

# BEATS AND BANJOS? GANGSTAGRASS ARE COMING!

DEBUT UK TOUR FROM U.S. BLUEGRASS HIP-HOP COLLECTIVE

New York City's Gangstagrass will bring their hybrid of bluegrass and hip-hop to the UK for the very first time in November 2016.

With their explosive live performances creating a buzz at SXSW, CMJ, NXNE, Folk Alliance International, LA's The Viper Room and on tours across North America, Gangstagrass' debut UK tour begins on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> November at The Fusilier Museum in Bury, and ends on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> November at The Ropetackle in Shoreham.

"There are a lot more people out there with Jay-Z and Johnny Cash on their iPod playlists than you think," says Rench, the mastermind behind the genre-breaking sensation Gangstagrass. And he should know, having spent the past few years performing across the U.S.A with a ground-breaking band that gives audiences the best of both worlds.



Looking forward to the tour, Rench said, "We've been hearing from fans in the UK clamouring for us to tour there since the beginning, and we are so excited for it to finally come together. We know this sound breaks down boundaries and borders and we are going to be having wild bluegrass-hip-hop parties that will blow the minds of UK fans who have appreciated the genre combination in studio recordings but have never seen it go down live.

"We are confident that our UK fans are going to have the same euphoric reaction to seeing a banjo player and rapper get down together that folks here have, and we can't wait to bring this sound into the UK for the first time!"

With a touring ensemble of Rench (vocals, acoustic guitar, beats), R-SON (vocals), Landry McMeans (Dobro, vocals), Dan Whitener (banjo, vocals), Dolio The Sleuth (vocals) and Melody Berger (fiddle, vocals), the seeds for Gangstagrass were planted back in 2007 when Rench had a musical itch that needed scratching. He said, "I was listening to the 1970s recordings of Ralph Stanley and The Clinch Mountain Boys and couldn't help imagining what classic bluegrass would sound like with rap vocals and beats."

The result was a genre-demolishing blitz called *Rench Presents: Gangstagrass*, which he made available to download for free. People took notice and hundreds of thousands of downloads followed, creating an intense underground buzz.

Rench has since spent the past decade producing honky-tonk hip-hop recordings on his Rench Audio imprint, while also making beats for local NYC rappers and hosting country music nights in popular NYC venues.



When FX Network came to Rench looking for the Gangstagrass sound for the theme song to their series *Justified*, he had bluegrass players lay down an original track with rapper T.O.N.E-z, the younger brother of early hip-hop legends Special K and T-LaRoc. The result was 'Long Hard Times To Come', the song that opened every episode and was nominated for an Emmy Award in 2010, contending for best theme song after critical praise and massive fan response.

The same live bluegrass band approach was used to make *Lightning On The Strings, Thunder On The Mic*, a full length

album with T.O.N.E-z. Two years later the Gangstagrass sound was expanded with the release of *Rappalachia*, a 15 song album featuring a variety of rappers, including Kool Keith, Dead Prez, Nitty Scott MC, David E Beats, T.O.N.E-z, BROOKLYN35, R-SON and Dolio The Sleuth. Country singers Brandi Hart and Jen Larson added gritty harmonies for several songs, while Rench took vocal duties on most choruses.

*Rappalachia* earned Gangstagrass thousands upon thousands of new fans who were eager for more bluegrass/hip-hop synergy, and Gangstagrass fulfilled their desires with *Broken Hearts and Stolen Money* released in 2014.

Featuring performances by Smif-N-Wessun, Brandi Hart and Alexa Dirks of Chic Gamine, *Broken Hearts and Stolen Money* received universal critical acclaim, especially from *The Boston Globe* who labelled their socially-conscious anthem 'Two Yards' as "essential".

Having no desire to simply coast on the success of previous releases, Gangstagrass released its fifth official album *American Music* in April 2015. Featuring a collection of standout original cuts and traditional folk anthems with a twist, *American Music* once again found Gangstagrass breaking new ground, while also paying tribute to their cast of American songwriting heroes.

Counting Massive Attack and Portishead as influences, in terms of how Gangstagrass infused hip-hop sounds with other influences, Rench says, "We're really happy about playing a date in Bristol, the city where trip-hop germinated. By coincidence, Bristol, Tennessee, is credited as the birthplace of country music, where the earliest recordings were made, so this is a city that has influenced us greatly - from both sides of the Atlantic."

Back in Brooklyn at Rench Audio, there are beats and banjos wailing through the night as new tracks come together. So keep your eyes peeled and your stomping socks on – Gangstagrass are coming.

#### **Gangstagrass' UK tour dates are as follows:**

##### **November 2016**

Thu 17 <sup>th</sup>	Bury, The Fusilier Museum
Fri 18 <sup>th</sup>	Glasgow, The Rum Shack
Sat 19 <sup>th</sup>	Perth, Inchyra Arts Club
Sun 20 <sup>th</sup>	Edinburgh, Voodoo Rooms
Tue 22 <sup>nd</sup>	York, Fibbers
Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Derby, The Venue
Thu 24 <sup>th</sup>	Exeter, Phoenix
Fri 25 <sup>th</sup>	Bristol, Thekla
Sat 26 <sup>th</sup>	London, The Borderline
Sun 27 <sup>th</sup>	Shoreham, The Ropetackle

##### **Gangstagrass online:**

Website: [www.gangstagrass.com](http://www.gangstagrass.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/gangstagrass](http://www.facebook.com/gangstagrass)

Twitter: [@gangstagrass](https://twitter.com/gangstagrass)

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/gangstagrass/sets/americanmusic>

##### **Videos:**

'Barnburning' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nSjg8Jx8IE>

'All For One' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XG7Ujh0XVH0>

'Banks of The Ohio' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIZXMDKtg9o>

'Bound to Ride' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnAIIJSj8aQ>

'Gunslinging Rambler' (featuring R-SON live at Southpaw) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLBRgLQ4bEA>

##### **Media quotes**

"Rench's vision has a toehold on a racy, improbable hybrid." - **No Depression**

"Gangstagrass adeptly layers rap lyrics over strong emotional accents from the instruments, something most DJs can't take advantage of when sampling electronica music. You can hear it in "Nobody Gonna Miss Me;" the skillful slide on the guitar and winsome lines from the fiddle fill in the background of the rap with a bluesy, remorseful tone." - **Mother Jones Magazine**

“Cheers to Justified for tracking down the perfect theme song. FX's modern-day shoot-'em-up opens with "Long Hard Times to Come," by the aptly named Gangstagrass . . . hits the bull's-eye.” - **TV Guide**

“Gangstagrass’ eclectic mix of low-down to down-low beats destroys other genres in their path.” - **Magnet Magazine**

“A mixture of bluegrass and hip-hop that might repel some purists on either side of the country-and- rap divide, but will knock the socks off just about everybody else.” - **Wall Street Journal**

“Rench and his friends have done nothing short of creating a new form of music. Gangstagrass takes two types of music that are opposites and mixes them together brilliantly in a way that is natural and enjoyable.” - **Elmore Leonard**

“A daring blend of innovative modern swagger and classic Americana cool which dares listeners not to come along for the ride.” - **Hear Hear Music**

###

**Gangstagrass will be available for interview.**

**For more information please contact Dave Clarke**



+44 (0) 7966 557774

[dave@planetearthpublicity.com](mailto:dave@planetearthpublicity.com)

@PlanetEarthDC