



*News Release*

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***For Immediate Release***

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# The HillBenders

*present The Who's*

## TOMMY: A Bluegrass Opry

Coming to Florida Theatre April 9 8pm

Tickets are on sale now \$59.00

*"Ever since I was a young boy I played the silver ball"*

Maybe not your standard bluegrass lyric, but a line known by all the world from the biggest rock opera of all time, The Who's *Tommy*, will be recreated on the Florida Theatre.

For this intimate concert guests will be sit on the stage, as the bluegrass musicians, The HillBenders, perform The WHO's *Tommy* in its entirety.

Forty-five years after its original release, this classic of classic rock has now been fully realized as a full length bluegrass tribute featuring Springfield, Missouri's The HillBenders. Conceived and produced by SXSW co-founder and longtime musician/producer Louis Jay Meyers, this Bluegrass Opry brings a new perspective to *Tommy* while paying total respect to its creators.

Originally composed by guitarist Pete Townshend as a rock opera that tells the story about a deaf, dumb and blind boy, including his experiences with life and the relationship with his family. The original album has sold 20 million copies and has been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame for "historical, artistic and significant value". In 2003, Rolling Stone magazine ranked *Tommy* number 96 on its list of the 500 greatest albums of all time.

Meyers had been looking for the right band to pull off this high wire bluegrass approach for



several decades and The HillBenders are the right band. With a perfect mix of virtuoso musicianship and rock star vocals, The HillBenders bring Pete Townshend's original vision to life in a new and exciting way.

It's amazing to hear banjo, dobro, mandolin, bass, and guitar bring the same energy and vision to *Tommy* as The Who did with a full rock band and orchestra.

The HillBenders are one of the few bluegrass groups that recognize their ability to bridge the gap between the common music consumer and the bluegrass genre, selecting material that defies any hillbilly stigmas. With their widely varied influences, they are trying to bring to bluegrass songs that unify. "We wanted to pair bluegrass with the other music we grew up with –rock and roll!" say HillBender Nolan Lawrence.

The live performance is a full 75 minute show covering the original album from start to finish with audience participation.

This recording was originally planned as a co-production with the legendary musician/producer Lou Whitney. After Lou's tragic passing in October 2014, plans were revised to record in Lou's studio in Springfield, Missouri surrounded by those that helped create the Lou Whitney sound and style of making records. This record is dedicated to the memory of the late great Lou Whitney.

*Tommy* is appealing to music fans of all ages. This is truly a classic.

A complete list of 90<sup>th</sup> Season events, sponsored by Community First Credit Union, can be viewed at [floridatheatre.com](http://floridatheatre.com).

*Florida Theatre* : From ballet and opera to contemporary pop, jazz, rock, country and blues the nonprofit Florida Theatre offers 200 cultural and entertainment events annually for every taste and age. More than just an entertainment center, The Florida Theatre is also home to graduations, awards ceremonies, lectures, business meetings and charity events that support the community's schools, churches, hospitals and civic groups. As an anchor to downtown development along the beautiful St. Johns River, The Florida Theatre draws 250,000 people to Jacksonville's center each year. The magnificently restored Florida Theatre is recognized as one of the finest concert venues in the Southeast. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Florida Theatre holds special memories for four generations. From the Vaudeville acts and silent films of its earliest days to today's blend of performances of all kinds, The Florida Theatre has served as Jacksonville's premier entertainment center since 1927.

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