

## music

# One Day at a Time

The musical life of Galloway & Luckett

by Rebecca Ragain

**B**arb Galloway has been playing guitar since about age 4. Actually, it was a toy guitar at that time. But it didn't take long for her to graduate to the real thing and begin a musical career spanning about 40 years, depending on when one starts the official count.

Today, Galloway lives and performs in Portland, where she grew up. She is nearly inseparable from her partner in life and music, Donna Luckett.

Luckett plays bass in their musical duo, called Galloway & Luckett, which performs at coffeehouses, farmers markets and bookstores as well as at events like Portland Pride and the Waterfront Blues Festival. The Saturday and Sunday Hillsboro farmers markets are a summer favorite.

In addition, the two are often hired to play at private gigs such as commitment ceremonies and awards dinners. Luckett, who manages booking and organizational details, says the group averages a gig per week throughout most of the year.

At this point in the couple's career, Luckett rarely has to call venues and ask for gigs: "We're well known in some of these places, so when they start booking music they call us, which is really nice."

The couple are looking forward to a tour of England, Ireland and Scotland this fall. In addition to several scheduled performances, Galloway is excited to sit in on some informal jam sessions at the pubs.

Except for the scheduled performances in Europe, Luckett plans mostly to sit back and watch. "I don't jam. Barb's the real connoisseur of music."

In fact, it was Galloway who taught Luckett how to play bass, and a smattering of rhythm guitar.

There is no doubt in Luckett's mind as to who is the primary musician of the couple, who have been together for 18 years now. "I'm a really solid bass player. She's taught me well. However, I feel like she's really the artist and lead musician."



Barb Galloway (left) and Donna Luckett are partners in life and music.

The self-described talker of the two, Luckett adds that her role is "promoting and focusing on Barb's talents."

There is certainly ample talent to support. Galloway plays the guitar, mandolin, accordion and bass. She switches genres with ease, being proficient in jazz, blues, country and bluegrass.

In a review published in *The Oregonian*, Marty Hughley wrote that Galloway's 1997 debut album, *When I'm with You*, was "worth waiting for." He called the album "a fitting document of what's been a quietly well-respected career" and described her guitar playing as "exemplary" and "tastefully executed."

*Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* recently featured Galloway in a special issue focusing on 16 women who play the acoustic steel string guitar in the flatpick style.

Galloway wrote both the instrumental and vocal parts for most of the songs on the couple's two self-produced CDs and is working on tunes for a third. When writing, she draws inspiration from her observations about life. Sometimes she wakes up in the middle of the night with an idea for a song.

Galloway is also a respected music teacher at Watz Up Hillsboro Music Co., where she usually has a waiting list. Her students stay with her for years, in part due to her unique willingness and ability to teach them to play almost any style of music that interests them, from heavy metal to gospel.

"Some [students] have joined bands, gotten to the point where they're pretty good and sent me a CD," says Galloway, clearly pleased by her pupils' success.

If anything outshines Galloway's talents as a musician, composer and teacher, it is her courage and strength as a performer. Throughout most of her career, female lead guitar players were rare enough in the industry that Galloway grew accustomed to being described as "the girl that plays guitar." People made assumptions about her skills as a musician because of her gender, especially in the earlier years, but she didn't let them get her down.

"I just play my music. Most of the time the men will come up to me and ask, 'Whoa, how did you do' such-and-such...I just be myself and play."

Now that Galloway finds the public generally to be more accepting of the idea that a woman can be a great guitar player, she has a new challenge to face. In 1998, she was diagnosed with a little-known degenerative disorder called Familial Spastic Paraparesis. (For more information visit the Spastic Paraplegia Foundation online at [www.sp-foundation.org](http://www.sp-foundation.org)).

In addition to other physical complications, Galloway has gradually been losing the ability to walk. Nowadays, she gets around with a walker or an electric scooter.

Galloway explains that the disease is progressive, "so you learn as you go how to deal with the next issue



Galloway was featured in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's* first Women Flatpickers Edition in September 2006.

that comes up." She also has to be careful not to overtax herself and performs while seated on a stool instead of standing.

In the nine years since the disease took hold, Galloway & Luckett has yet to turn down a gig because of the disability. With the organizational help and emotional support of Luckett, who specializes in disability accommodation in her career as a vocational counselor, Galloway is able to keep performing her music.

But it isn't easy.

Now, when a group of musicians is jamming on stage, Galloway has to talk herself into joining them. It isn't the level of musical talent that is intimidating, it is the stairs that separate her from the stage. What if she falls on her way up?

Galloway says: "Now it's me having to push myself to get up there and do that. It's a struggle, but either I do this or I don't."

However, once Galloway starts to perform, everyone who listens loses any preconceptions they had about people with disabilities, says Luckett. "She takes things day by day, and she proves who she is each time she plays." 10

GALLOWAY & LUCKETT performs 10 a.m. July 15

at the Hillsboro Sunday Farmers Market in the parking area between Orenco Station Parkway and Northeast 61st Avenue, just off Cornell Road. For more information visit [www.gallowayandluckett.com](http://www.gallowayandluckett.com).

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