

A SPIRIT THAT IS NOT AFRAID



The Auburn Plainsman

DONATE

SUBMIT A TIP

SUBSCRIBE

NEWS

The Brook & The Bluff’s return: Bringing rhythm to The Railyard



Lead vocalist for The Brook and The Bluff Joseph Setline performing on stage at the band's last stop on their Bluebeard album tour at The Railyard in Opelika on April 26, 2024.

Photo by [Cole Peake](#) | [Photographer](#) | The Auburn Plainsman

By [Ella Walton](#) | [Newsletter Editor](#)

April 27, 2024 | 11:58am CDT

It isn’t a bluff when people say Auburn University is a place where students can find their lifelong friends, their Auburn family. The Brook & The Bluff’s band members Joseph Setline, John Canada and Alec Bolton found each other and founded their band at the university — igniting a spark that has won the hearts of countless indie rock lovers.

On Friday, April 26, The Brook & The Bluff concluded their tour at one of the places their band's career first began — The Railyard in downtown Opelika. The tour, promoting their newest album "Bluebeard," lasted about six months and was comprised of about 70 shows.

Their opener, Hotel Fiction, began at 8 p.m., while The Brook & The Bluff took The Railyard's stage at 9 p.m.

Settine shared that The Railyard holds a special place in their hearts, as it was the first venue in which people sang their songs back to them.

"I think the best feeling being on stage is hearing people sing the songs. The first time we heard people sing our lyrics back to us was crazy — it gave me chills," said John Canada, the band's drummer.

While attending Auburn University, Settine first met Alec Bolton, the band's guitarist, through a mutual friend during their freshman year. The first time Settine and Bolton met, the two played guitar together.

Later, John Canada was invited to come jam with them and the group's shared passion for music began a long-lasting friendship. John Canada's brother, Kevin Canada, later joined on keys, and Fred Lankford joined on bass.

"Auburn brought everything together," John Canada said.



[Cole Peake | Photographer](#)

Lead guitarist Alec Bolton (left), lead vocalist Joseph Settine (center), and drummer John Canada (right) outside the John Emerald Distillery at The Railyard concert venue in Opelika for the last concert of their Bluebeard album tour, April 26, 2024.

In addition to supplying the band with innumerable memories, like nights at Little Italy and experiencing The Kick Six, Auburn University prepared them for where they are today and provided them all with the abilities they need to succeed in their industry.

"It gave us the capacity to not be afraid of what we're doing now," Settine said.

“I majored in accounting and did business at Auburn before doing the band as a full-time position, but I don’t regret that. If I had to do it again, I would — I would still come back and get the degree,” John Canada said. “I mean, obviously it’s the reason we all met, so it’s easy to say that, but also, I was developing skills; I don’t think I would have been ready to try it at 18.”

Although the band members met in college, Settine, Bolton and John Canada’s love for music started much earlier than their Auburn years.

Settine was inspired by his mom, who is a music teacher, as well as other music teachers he has had over the years.

“My music teachers growing up, they really fostered and nurtured my music — like, ‘you can make this your career,’ or ‘you can make this your life,’” Settine said.

For John Canada, his love for music began later in comparison to his brother, Kevin.

“Kevin started taking piano lessons when he was like 3. I didn’t like being forced to learn an instrument, especially at a young age,” John Canada said. “It wasn’t until later in Junior High that I got a video game and started playing drums on that. I loved that so much that I was like, ‘oh, I should get a real drum set.’”

Bolton’s dad grew up playing the guitar and drums, and a few of his cousins enjoyed creating music as well, so he was always surrounded by it.

“It was just always there, so I was just kind of thrown in, in terrifying fashion, as a child. Then I kind of got to the point where it wasn’t as scary anymore, and by 12 years old I was like, ‘this is it,’ although I didn’t know I would do it for a career then,” Bolton said.

Despite how long they’ve been playing music, and how confident they appear on stage, the band members still experience stage fright from time to time.

