

RHONDA VINCENT & THE RAGE
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Rhonda Vincent not only makes bluegrass records -- she breaks them. Vincent recently broke her own record in October, 2006 by taking home her seventh consecutive International Bluegrass Music Association Female Vocalist of the Year award, more than any female in history.

"It's such an honor to even be nominated, much less receive an award from such a prestigious bluegrass music leader as the IBMA," Vincent says.

Vincent and her band, The Rage, will perform at 7pm on Saturday, May 5th at The Little Nashville Opry.

"Indiana has a strong bluegrass following," Vincent says. "They are big fans and have a definite love for the music."

Vincent, a fifth generation bluegrass musician, was only three years old when she began singing with her family band, The Sally Mountain Show.

"Back then, the family band consisted of my father Johnny, mother Carolyn, grandfather Bill, aunts, uncles, cousins and some friends," says Vincent, a Greentop, Missouri native. "Since there were friends involved, they couldn't call it The Vincent Family. There was an establishment not very far away from where we lived called Sally's Mountain. Everyone in the area knew of the place, so they decided to name the band The Sally Mountain Show. Eventually it was dad, mom, myself, and my two brothers, Darrin and Brian, who ended up carrying the band name on."

The singer and multi-instrumentalist began playing the mandolin at age eight and gradually mastered the guitar, bass, fiddle, banjo and dobro.

"Music has been a way of life for me since the day I was born," Vincent says. "It's just what my family did. I would come home from school, have dinner and then every night we would play until bedtime. It taught me that if you want to pursue something and really do it well, you have to work hard."



The young bluegrass circuit star recorded eight albums as a member of The Sally Mountain Show and is cited as a musical influence by such country/bluegrass artists as Alison Krauss.

"In 1985 I went to Nashville to work for country musician, Jim Ed Brown," Vincent said. "My dad needed someone to take my place in The Sally Mountain Show. A friend told him about a 12-year-old girl named Alison Krauss who was from Champaign, Illinois and played the fiddle. People would come to the shows and not really notice that Alison had taken my place because we both had the same hair color and she wore my performance clothes. Since I played the mandolin, they definitely noticed the difference once they heard Alison play the fiddle. I play the fiddle a little bit, but nothing like Alison."

Releasing a series of highly acclaimed solo bluegrass albums in the late '80's earned the vocalist a major Nashville label recording contract, resulting in the '93 "Written In The Stars" and '96 "Trouble Free" country albums.

"Doing the two country albums was a bit like going away to college," Vincent says. "It involved a lot of growing pains. I learned so many different things, like recording, producing, and the business side of music from the best of the best in Nashville. It was a wonderful opportunity."

Achieving marginal success in country music forced the vocalist to make a difficult career decision in '99.

"I was at a crossroads, not knowing if I wanted to keep pursuing country or exactly where I wanted to go with my music," Vincent says. "That's when, for the first time in my life, I put together my own band. We did a couple of bluegrass festivals. It became quite obvious that I was happiest doing bluegrass, it was the natural thing for me to do, and that people seemed to really love what I was doing. It was as if all the pieces fell right into place."

Vincent's current 2006 Rounder Records project, "All American Bluegrass Girl," covers a wide range of styles and textures, while maintaining a carefully consistent sound. Vincent co-wrote three out of 12 selections on the cd, including the title track, the poetic and moving "God Bless the Soldier," and the nimble instrumental "Ashes of Mount Augustine."

"I just hope my music can inspire people and maybe even inspire them to play," Vincent says. "It still amazes me when young people come up to me and say, 'I'm learning how to play the mandolin so that I can play just like you.' When you're right in the middle of doing all this, it's nice to be reminded just how influential music can be and what it means to people."