

# Gaston *Alive!*

Home • Garden • Style • Fun • Food • Happenings

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Cornish Game Hen-Wow! At Parties *p14*

Happy Space- Happy Place! *p20*

A Musician At Heart-Meet Jim Ashton *p23*

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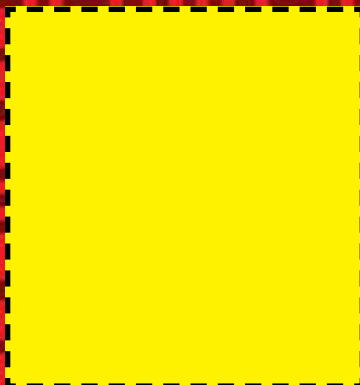
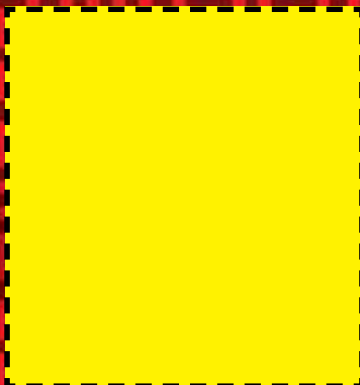
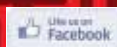
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# about the cover

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This month's cover was shot on location at the home of Jim & Nadine Deason. Jim is the owner of Deason Landscape & Irrigation. Outdoor room built by Integrity Structures. See related story page 10. Cover photography by Rick Haithcox, cover graphic design by David James.

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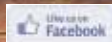
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Meet Preston Wilson And His

# Renaissance

BY DAVID HAMRICK

# Builder's Portfolio

**GA!: Tell us a little about yourself-family, where you went to school, business background, etc.**

**Preston:** I am a local Gaston County boy. My beautiful wife Somer and spirited toddler Liam are everything to me. I am involved in numerous local businesses, most all of which involve construction and development. I am lucky to be doing work I love, surrounded by great people.



**GA!: I think of you as a renaissance builder because you often bring back historic projects to be more than they ever were before, but also because you are sort of a "construction artist" that utilizes different trades and disciplines in your projects...**

**Preston:** Design and architecture have always intrigued me, and I have been fortunate to have some great mentors. We have a diverse team with varied design and construction backgrounds, and I think we bring a great portfolio of talent to the projects we do.

**GA! Preston, you have worked on lots of fun, interesting projects-many historical. I know you did renovations on the duplexes in McAdenville, and multiple projects in downtown Belmont and Mt. Holly.**

**Preston:** Those projects were fun and interesting to say the least- we welcome opportunities to work on historic projects where we think we are a fit. It is intriguing- and





sometimes humbling- to see how some of the great old buildings and development in Gaston County were accomplished using just our local resources and craftsmen.



**GA!: Tell us about outdoor living projects...**

**Preston:** Over the last 5 years we have really enjoyed working with clients on some amazing outdoor projects. Some of these projects are truly "out of the box". People are increasingly finding value and comfort in creating a natural retreat right in their own back yard. Every project is unique. We enjoy using combinations of stone, wood, fire, water, brick, lighting, and metals.

**GA!: Tell us about working with designers and landscapers?**

**Preston:** It really makes it fun when we get to add several more imaginations into the creative mix. We really have some great designers and landscapers in our area. We just finished an amazing outdoor living and dining room extending from a log cabin working with local designer, Vallerie Pressley and landscaper, Jim Deason. These are just a few of many talented people that we have enjoyed creating some special projects with.

**GA!: What if I have a dream of a room or project, but don't really have a plan?**

**Preston:** You would be 75% of our clientele! We love to sit down and hear your ideas, and for our emails to be flooded with Pinterest and Houzz pictures. This tells us more about you. From there we begin to outline a scope of work and plan of attack. Often we are able to handle everything in house. If we feel it would be most beneficial to involve a designer and/or architect, we will get them connected and stay involved through the planning process so that we are well aware of the clients' interests and desires when it comes time to renovate or build.



as understanding the desired outcome. Our team spends a lot of time discussing our client's projects and budgets to ensure that we are being as creative as possible to achieve value before any proposal is developed or discussed. We always have three members of our team evaluate the entire plan to make sure the numbers work for the client.

