price, come for me factory, a good price, ha, ha.
- Rob But you make your instruments here at the back here in the workshop?
- Richard Yes.
- Rob How long does it take to make, for example, a guitar? How many hours of work?
- Richard Er, one hundred and fifty?
- Rob One hundred and fifty hours to make a guitar?
- Richard Yes, until finished and ready to play.
- Rob Okay.
- Richard You start with just wood, go to the machine, make the uh, make the

work, eh vernis ...

Rob Varnish, yes.

Richard Varnish, yes. With the string(s) and réglage, you know ...

Rob Tuning.

Richard Tuning. It's okay for play. Just one hundred and fifty hours. It can be more longer than this.

Rob Is this been your trade always? Have you always made instruments?

Richard No, no, no. I start here in 2006 year, and I open my shop in this year and before I make ten years practise, practise, practise for be a good ... maker. But before I have another job.

Rob And you play, er, banjo I understand?

Richard Yes. I play banjo.

Rob Five-stringed banjo.

Richard Five-string, yeah.

Rob And what's so special about a five string?

Richard It's special is because you never meet this instrument before. Guitar, everybody play guitar, but with five string you have a little string, start in the middle on the neck. That's why the people like to play, they don't understand how to do play banjo and have somebody to learn you is very difficult.

Rob And what kind of music is most commonly played? What kind of genre of music is played on the banjo?

Richard At first it was old-time, old-time style with old-time feeling, and after you have 'Blue Grass' arrive, and now all these people arrive, they play all style of music, they play classical, they play in a rock band ...

Rob It's not a Breton instrument?

Richard No, no it's not Breton. Someone a long time ago there is an orchestre, orchestra for the ball, popular, and there is a banjo. He don't, it is not a five-string, it was a four-string. And after he disappear, and five-string take up, takes the up ...

Rob Takes the majority, I guess?

Richard The majority, yes.

Rob And you have several groups that you play with?

Richard Oui, yes, I have one group for now 12 years. We start twelve years before, and we have make two CD(s).

Rob What's the name of the band?

Richard The Jack Danielle's String Band. It's popular. I think when we play, we have a big party always.

Rob It's true, I've seen you play. It's always a party. And what other bands do you play with? I've met some other musicians just now.

Richard It's a new band, and the name is Penticoups, and we play folk and Blue Grass. A lot of sing., a lot of singer in band. In English, there is banjo, contrebass, mandolin, guitar and harmonica. That's the group. And two singer.

Rob And two singers?

Richard Yes.

Rob Female singers or male singers?

Richard The two. We have Delphine and Favre

Rob And we're lucky because one of the members of your Jack Danielle's String Band has just arrived!

Richard Hello, Jack.

Jack Hello.

Rob Jack. Jack Tetley, hi.

Jack Hi, Rob.

Rob We were just talking about the different groups that you play. You play Blue Grass music with Richard. What's so special about Blue Grass?

Jack I believe that most people who put a foot into Blue Grass music tend to get hooked on it, 'cos it's, it's something ... I don't know ... very social music. It can be very simple to play for beginner players, and then it can also be very complicated to play for people who want to push it further. And it's., yeah, it's a very wide-range music. It's not a very, very ancient music. People think it's really old because it's, it's acoustic, but it's not that old. The actual style of Blue Grass was born in the 50s. And it was a kind of a mix of music that already existed, something between old time music, country music, gospel music, blues, and Irish music. All that mixed

together brought Blue Grass to life.

Rob Richard was just telling us that when you, the Jack Daniels Band, play, there's often a party going. How do you reckon the Breton people like Blue Grass? Because it's it's not anything to do with traditional Breton music, is it?

Jack Yeah, but I mean Breton people don't only like Breton music, they like, they like lots of different musics ... and well, I don't know why they particularly like our band. I mean it's true that we get to play quite a lot just in Brittany. People ask us year after year to come and play, even though they know us already. But it might be because we're the only Blue Grass band. I don't know, they might not think it's that amazing, but since we're the only one if they really want Blue Grass music they call us, I don't know.

Rob I've seen people, the audience, react. It's great to watch.

Jack Yeah, Blue Grass music ... you can easily imagine how to dance it, even though people don't often dance to our gigs, 'cos it's, they don't know the culture that much.

Rob So how did you get into Blue Grass yourself?

Jack Oh, by my dad. No big secret. I didn't discover it by my own. Me and my little sister Danielle, who sings and plays with us, we grew up with Blue Grass music.

Rob So you grew up with it?

Jack Yeah. Basically, before we could even play instruments we were already singing Blue Grass songs with our dad and stuff.

Rob Um, Jack Danielle's String Band, you've got yourself, your sister, Danielle ...

Jack That's right.

Rob You've got Richard. Who else plays in the band?

