

Tony Furtado

“Tony Furtado is a major musical force without a doubt. He has his black belt in voice and bottleneck guitar and his banjo playing scares the crap out of me.”

David Lindley, musical adventurer

Very few musicians of any stripe so personify a musical genre as completely as Tony Furtado embodies Americana roots music. Tony is an evocative and soulful singer, a wide-ranging songwriter and a virtuoso multi-instrumentalist adept on banjo, cello-banjo, slide guitar and baritone ukulele who mixes and matches sounds and styles with the flair of a master chef (he’s also an accomplished sculptor, but that’s another story). All of the music of America is in Tony’s music. *Relix* hit the nail on the head when writing of Tony: “True talent doesn’t need categories.”

A native of Pleasanton, California, who now makes his home in Portland, Oregon, Tony Furtado took up the banjo at age 12, inspired by the *Beverly Hillbillies* TV show and a sixth grade music report. He first attracted national attention in 1987, when he won the National Bluegrass Banjo Championship in Winfield, Kansas. Not long after that, Tony opted for the life of a full-time professional musician, joining Laurie Lewis & Grant Street. A second victory at Winfield, in 1991, bookended his years with Grant Street.

In 1990, Tony signed a recording deal with Rounder Records, one of the country’s preeminent independent record companies. Beginning with *Swamped* in 1990, he recorded six critically acclaimed albums for the label, collaborating with such master musicians as Alison Krauss, Jerry Douglas, Tim O’Brien, Stuart Duncan, Kelly Joe Phelps and Mike Marshall. During this period, Tony also performed and recorded with the band Sugarbeat and the Rounder Banjo Extravaganza with Tony Trischka and Tom Adams.

Beginning in the late 1990s—influenced by such musical heroes as Ry Cooder, David Lindley and Taj Mahal—Tony added slide guitar, singing and songwriting to his musical toolbox and began leading his own band. He is a tireless road musician who performs in a dizzying variety of formats: solo, in a duo or trio or with his full five-person band. He

especially values the opportunities he has had to tour with such legendary musicians as Gregg Allman and with such esteemed slide guitarists as David Lindley, Derek Trucks and Sonny Landreth.

Tony has performed throughout the world at top venues and appeared at such prestigious music festivals as the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, High Sierra Music Festival, Jazz Aspen, Kerrville Folk Festival, Strawberry Music Festival, Winnipeg Folk Festival, Sisters Folk Festival, San Jose Jazz Festival and countless others. “I love playing live,” he says. “All my energy is focused on the love of playing music and rolling with the moment. It’s a give and take from the audience to the stage, and back. And the music that is created is something that otherwise might not occur without that flow.”

Tony has recorded and produced almost a dozen CDs for various labels such as Dualtone, What Are Records and Fonzalo Records. Tony enthusiastically describes his newest CD, *The Bell*, as “the most personal of my career.” To be released this summer on his own YousayFurtado Records, *The Bell* is an important release for several reasons: it represents a return to Tony’s banjo-playing roots, with the banjo and cello-banjo more prominent than in recent years; the original songs concern such weighty themes as the loss of his father, the birth of his son and his own creative rebirth with the move to a new record label and management team; his working band is featured; and, most important of all, this is the first album in a long time on which Tony had complete artistic control. It’s his music, done his way.

