

Essential Listening - Larry Sparks

Essential Listening went to Summergrass and was inspired to do a quick survey of some of Larry Sparks' best songs after hearing one of the bands play "Blue Virginia Blue" on stage. Larry Sparks has had an 50+ year life in bluegrass and is known both for his soulful crooning and his fine guitar work, early on playing guitar with Ralph Stanley, then going on to a stellar career heading up his own bands. A great survey of Sparks' music is his album **Classic Bluegrass** (see link below).

Here's Sparks recorded version of "Blue Virginia Blues" from a Rebel Records 2005 release.
<https://youtu.be/1OpRglx9gqY?si=sOa21vyC9AzNvqpF>

One of Larry Sparks' best known numbers is "John Deere Tractor". Here's a version of that song with Alison Krauss at The Station Inn in Nashville in 2017.
<https://youtu.be/nzNkCDnvhK0?si=wN9MEaqV9uL-FUOn>

Another well known number from Sparks' album **Classic Bluegrass** is "Tennessee 1949" that also include "Girl at the Crossroads Bar".
<https://youtu.be/IOgDC53QPDg?si=gxBGAKJ8Z9RvjUzd>

If you have a bit more time, check out this video of a Sparks live show at the Huron Valley Eagles Club from 1988 with one of his best bands featuring Barry Crabtree on banjo, and David Harvey on mandolin (David now is the custom mandolin maker for Gibson), and Dee Sparks on bass.

<https://youtu.be/Q3PH9kupPzM?si=FeeqRhsU9duAjn6K>

Learn more about Larry Sparks and his life in the bluegrass music world in this documentary.
<https://youtu.be/kEb4ir6UxwI?si=awJB5CUdw4GW6DHm>

There are a lot more great songs on YouTube for you to find. Give Larry Sparks a deep dive.