>>Article continued on page 13.



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For more of this article go to [gastonalive.com](http://gastonalive.com).

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# Meet Jim Deason



### **GA!: Jim- tell us how you got started in the landscape business?**

**Jim:** After studying many art forms at Brevard and East Carolina University I came home to find myself working with a friend's family business. A few years later my Dad, who had just retired from Burlington, started dabbling in landscape projects. I thought that looked interesting and dove right in. At that time there were not many people in this field around here (20 years ago!) so I quickly took it to the next level.

### **GA!: Looking at your website...you have a gorgeous portfolio of work...**

**Jim:** Well, I try to look at the landscape in as creative way as I can so we do not end up with the same old thing everyone else has. There are many different and unusual plants, trees and ground-covers that are available that the average landscaper does not think about or does not know how to use them. And how the plants and other materials are used takes a little creativity itself, not to mention craftsmanship to implement them.

### **GA!: Do you have a specialty or a favorite type of project?**

**Jim:** Hmm, I really enjoy working in small spaces such as courtyards, intimate spaces and Japanese gardens. But I equally like to go into an older yard and rip everything out and install a completely new landscape. That always makes a huge impact and creates quite a stir in a neighborhood!



### **GA!: What about outdoor living spaces, pool areas and hardscapes?**

**Jim:** We like to install hardscapes such as stone, brick or paver type products too. And that could be patios, walkways and walls. If I need something such as an outdoor kitchen, cabinets or fireplace I usually call on Preston Wilson's expertise because his crew

is very experienced in that area. Outdoor living spaces are fun to work with and really useful for families and their friends.



### **GA!: Is an irrigation system important in our climate/area?**

**Jim:** I recommend installing an irrigation system when doing most landscaping projects simply because you need to take care of that investment of plantings. But equally important is proper usage of our resource of water. A good controller with one of the new generation rain sensors is the way to go. They can now automatically adjust the run time on a daily basis due to the temperature and evapotranspiration rate of plants in your micro-climate.



For more of this article go to [gastonalive.com](http://gastonalive.com).

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# Cornish Hens

I love this dish because it has a lot of wow factor for a dinner party. However, it is a bit of a cooking misnomer, as Cornish Game (or Rock Cornish Game) Hen is neither a wild game bird, nor necessarily a hen since it could be of either sex. They are, in fact a domestic chicken hybrid cross between Cornish Game cock and White Plymouth Rock hen that was developed in the 1950's by a farming couple in Connecticut.

The breed grows quickly and develops into a succulent single serving bird in 4-6 weeks defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as a young immature chicken weighing less two pounds, in ready to cook weight, descended from a Cornish chicken.

Now that we have covered the trivia, lets discuss the recipe.

## Ingredients:

*4 Cornish Hens (or more)*

*Lemon (1/4 per hen)*

*Garlic (1 clove per hen, plus 2 for the wild rice)*

*Fresh Rosemary, Sage and Lavender (optional)*

*Wild Rice, your choice of a blend or even out of the box based on servings required*

*1 pound Sage Sausage*

*Onion*

*Chicken Broth*

*White Wine*

*Cornstarch*

Pre heat oven to 375 degrees, prepare the hens, rinse, remove giblets, pat dry, rub in butter or EVOO season with salt and pepper. Stuff each hen with 1/4 lemon, a sprig of rosemary, a sprig of lavender, four sage leaves, a clove of garlic.

Cook breast down, in roasting pan with a wire rack to keep the hens up and out of any drippings (this allows the skin to crisp). I start the hens breast down to keep the breast more moist, after back starts to brown 30-45 min turn hens over with breast up and cook another 30-45 min or till breast skin browns and internal temperature reaches 165 degrees. If the hens don't brown enough in 45 min, raise the oven temperature to 425 watching carefully till they reach the desired color.