“We’ve played so many shows at this point that at a lot of the shows, we don’t get nervous,” John Canada said. “But then there are some shows, like this last tour, where we played a sold-out show at a venue we’ve always wanted to play at in New York, and it was incredible — there’s just going to be more butterflies going into that.”

John Canada added that for him, it takes the first note going right for it all to go away. For Bolton, connecting with his bandmates and with the crowd is what quiets the nervousness.

“I feel like when we’re most nervous, we can just look at each other and make each other laugh on stage. And immediately, you turn and you smile, and the crowd smiles back, and you’re like, ‘Oh, okay, we’re all just people here,’” Bolton said.

If nerves were present, the band certainly didn’t show it on The Railyard’s stage. Settine showed off his dance moves — spinning and sashaying while still singing, much to the excited crowds’ enjoyment — while Bolton’s guitar solos were met with loud cheering each time.



[Cole Peake | Photographer](#)

Lead vocalist for The Brook and The Bluff Joseph Settine closing out the final performance of their Bluebeard album tour to cheering fans at The Railyard in Opelika, April 26, 2024.

Betsy Nearn, Amelia Shannon and Cate Lewis, freshman students at Auburn University, attended their fourth The Brook & The Bluff concert this school year.

“Whenever you put on one of their songs, all the vibes change and you’re just happy, you’re free, and you just feel good all of the sudden,” Nearn said.

Shannon added that she loves the honesty of the band’s lyrics in particular.

“What I love about The Brook & The Bluff is their spontaneity and creativity, and the way they perform so effortlessly; they just engage the crowd with all their music because their music is so joyful and lively,” Lewis said.

When offering advice to anyone pursuing music, the band stated the importance of both surrounding oneself with joyful people and using music as an outlet of expression.

“Surround yourself with people that make making music joyful. That’s why you do music in the first place — it gives you joy most of the time, and if you can surround yourself with people that will help you get that feeling too, that will carry you through,” Bolton said.

John Canada added that people trying to enter music professionally should always trust their instincts, both musically and regarding whom they surround themselves with professionally.

Settine emphasized the importance of people pursuing music because it fulfills them, rather than them trying to make money.

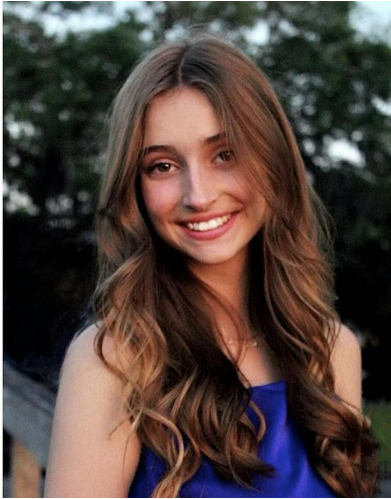
“Even if we weren’t doing this, we would still be musicians,” Settine said. “Being a musician can be a career, but more than anything, it’s a thing you have for your life that will give you an outlet for expression or processing or something like that, and I think more than anything, that should be the life goal.”

The Brook & The Bluff brings creativity and liveliness to indie rock and is a source of pride for the Auburn Family. Their Opelika concert succeeded in bringing a little change of pace to the local music scene, while ending the band’s “Bluebeard” tour off on a sweet note.

Do you like this story? The Plainsman doesn't accept money from tuition or student fees, and we don't charge a subscription fee. But you can donate to support The Plainsman.

Support The Plainsman

Ella Walton | Newsletter Editor
Ella Walton, majoring in English literature with a minor in creative writing, currently serves as the Newsletter Editor at The Auburn Plainsman. Formerly the Culture Editor, Walton has been with The Auburn Plainsman since the fall of 2023.



ABOUT CONTACT CORRECTIONS SEARCH ADVERTISE LETTERS



All rights reserved

© 2025 The Auburn Plainsman

Powered by Solutions by The State News