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Kindred Valley: Born out of the pandemic, hometown band makes it to 'Mountain Stage'

By Bill Lynch For HD Media
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Kindred Valley performed during "Mountain Stage," presented by the Marshall Artists Series, at the Keith-Albee Performing Center in Huntington on Sunday, March 26.

KINDRED VALLEY | Courtesy photo

HUNTINGTON — It's not so much a homecoming as a coming-out party and international debut for Huntington's Kindred Valley.

The young, six-piece Americana band is on the bottom of the bill for tonight's Mountain Stage taping — presented by the Marshall Artists Series at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center in Huntington — but they might as well be at the top.

Riding around in a car, four of the six members said they were over the moon about getting to play.

"We were honestly in disbelief when we found out about it," Blake Lacy said. "We were so happy and so thankful about it. This is such a massive deal."



"We listen," Kaden Salmons said. "There have been so many amazing artists on the show. Even the people we're playing with have done incredible things. We love their stuff. It's an honor to be there."

Some music acts will spend years, sometimes decades, building up a presence before getting the opportunity to play a radio program like Mountain Stage. Kindred Valley did it in less than three and did it without touring or having a major label release.

They did it by coming up with a thoughtful, Americana sound that's a little bit rock, a little bit folk and a little bit Appalachian. The music is soft. The harmonies are sweet and the lyrics are heartfelt and authentic.

Kindred Valley started with Blake Lacy and Brett McCoy, two musicians and Marshall University students who got together, thinking they might be able to write a song. It was early fall of 2020. The pandemic was raging, and social distancing was in effect. There wasn't a whole lot else anyone could do, except look for ways to spend time.

The two men hung out at McCoy's apartment. McCoy played guitar while Lacy sang. That first song sounded good, but not quite right.

“Oh, shoot. We needed somebody else to play an instrument because I do not play an instrument,” Lacy said. “Brett does.”

So, they called guitarist Noah Freeman.

The three of them got together at McCoy’s apartment, tinkered with lyrics and melodies and came up with a song called “Georgia.”

Lacy said they were all taken aback by how good that first song sounded.

“We just really enjoyed it,” he said.

So, they decided to keep hanging out and keep writing songs. It wasn’t like they had much else to do, Lacy said.



“So, we hung out for like a month.” He laughed and said, “At the end of it, we hated each other.”

But they’d also written and recorded rough versions of two more songs, “1921” and “Half My Heart.”

They released the songs as a trio, but couldn’t do much with them beyond that. Public performances were essentially outlawed and besides, as fall turned to winter, the pandemic worsened, and they had school.

“We just didn’t see each other through the spring,” Lacy said.

But they kept in touch.

And then Jadon Hayes reached out to the trio. He sent music files that he'd mixed with Rachael Hayes and a song from Kaden Salmons. Salmons, as it happened, attended the same church as Lacy.

"I didn't even know that," he said.

So, they all met up at church and then got the two separate, informal groups together. The chemistry was good, and the music was better.

They spent the next year working on a record, which was released at the very end of 2022.

"We debuted it at The Venetian in Milton to a packed house," Lacy said.

Lacy is maybe the band's most accomplished lyricist, but songwriting is spread out among the group.

Salmons said, "Blake doesn't write all of our songs, though he's a genius lyricist."

Musically, he said, they take some cues from the Ohio band Caamp, which uses similar instrumentation, mixing traditional rock instruments with a banjo, for example.

Salmons said they admired earnest songwriters like the Avett Brothers and Jim Croce.

"Blake and I admire Jim Croce. We can't play guitar like Jim Croce," he laughed and then said, "but we admire his lyrics, and songs by artists like Gregory Alan Isakov."

Rachael Hayes said they try to write songs with depth and weight.

"There's a lot of symbolism and metaphor," she said. "Honestly, there's just a lot of poetry."

"They just resonate with us," Salmons said.

The band's songs capture a wide range of emotions, including regret and a youthful restlessness.

Kindred Valley is excited to share their songs and see where it leads them.

What's beyond Mountain Stage is anyone's guess. Half the band is still in school, though two of them are nearing graduation, but everyone is at least interested in pursuing music full-time.

"We've got someone now helping us, guiding us and he said he thought we should finish school before we start touring or opening for other artists," Rachael said.

But the temptation to hit the road is great and there are a million artists they'd love to open a show for.

"One of our biggest dreams is to play at Red Rocks," Rachael said. "We'd love to open for Caamp or the Avett Brothers or Drew Holcomb."

"The Lumineers, who really inspired a lot of this," Jadon said.

"We all have different answers to that question," Rachael said.

"I think we'd all be dumbfounded if we ever got to play for anyone like that," Jadon said.

The Marshall Artists Series presents "Mountain Stage" with The High Kings, Tom Paxton, Catherine Russell, The DonJuans and Kindred Valley at 7 p.m. tonight at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$35 and available at mountainstage.org.

If You Go

WHAT: The Marshall Artists Series presents "Mountain Stage" with The High Kings, Tom Paxton, Catherine Russell, The DonJuans and Kindred Valley

WHEN: 7 p.m. Sunday (tonight)

WHERE: Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, Huntington

TICKETS: \$35

INFO: mountainstage.org

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