In the meantime cook the wild rice according to instructions replacing the water with chicken broth. In another pan, brown sage, sausage, onion, garlic. When the rice is done, mix rice with the browned sausage.

Remove the hens from the roasting pan when done, and use the pan drippings to create a sauce. Add 1 tbs cornstarch to 1/2 cup white wine, whisk into drippings cook for 5 min while hens rest. It will have a nice herb and lemon flavor.

Present the hens on a bed of the rice, spoon sauce over top add the veggie side and impress your guests!

Enjoy, Glenn





# Cooking

with Glenn





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# *The Home Stylist*

By Jodi Kines

## **Make It Personal**

Today's demanding lifestyles mean that while the world is demanding more from us, we must demand more from our personal space. Your home should offer refuge from the hustle and bustle of everyday life; it should draw you in after a long day and feel like your very own escape. Your home should be a reflection of you, your personality, and your style. Your home should be your 'happy place'.

Start by surrounding yourself with colors, patterns, and textures that make you feel joyful, calm, and at ease. While current trends and mainstream style will often influence overall design decisions, adding your personal flare is what will ensure your home feels like your own, personal retreat. Allow yourself to choose a palette of color and texture simply because you feel drawn to it and then work around that concept to pull the remainder of the room together. Let your lead design decision be about what you love – the fabric you keep coming back to or the paint color you just can't stop holding up to the wall - and let the rest fall into place around it.

Personality can be seen in our color palette and furnishings, but really shines through in our art and accessories. Start with your walls and be selective about the items you display throughout your home. Focus more on personal, meaningful artwork to set the tone of your space. Photo collages are a great way to add interest and personal style to your walls – and they don't have to include just family portraits. In a recent client's home we filled a hallway with a simple photo collage that included family portraits as well as images from all of the cities where the couple has lived. This is a wonderful way to tell your personal story and accessorize your walls at the same time.





Photo collages also don't have to be just about your immediate family. In our home, we used vintage photographs of multiple generations to create a gallery-style display. It's a fun way to pay tribute to our ancestors and makes a wonderful conversation piece.

Taking the vintage concept a step further, we recently used old license plates to create a collage above the bed in a little boy's room; each of the plates represented a state his parent's had lived. As a car fanatic, the little guy loved the idea; it added a wonderful pop of color and texture AND had a personal connection to their family.

Gallery wrapped canvases also make great artwork! Don't be afraid to go big and bold to make a statement – and don't feel like you have to use just formal, posed portraits. Candid images often best convey your family's personality and offer a more casual, comfortable feel for the room.

When it comes to accessories and final touches, again, think personal, think meaningful. Imagine making a personal - even emotional - connection with the items that surround you instead of just meaninglessly "excess-oring" shelves and walls merely to have them look 'finished'. Don't be afraid to reuse and repurpose vintage or keepsake items. Consider using smaller heirloom silver or crystal serving pieces to accessorize not just your dining room, but your family room end tables or your bedroom nightstands. I use my grandmother's vintage colored-glass candy dish to hold my jewelry by the sink in my kitchen; not only does it add a welcome splash of color, but I also love seeing it and being reminded of her as I go through the routine of my day.

We have also chosen to accessorize the built-in bookshelves in our family room with many found objects from my husband's family farm. Most of the old buckets and bottles were dug out of the dilapidated barn and given a good wash before being displayed on our shelves; however, we maintained their dents, dings, rust and patina to add character and charm. These items add great interest and texture to the space, but they also tell the story of our family and our farming heritage.



Whether you start by surrounding yourself with a design palette dictated by personal taste or by adding furnishings and accessories that are personal and meaningful, even the smallest step toward personalizing your home can go a long way to creating your own personal retreat, your own getaway from the world, your own 'happy place'.





