

Colorado native Brian J. Rill has a thing or two to say about integrity and ethics these days, and it's not because of the current political environment.

Musician, lyricist, composer, and educator, Rill has played the Salida and Buena Vista scenes since relocating in 2003 from Colorado Springs. Fiercely independent, Rill feels that his innate rebellious nature doesn't necessarily endear him to the community at large. And he's okay with that.

"I learned from my mentor and teacher (late rock and blues musician, Peter Israel, *Midnight at the Palace Hotel*) to hold my craft in high esteem. Israel, a lifelong member of BMI, taught me that I wouldn't be a real artist unless I got paid for doing what I love to do."

BMI (Broadcast Music Incorporated) is a performing rights company that supports its songwriters, composers, and publishers by taking care of an important aspect of their clients' careers: getting paid. They charge a nominal fee from business owners who play music – whether pre-recorded or live – to help support their client base.

"This is how I make my living. I can't be playing for free, and I can't minimize the cost it requires to hire me, because that would be self-defeating. I know that some see it as my having "sold out" to the industry somehow. I don't see it that way. I see it as being a professional musician."

He feels his views have stigmatized his reputation somewhat. He considers his stance as being "on strike against poor pay [for musicians]."

Rill was enticed to move to Salida after visiting an aunt and cousin in the early 2000s, when he fell in love with the beauty of his surroundings. He volunteered at KHEN 106.9 in Salida, hosting an alt-rock and live music show. Since then, he has carved a musical niche for himself in the region. He was grateful to be able to step into the musical void left when musician Brian Dyer passed away three months before Rill arrived. To Rill, it felt like the universe was telling him that Salida was where he was meant to be. He wanted to be true to himself and his musical calling.

"I see it as beneficial for everyone to stand up against those who would take advantage of musicians in the region, because it lets the business owner or event coordinator know that I value my work, enough to not sell it to the lowest bidder."

Rill feels such "bargains" hurts the local music scene, as it creates a perception that local musicians aren't worth as much as those in more metropolitan areas. He is also a member of the American Federation of Musicians, a non-profit organization that represents "any musician who receives pay for his musical services."

"Sometimes you have to double-down in order to earn what you're worth."

He is tenacious and invested in seeing Salida and surrounding areas become a place where creatives can earn a living pursuing their dreams and not a virtual battleground where they are slowly bled dry and bereft of creative nurturing.

His career has had a few setbacks, one involving a music producer stealing master tapes of a 2012 collaboration he did with late friend and musician William Boddy, an event that took him nearly four years to bounce back from. He says, "Salida is my muse."

In 2009, Rill and Boddy created the Salida School of Stringed Instruments, which remains in operation today. Most recently, Rill also doubled down on his efforts to create a supportive environment for up and coming musicians by forming the Future Musicians Charitable Trust. You can find his work and other items, as well as more of his background, on his website: <http://www.brianrill.com/>