

i'm with the band

SARAH STACHURA COVERS MUSIC FROM MOUNTAIN TOP TO THE LUXEMBOURG PAN HANDLE

Backroad boogie

If you think that "Northeastern Pennsylvania" and "good, down-home country music" are two phrases that shouldn't be in the same sentence, Mountain Top's **Tony Merker** would adamantly disagree.

Merker plays guitar, sings, and plays the fiddle. He's also been known to pick up folk-friendly instruments like the dulcimer, mandolin, and banjo. He attended the Country Music Association's "Fan Fair" Music Festival in Nashville, Tenn., and got his day (along with many other honky tonk hopefuls from all over the country) in the sun: an opportunity to display his wares at the Writer's Showcase at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge.

His latest project, country-southern-blues-rock trio **Backroads**, has had quite a busy summer so far. Venues like the Pine Street Pub in Tamaqua and The Shalimar in Mountain Top have picked up on Backroads' sound.

Along with Merker, Backroads includes drummer **John McHugh** of Kingston and **Mike Dutz** of Drums on bass and guitar.

While Confederate flags are not necessarily my choice of band advertisement (tonymerker.biz has a few Stars and Bars draped over the site), Merker has a smoky-barbecue voice that conjures up (to paraphrase "Luckenbach, Texas") images of "Waylon and Willie and The Boys."

Merker also has some friends across the Atlantic: his song "Walkin' in a Straight Line" hit number 14 on the Radio ARA charts in Luxembourg.

Backroads is cooking up some Southern-fried jams this Saturday from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. at the Hunlock Creek Tavern, and July 27 at the Dallas American Legion, from 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.



Is your band doin' it better