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173 West Main Avenue, Gastonia



@stepsidedeluxe

# MUSIC



**by Bil Jones**

*[bjones@gastonalive.com](mailto:bjones@gastonalive.com)*

## Jim Ashton

On a live music stage most weekends sits a man behind a mechanical marvel of wood, levers, rods, pedals and strings. Guiding a steel bar with one hand and plucking the strings with the other he cajoles a most unique sound, almost effortlessly it seems, in time with the other musicians. The man at the helm of this fantastic instrument, the pedal steel guitar, is North Carolina musician Jim Ashton.



Originally hailing from Derwood, Maryland Jim picked up the guitar at the early age of 12. He quickly moved on to the banjo three years

later after hearing the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's 1972 release 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken'. This three album merger of rock and traditional country music was a considerable influence on Jim and eventually led him to such banjo masters as Tony Trischka and Courtney Johnson. The pedal steel guitar came to Jim's attention next after hearing Jerry Garcia's wonderful arrangement on the Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young song 'Teach Your Children'. He then proceeded to learn to play this complex instrument and immersed himself in the music of steel greats Buddy Cage and JayDee Maness. Rounding out his initial musical influences were artists such as The Byrds, Pure Prairie League, and The Grateful Dead among many others.

Jim hit the stage and spent time honing his craft in the nearby local music scene of Washington, DC thru his

early twenties. The vibrant musical offerings of the area such as Danny Gatton, The Nighthawks, Tom Principato, and Seldom Scene provided him with a background which has given him a unique and genre crossing style. After spending time in DC with his first band, Ambush Pass, Jim's talents led him to a summer playing music in Colorado and then on to New York for a few years. A visit to a friend in North Carolina in 1983 brought him to the area and he successfully auditioned for The C & M Traveling Show which later morphed into the band, Long Rider. Jim spent three years traveling across the nation with the group but eventually decided to leave the road behind and finished out the 80's playing first with Danny Baker, better known as Unknown Hinson, and then the Carter Brothers Band.

The 90's opened with Ashton performing a house gig at Country City USA in Charlotte and then moving across town to the house band at Coyote Joe's. The road beckoned and Jim once again set out, this time landing in Nashville, Tennessee. After a stint playing in the country music capital of the world he moved on to Myrtle Beach and was then invited to join the Davidson, North Carolina based progressive bluegrass band, Cast Iron Filter. Jim toured with CIF from 1999 to 2002 before taking over pedal steel guitar duties at The Frontier in Gastonia. He would eventually lend his talents as the house band leader the following year and held the position until 2011.

Currently Jim is sought after as both a session player and producer in the studio. His recent release, 'Banjo', is a collection of original tunes that appeal to a wide variety of music enthusiast. It has garnered rave reviews and has been in rotation locally on WNCW 88.7 FM. Jim is also much in demand on the stage and currently divides his time playing with Jonathan Birchfield, Nashville artist Lacy Green, and Gaston County based Stepside Deluxe. When he is not writing, recording, producing or playing music, Jim teaches private lessons in the Hickory area.

Jim Ashton considers himself incredibly fortunate to work at something he loves. He has invested a lifetime dedicated to his passion for music both on and off the stage - a passion which he says still burns hot to this day.



*B. J. JONES*

**You can catch Jim Ashton live Saturday March 23rd, 2013 at Freeman's Pub in Gastonia performing with Stepside Deluxe.**

**Jim Ashton's CD 'Banjo' is available through; iTunes - <https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/banjo/id414067810>**

**CD Baby - <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/jimashton>. Jim can be contacted via email at [jcashtone9@yahoo.com](mailto:jcashtone9@yahoo.com)**

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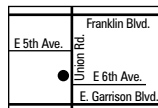
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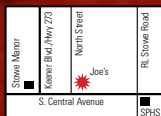
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# Gaston County Restaurant & Dining Guide



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	LUNCH	L	OUTDOOR DINING	T	\$S	\$11-\$20
	DINNER	D	BEER/WINE	T	\$SS	\$21 AND UP
	SUNDAY BRUNCH	SB	LIVE MUSIC	J		

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