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Most comprehensive bluegrass music documentary ever made to air on PBS in August

**“Bluegrass has brought more people together and made more friends than any music in the world.”
– Bill Monroe, the “Father of Bluegrass”**

FOR RELEASE: MAY 22, 2019

Big Family: The Story of Bluegrass Music offers a comprehensive look at bluegrass — its origins, the pioneers who shaped its sound, and its worldwide appeal. The documentary, narrated by actor and bluegrass enthusiast Ed Helms, will air nationally on PBS stations Friday, August 30, 2019, at 9/8 pm ET. Check local listings.

The film traces the genre’s history — outlining how Scots-Irish and African-American influences led Bill Monroe to develop the distinct musical genre to its foothold in popular culture through television and movies.

At the heart of the two-hour film is the music itself, as recordings and performance footage showcase and celebrate its unique sound. More than 50 musicians appear in the film, including Alison Brown, Dale Ann Bradley, Sam Bush, JD Crowe, Bela Fleck, Laurie Lewis, Del McCoury, Bobby Osborne, Ricky Skaggs, Chris Thile, and many more.

Using archival and contemporary photos, footage and recordings, the film also chronicles how bluegrass music evolved as American culture and politics played out — revealing that the story of bluegrass music is the story of America.

Big Family begins by exploring the life of Bill Monroe, who moved, along with his brothers, from the tiny town of Rosine, Ky., to Chicago, to find work, just as many others did during the 1930s. Monroe got his start on WLS, at the time the largest radio station in Chicago. When Monroe moved from Chicago to Nashville, he became a hit on the Grand Ole Opry stage and solidified his place in music history as the “Father of Bluegrass.”



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The film goes on to explore how the Great Depression, World War II, the Civil Rights movement and more impacted the genre, including the creation of offshoots of bluegrass, such as newgrass in the 1970s.

Viewers will travel from Monroe's hometown of Rosine – with a population of around 100 – to downtown Tokyo, where members of Bluegrass 45, a popular contemporary Japanese bluegrass band, demonstrate how the music transcends not only generations but cultural and geographic boundaries, as well.

The documentary also features scenes from IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association) World of Bluegrass week-long events and the FreshGrass festival in North Adams, Mass., as well as archival footage from KET's long-running nationally distributed Americana music series *Jubilee*.

Additionally, *Big Family* explores the role of women in bluegrass music and shares stories from some of the genre's most celebrated musicians, who discuss how they work together to create what Berklee College of Music's Darol Anger calls in the film a "magical, huge, powerful sound."

More information, including a photo gallery and a full list of those appearing in the film, is available at Bigfamilyfilm.com.

Big Family: The Story of Bluegrass Music is a KET production, made possible in part by the KET Endowment for Kentucky Productions. It is produced by Matt Grimm and Nick Helton and written by Teresa Day. Consulting producer is Craig Cornwell. Executive producers are Shae Hopkins, Linda Randulfe Marquez and Nancy Southgate.

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