Jack Well that's the beginning trio, me, Danielle and Richard. We met, three of us basically, that's what got it started. And then we met the double-bass player, Jonathan, Jonathan Coserter who er, we used to go to school with him, me and my sister, and, yeah, found out that he was playing double-bass and so we thought 'Oh yeah, we could do with a double-bass player', and then so he was up for it. Then we met a drummer called Nico, and first we had a quintet with drums and we were doing all sorts of mixes of Blue Grass and country music with other stuff, like hip-hop, or drum and bass we saw rock steady style stuff, since we had a drum kit and he was very good at it we decided to have fun with it basically. Then he left the band years later, and at the same time we met a fiddle player,

an amazing fiddle player called Gabrielle, Gabrielle Faure, so that gave another turn to the band. Suddenly, we didn't have a drum any more but we had a fiddle with it. It sounded a lot more traditional. And then eventually we met another fiddle-player, called Nico Hayes, Nicola Hayes ...

Rob She's not Breton, is she?

Jack No, she's from Australia. And she's an amazing fiddle player, plays a lot of Irish music, old time music ... At first we asked her to come and replace the other fiddle player, who couldn't play for a gig, and then it became pretty obvious that it would be great to do it with two fiddles, because in Blue Grass music very often you get twin fiddles for some tunes, and they play the melody together with harmonies and it gives it a real amazing effect to the tune, and so now we're a sextet, effectively. I mean now and then there's one of us missing, or maybe two, but we really like playing all the six of us together.

Rob And you only have one microphone?

Jack And we only have one mike, yeah.

Rob So how do you manage that, for anybody that hasn't seen you play?

Jack Not very well, I mean... Different people think ... well a lot of people think it's amazing, and other people say that you can't hear everything, which is true, but the idea is to bring people to listen more, which... 'cos we used to plug in all our instruments and people wouldn't listen that much to the music even though, even though we had sound. It doesn't mean that you put ... well, it's not because you put the sound up that people listen more that's a false idea. And er, at first we decided to do that just to make it simpler, and also so th.. because the instruments sound more natural through a good microphone than when you plug them in they sound all plastic when you plug instruments in, even with good pick-ups and good instruments, and it's really hard to get a natural sound out of a pick-up. And so, yeah, that was the idea at first, and it's been working just better ever since ... and it's not easy to get it working properly ...

Rob There's a choreography involved, isn't there?

Jack Yeah, not only we have to be pretty sharp in our movements to make it work properly, but the sound engineer has a good job to do. Getting the most out of one microphone is not that simple, even though he only has one microphone to deal with, it's quite complicated to make it really optimal ... can you say that? 'Optimal', is that English, optimal?

Rob Anyone who's seen the film *Oh Brother Where Art Thou* will be

familiar with your style on stage, won't they?

Jack Exactly, yeah.

Rob And it's, er, and it's probably maybe it's brought Blue Grass to a lot of people that didn't know it before.

Jack Oh yeah, er, twenty years ago Blue Grass was quite popular in France, there's a lot of local players like Jackie Molard, you might have heard of Jackie Molard, a very famous fiddle player round here. And Soïg Siberil and guys like that, they used to love Blue Grass music and they even had a band called Le Gazon Bleu, and er, and yeah ...

Rob Blue Grass, Gazon Bleu, Blue Grass ...

Jack Yeah. There used to be more, I reckon, Blue Grass fans in France twenty years ago, it's slightly kind of faded away, Blue Grass lovers in France, and then, yeah, when the film *Oh Brother Where Art Thou* came out, well, it kind of gave it a new kick, and Blue Grass came back, and we felt it in our band, lots of people asking like for us to play tunes from the film and we thought, ah, yeah, okay, we've been playing for ten years and now you want us to play Blue Grass all of a sudden. It's funny, that. But yeah, it's come a little bit, Blue Grass music in France.

Rob Richard, do you write your own music, or ...

Richard Write the music? Jackie write the sing.

Rob The tunes, yeah.

Richard The sing, the text of the sings. We use traditional music, and we change the music. It's Jackie make the music more than... eh ...

Rob Jack, you are the songwriter?

Jack Yeah, yeah.

Richard Music writer, too? But everybody have something to say, when you play, you have an idea you make your idea.

Jack Yeah, I, when I write a song I give the basic harmony idea and then I ask people to try and find a tune to go with it, or a solo, just a solo, a written solo can make a completely different tune if someone gets it right.

Rob Well maybe we could get a chance to actually hear you play some music together? Would that be okay?

Jack Yeah, I don't know if you've said it already but we're kind of surrounded in instruments here, you can probably hear it in the

echo.

Rob As well as the traffic going by.

Jack Yeah, as well as the traffic going by. We're in the music shop, yeah, why not play a tune?