

## PETE WERNICK

Pete Wernick, "Dr. Banjo", is renowned worldwide for his accomplishments and contributions to bluegrass music: the hot-picking force in several trend-setting bands including Hot Rize, respected author and teacher, songwriter, and long-term President of the International Bluegrass Music Association.

Pete's national music career started in 1971 with the first records by northeast instrumental wizards Country Cooking. Founding Hot Rize in 1978 led to an enduring stint as a performing artist, appearing throughout the U.S. and three continents, on national television and radio. Pete's instructional books, CDs and videos include best-sellers in their respective fields: *Bluegrass Banjo*, *Masters of the Five String Banjo*, *How to Make a Band Work*, and many others. A pioneer in bluegrass music instruction, since 1980 his *banjo camps*, bluegrass jam camps, and clinics have inspired players nationwide and overseas.



Pete took up banjo as a teenager in his native New York City, closely studying Earl Scruggs records. While completing B.A. and Ph.D. sociology degrees at Columbia University, he played in local bands and hosted the New York metropolitan area's only bluegrass radio show in the 1960's. In the early 70's while a sociologist by day at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, he formed Country Cooking whose innovative recordings helped usher in a new wave of contemporary bluegrass.

In 1976 Pete moved to Colorado where he recorded *Dr. Banjo Steps Out* (Flying Fish) and soon after started Hot Rize, with Tim O'Brien, Charles Sawtelle, and Nick Forster. The foursome became a major attraction and creative force in bluegrass, famous for their dynamic stage shows and finely-crafted songs and recordings. The group scored repeated #1 bluegrass radio hits, including the Wernick-penned "Just Like You", and was the first recipient of the IBMA's coveted "Entertainer of the Year" award in 1990, as well as a Grammy nomination the following year. The band's daffy alter-egos Red Knuckles and the Trailblazers gained a following of their own, with Pete as Waldo Otto, steel guitar player and donut impresario ("You Bite It, You Bought It").

In 1990 Hot Rize disbanded as a full-time unit, while continuing to make selected appearances throughout the next two decades. In the 90s, Pete recorded and performed with Jody Stecher & Kate Brislin, Jeff White, Chris Thile, Peter Rowan, and Jerry Douglas. His 1993 solo Sugar Hill album *On a Roll* won high praise, with a wide-ranging mix of traditional and progressive bluegrass and the debut of his innovative bluegrass/dixieland band, FLEXIGRASS (then known as The Live Five). The album rode the bluegrass chart for over a year, with another #1 hit, Wernick original, "Ruthie".

In 2005, Wernick was featured on the David Letterman show as part of Men With Banjos (Who Know How to Use Them), an elite group assembled by Steve Martin, that also included Earl Scruggs. Wernick has assisted Martin with a number of projects including a festival concert by Men With Banjos and the production of Martin's Grammy-winning banjo album "The Crow" (including "Words Unspoken", a Martin/Wernick co-write).

Pete has been based in Niwot, Colorado since 1976, and tours and records with the traditional bluegrass band Long Road Home, with his wife Joan in a duet and in the bluegrass/traditional jazz combo Pete Wernick & FLEXIGRASS. He also hosts as many as ten music camps each year, at locations throughout the U.S.. The year 2010 marks his 40th since his first recordings, and will also see Hot Rize performing at several festivals and touring in Fall.