



MandoBasso (Gunnar Biggs on bass and Bill Bradbury on mandolin) performs at It's a Grind Coffee House.



Biggs Is a Real Stand-Up (Bass) Guy

Photos and Story by Lauren Schroeder

Gunnar Biggs, double bassist and music educator, has spent almost 50 years playing and teaching music in Southern California. At the age of 18, Biggs gave his first lessons to Nathan East, who is now Eric Clapton's bass player. "He was two years behind me in school," Biggs says of East. "The band director said, 'Take Nathan and teach him how to read music.' [Nathan] still calls me 'Teach.'"

Biggs's teaching career is extensive, including a 25-year tenure as instructor of double bass at San Diego State University, five years as director of jazz ensembles at Palomar College and several as orchestra director at Valley Middle School and Carlsbad High School.

Several of Biggs's students have become teachers themselves. Violinist Marina Hall played under his orchestral direction from seventh through 12th grade. Since then, Biggs retired from the

position and Hall is now Carlsbad High School's orchestra director. "As a teacher, that's your real success story, when students choose to follow your discipline," says Biggs.

Biggs is only semiretired. He still teaches students from Cal State San Marcos and Palomar and MiraCosta colleges, and maintains a private teaching practice out of his home in the Village for 28 students.

As long as he's teaching, he'll be performing, too. You can find him playing with Big Time Operator at Carlsbad's TGIF Concerts in the Parks, in the duo MandoBasso and with Peter Sprague's group at the Carlsbad Music Festival and with various other musicians at jazz clubs and music halls all over San Diego County. "I'll never be able to really retire," he says. "I'll just die on the bandstand."