

# Jacob's big banjo strums Christmas cheer through Lyons

## 30-foot banjo decorated for the holidays

By Brittany Anas

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LYONS -- As the proverbial saying goes -- build it and they will come.

So, imagine what happened -- and who showed up -- when a Lyons man built a 30-foot-long banjo in his front yard.

Jacob Leeuwenburgh's big banjo is strung with Christmas lights, and a music player tucked inside of it plays Bob Dylan tunes. The public art display is made entirely from recycled materials -- busted copper pipes, window shutters, door hinges, shiny handles and wood. The Christmas bulbs are from the thrift store.

Jacob's banjo is spreading Christmas cheer through this mountain town that plays host every summer to the Planet Bluegrass festival and is home year-round to many local artists and musicians. The banjo on Fourth and Reese streets near Lyons' downtown has drawn several visitors.

A family of five showed up with their own mini banjos and posed by Jacob's banjo for a portrait to go along with their annual Christmas card.

A guy made a video for YouTube of himself simultaneously rollerblading, hula-hooping, playing the banjo and singing with Jacob's banjo and a chicken in the background.

And then there was the town inspector who showed up, wondering if Jacob's banjo was a permanent structure or an addition to his home.

Leeuwenburgh, who moved from Holland three years ago, is a painter and an artist living in Lyons with his wife and two children. He said that artists, musicians and writers share a universal desire to use their skills to invoke emotions in others.

"In the case of this banjo, I hope to make people laugh," he said.

It's not the largest banjo in the world, he concedes. (That claim to fame belongs to a water park in Branson, Missouri. The neck of the banjo there holds five fiber optic strings and is 47-feet long, and is built with more than 3,000 pounds of steel). But Jacob's banjo is the most artful and eco-friendly, says the creator.

Leeuwenburgh said he hopes the public art makes a statement for recycling -- as he scavenged for materials at places like Boulder's ReSource.

Rachel Tallent, who works at The Stone Cup coffee shop in town, said people stop by and ask where they can find the big banjo.

"Who doesn't want to see that?" Tallent said.

When he began crafting his banjo over the summer, Leeuwenburgh stirred up suspicion among his neighbors.

"I even had people think I was building a flying saucer," Leeuwenburgh said.

His 8-year-old daughter Ixchel and her friend Oran Huff, 5, pointed out the places on the banjo that they helped create. During the warm weather, the pipes can spout out water for the kids to run through.

What's next for the banjo?

"I might lie awake at night wondering where the banjo should end up," Leeuwenburgh said. "I hope there will be a spot here in town where the banjo can be placed to symbolize the town of Lyons."

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Photo by Paul Aiken

Artist Jacob Leeuwenburgh with his giant banjo Tuesday in front of his Lyons home.

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