

Barnstar! began as the brainchild of **Zachariah Hickman** (bassist for Josh Ritter, musical director for Ray Lamontagne) for a local bluegrass supergroup featuring some of Boston's best musicians and songwriters. Using the familiar tools of the genre—guitar (**Mark Erelli**), fiddle (**Jake Armerding**), mandolin (**Taylor Armerding**) and banjo (**Charlie Rose**)—**Barnstar!** forges its own brand of song-based bluegrass, gloriously harmonized and raucously played.

The band debuted in 2011 with *C'mon!*, a mix of distinctive originals and unexpected covers (Neil Young, Dawes, The Traveling Wilburys) cut live in the studio. Despite juggling various high-profile sideman gigs behind other artists, the lads in **Barnstar!** managed to cause quite a stir with relatively few appearances. Whether playing above 10,000 feet in the Colorado mountains, dressing up like pirates on a boat cruising around Boston Harbor, or starting a small skirmish over the last CD in Shrewsbury, England – shouts of “C'mon!” followed the band everywhere they went.

In February 2015, **Barnstar!** proudly unleashes its sophomore release *Sit Down! Get Up! Get Out!* (Signature Sounds), which sports a more richly textured sound than its predecessor. “What continues to define **Barnstar!**,” says Zachariah Hickman, the band's mustachioed leader and producer of the group's albums, “is that we're not singing songs as an excuse to play a solo. We like to sink our teeth into songs that have a narrative or a story to them, and then make them our own.”

Sit Down! Get Up! Get Out! is the sound of a band stretching out, exploring darker themes and finding the joy amidst life's trials and tribulations. “We got our start by showcasing our newfound chemistry and how excited we were to take a break from supporting other artists to work on our own project,” says Erelli of their self-released debut. When it came time to go back into the studio, band members actually brought new original material written specifically with **Barnstar!** in mind. According to Hickman, “this record feels like a conscious move away from the novelty of being a band, toward finding our voice collectively.”

Some of the new originals branch out into new musical and geographical territory for the band, like the Cajun drone of Jake Armerding's “Delta Rose” or Charlie Rose's Appalachian mining lament “Cumberland Blue Line.” Other new contributions serve to celebrate and reaffirm the band's New England roots. Mark Erelli's “Barnstable County” is a murder ballad that relocates the drama of Knoxville Girl from the mountains of Tennessee to a Cape Cod salt marsh, while “Country John” honors John Lincoln Wright, a honky-tonk legend who never really made it big outside of Boston.

The cover selections on *Sit Down! Get Up! Get Out!* reinforce the band's musically omnivorous reputation, transforming songs by Josh Ritter, The Hold Steady, Patty Griffin and The Faces into something that sounds distinctly like, well, **Barnstar!** Studio versions of mainstays from the band's live performances sit comfortably alongside selections like Chris Moore's “Six Foot Pine Box” or “Trouble” by Cat Stevens. The breadth of these selections alone proves that while **Barnstar!** may be bluegrass in spirit and instrumentation, the song is their muse, not the soloing.

Ultimately, *Sit Down! Get Up! Get Out!* is most compelling as a showcase of the combined virtues of innocence and experience. Each of the group's members is a multi-instrumentalist, but with each member limiting himself to his native instrument they can make a song roar and soar, or whisper and lilt with equal intensity. Though collectively they share over 80 years of professional experience, it is exciting to hear a group of seasoned musicians coming to a new project as equals, sharing lead vocal duties and switching harmony registers to cover whatever part is needed.

Up until now, the members of **Barnstar!** may have been best known by the company they keep as sidemen and accompanists. But in short order, *Sit Down! Get Up! Get Out!* could very well turn the narrative upside down: suddenly, it's **Barnstar!** that becomes the household name.