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Bluegrass Wednesdays

One place to catch live bluegrass on a regular basis is at the Bremen Café for its “Midweek Mountain Music” night. Musicians Colin O’Brien and Chad Witty share the stage along with other musicians every Wednesday evening.

On a recent Wednesday, O’Brien took the stage, strumming his guitar while Witty picked away on the banjo. To say the atmosphere was low-key would be an understatement. An eclectic mix of older hippies, younger college kids and delinquent-looking juveniles were all hanging around casually in Bremen Café’s simple setup. The small stage itself features water pipes running up one side of it, and a backdrop made of a dull beige curtain that looks like it came from granny’s house.

O’Brien played guitar, violin and banjo, sometimes playing along on a harmonica or tapping out the rhythm with his foot on a rectangle of wood hooked up to an amplifier. O’Brien and Witty rolled through songs like the classic “Big River Blues” while a group of four people improvised a square dance, hooting and clapping. The set list came naturally, with the musicians discussing what to play next as they went along. They covered the “Bullfrog Shuffle” by Bela Fleck and a song by old-time Appalachian folk musician Hobart Smith. They played “Banjo on my Mind,” which O’Brien also plays with his band Salt Creek. The two players trotted through a fun set of easygoing bluegrass, displaying their familiarity with the art of toe-tapping music.

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