

# Tomorrow Never Knows

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Turkeyfoot Delivers *The Promise of Tomorrow* in an Uncertain Time

By Stephen Pitalo

With the release of their debut full-length album *The Promise of Tomorrow*, Colorado-based Turkeyfoot hopes to take their sound to the masses. Turkeyfoot is a nickname for the big bluestem grass that grows across much of the Great Plains, where lead singer-songwriter Jordan Brandenburg grew up.

With Brandenburg on mandolin, Michael Rudolph on bass, Bridger Dunnagan on fiddle, Dave Paillet on guitar and dobro, and Alex Koukov on banjo, the band knows that setting themselves apart from the regular bluegrass acts is a hard road, but *The Promise of Tomorrow* has them off and running.

The five members were friends first, and after playing around one condenser mic at a weekly bluegrass jam in Denver, the band was soon playing across the West.

“Friends of our band, Meadow Mountain, used to host a weekly single mic jam at Cerebral Brewing in Denver,” explained Brandenburg. “This is where most of us met and is where the current lineup of Turkeyfoot was solidified. Meadow Mountain decided to pass on this jam and Turkeyfoot has been hosting it for over two and a half years now.”

Each member draws from his own experiences in his approach to bluegrass.

*“I had started listening to bluegrass on my own around age 17,” Brandenburg said, “and shortly thereafter I met Matt*

*Menefee [of Cadillac Sky and now the Golden Age] and he started taking me with him to jams in East Texas. I really caught the bug in terms of listening to bluegrass at that time but was only dabbling with the mandolin. I stopped playing music after college but got back into it full force when I moved to Denver and met everyone in the scene here."*

*"I had some friends who were into bluegrass in high school," said Koukov, "and one of them convinced me to buy a one-day ticket to Rockygrass back then. My mind was blown by the community and the sheer amount of joy everybody seemed to be experiencing there! I started taking banjo lessons shortly after."*



*"I started playing bluegrass when I started to see the social group around it in Bozeman, Montana," said Dunnagan. "I had played violin before that, but really got into fiddle styles when I realized that allowed me to meet and play with all sorts of people."*

*"I started because my mom and stepdad wanted a bass player for their old-time duo," said Rudolph. "As a teenager, my biggest influences were electric in classic rock. I started to identify more with bluegrass in college."*



*"I started listening to bluegrass through Yonder Mountain String Band and other jam grass groups like String Cheese Incident when I was in early high school," admitted Paillet. "I attempted to play some then, but only really got more into it in college."*

In 2018, after coming up just short of first place at the RockyGrass Band Competition, the band kept giving it a go with new audiences around the country. The new album's songs were recorded in just four days at Vermillion Studios with engineer Eric Wiggs. Lacking a real label to back their effort, a

Kickstarter campaign pulled the funding together, with the band offering perks such as dinner cooked by banjo player Koukov and fly-fishing trips with Brandenburg and Dunnagan. “We got a ton of support from this community,” Brandenburg said. “For me, it’s been cool to see that your friends are excited about the things that you’re doing.”

While *Promise of Tomorrow* is still a decidedly bluegrass record with straightforward instrumentals such as “Snaggletooth Stomp” and “Westwater”, other moments harken more to an old country or Americana sound by adding pedal steel to the mix. On “Another Painful Lesson Learned”, the band tackles the downfall of a romantic relationship. “It’s about a realization of values,” Brandenburg rationalizes. “And maybe the things I’ve been moving towards aren’t the things that are really going to allow me to be the person I want to be. We’re all just growing up and figuring it out.



“All songwriting is autobiographical in a way,” Brandenburg continued, “and for me, timing-wise, it’s been interesting to

see that some of these songs are newly relevant as we've been going through layoffs and anxiety due to coronavirus. We are thinking, what does tomorrow hold? But still holding onto the hope that tomorrow might be a better day."

Although the nicely produced collection has no overall theme, Brandenburg said the title track was a tribute to his family.

"There was really no intended theme for the album, although when we completed it, it seemed to all mesh pretty well together.

But the song 'The Promise of Tomorrow' was inspired by my grandparents' move from Oklahoma as young high school graduates to go and start a new life for themselves out West, first in Colorado and Wyoming and then eventually California."

Those struggles connected with Brandenburg, which he mined to produce several tunes on the new album.

"My grandma came to live with us when I was around seven," he said, "and so I grew up hearing all these stories of what it was like to grow up during the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma, and that's the main theme of the title track."

<https://youtu.be/u5PsrrILeTA>

#### **EACH MEMBER'S BIG INFLUENCES:**

**Alex: Ron Block, Britney Spears**

**Jordan: Sam Bush, Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt, Tim O, David Grisman, IIIrd Tyme Out**

**Bridger: Miles Davis, Stuart Duncan, Bruce Molsky.**

**Michael: Bass influences are Barry Bales, Alan Bartram, Mike Bub, Edgar Meyer, Bluegrass Album Band, Blue Highway, and currently Mike Twelve.**

**Dave: Jerry Douglas, Rob Ickes, Bryan Sutton**