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by Kara Martinez Bachman

Guitarist Alex Leach is just a little over 30 years old, but during that time, he's done ... well ... a whole bunch of stuff.

He already has a whopping 20 years of experience in radio; he started as a DJ at just nine years old (that's not a typo!) on WDVX in Clinton, Tenn. and continues still today. By age 15, he'd been named "DJ of the Year" TWICE by SPBGMA. He toured as a performer for five years with Larry Gillis, followed by seven years touring with Ralph Stanley II as a member of the legendary Clinch Mountain Boys. During that time, he even took to the stage at the Opry with Dr. Ralph himself.

He always, however, thought of having a band.

"My wife kept pushing me," Leach said. "At the beginning of 2019, I finally decided to give it a go."



He said The Alex Leach Band was off to a great start and had released two singles, but then...the pandemic happened. Just like what happened to most performers around the country, things stalled out a bit. The band has some upcoming dates booked, so hopefully, that break in the forward trajectory for the up-and-coming band is soon over. Leach said his group aims to do something a little different. He hopes to bring new listeners into the fold.

"A lot of people thought it would be a straight Stanley-style sound," he explained. They may have been surprised. Leach

didn't really want a rehash; he wanted something he referred to as "fresh and new." He wanted "traditional elements, but a new sound."

He also didn't want to re-do the old songs; he envisioned a focus on originals.

The band's first full album – which Leach said will be released “around the beginning of next year” – will feature 11 tracks, with nine of them being originals.

“My wife Miranda and I do a lot of the songwriting,” Leach said. “[singer-songwriter] Jim Lauderdale wrote one, and our Mandolin player, Josh, wrote an instrumental as well.”

Leach is joined in his band by singer and wife, Miranda Leach; Josh Gooding, on mandolin; Brandon Masur, who picks banjo; and JT Coleman, who supplies the bass. The band is based in the mountains of Eastern Tennessee.

They can't wait to get out there to perform again, and Leach said he “would like to see a year from now, maybe a hundred dates on the books.” He hopes to grab the existing bluegrass audience, but also would like to attract a new, youthful audience willing to give bluegrass a listen.

<https://youtu.be/dISdoK-4gpc>

“All my life I pretty much played bluegrass festivals,” he said. “Our challenge is to get a new audience of younger folk...who go to jam band festivals...or who are into electric music.”

What would Leach say to someone who has never given the genre a chance, or who never thought they'd enjoy this style of music? In nutshell, he said it's not just about the music, but it's about the whole scene. He said the uninitiated should try out a bluegrass festival. Just try it.

“I think the people you meet and get to hang out with is a lot of it,” he explained. After all, he’d know...he’s been hanging out and playing at bluegrass events since he was a little kid. “If you go to one...then you’ll definitely be going to another.”