

Hi there, and welcome to As It Is, our daily show for people learning English. I'm June Simms in Washington.

Today, we are celebrating 10 years of togetherness with the Bluegrass band Nu-Blu. To mark the anniversary, we will play some new music from the group.

But first, we begin with a report from Los Angeles, California. Los Angeles is one of the most famous cities in the world, thanks to Hollywood. Now, a project called Snapshot Galleria is documenting some of the city's hidden culture. Jim Tedder has more.

Street Photographer Documents Urban Life and Art

Erwin Recinos is a photographer who records the life and urban art of Los Angeles. At a neighborhood auto show, he takes pictures of lowriders. Lowriders are classic cars that are made to sit close to the ground, almost touching the road.

Car clubs in the city's Hispanic communities make changes to American automobiles from the 1960s and 70s. Mr. Recinos captures images of the cars for a project by local photographers.

“A lot of these car clubs have been around for about 50 or 60 years. So what you're looking for is cultural influences in the community.”

Mr. Recinos walks around an industrial neighborhood looking for things to photograph. Here, many graffiti artists have painted storage buildings with colorful murals. Some of the murals are almost seven meters tall.

Erwin Recinos says inner city artists are one of the many cultures of Los Angeles.

“Different neighborhoods of surf culture, skate culture, gang culture, car culture, graffiti culture.”

The online photography project, called Snapshot Galleria, documents these cultures.

Mr. Recinos says he loves to work downtown. The area is full of surprises. Sometimes, the photographer says he even finds waste containers that are decorated with art.

Mr. Recinos says Los Angeles is rich with images. On a photo shoot in a downtown park, he comes across a group of mean-looking pit bull dogs and their owners. The dogs are taking part in behavioral training. He stops to take a picture. He says such unexpected sights can result in a great image.

“You never know what's going to happen. You've just got to go with it.”

He says these photos show a different side of a colorful city. I'm Jim Tedder.

And I'm June Simms. You are listening to As It Is, from VOA Learning English.

Celebrating 10 Years of Togetherness with Nu-Blu

Some musical acts come and go so quickly. So it is rare to find a group celebrating 10 years of togetherness. But that is exactly what the modern bluegrass band Nu-Blu is doing with its new CD “Ten.”

Carolyn Routh sings lead on most of the songs on Nu-Blu's “Ten.” Her singing rings out so smooth and strong. Yet she was almost silenced by a series of strokes in November of 2003, soon after the band was formed.

At first, Carolyn Routh was unable to talk or use the right side of her body. But with the help of the band's guitarist, and now her husband, Daniel Routh, she battled back. Seeing her play and sing today, you would never know the red-haired bass player had ever been sick.

In addition to the Rouths, Nu-Blu has two other members: Levi Austin on banjo and Austin Koener on mandolin.

The North Carolina group plays the same instruments as the creators of bluegrass music did back in the 1940s. Yet, few of the songs on Nu-Blu's fifth album have that twangy, old-school sound.

What is Nu-Blu's secret to surviving and staying on the road for 10 years when so many bands break up? Carolyn Routh says you have to love every minute of the job. Singing is all she has ever wanted to do.

"That's my dream job and I love every minute of it. I'm also a real homebody. And I love my family and I love my home."

Being on the road all the time takes her away from family and friends. That is the subject of a song called "That Road."

"This song lets me be in both places. When I perform this song, I'm thinking about how much fun I'm having right there on that stage and, at the same time, how much I'm missing my family back at home. So the song sort of bridges that gap for me."

Nu-Blu has a large number of performances planned across the United States. This includes shows on a cruise ship in the Caribbean Sea in early winter. The group hopes to add overseas dates next year.

And that is As It Is. Thanks for listening.



Have a question or comment about our show? We would love to hear from you. Email us at learningenglish@voanews.com.

I'm June Simms in Washington. Stay with VOA for world news at the beginning of the hour Universal Time.