



## ***The Tumbling Tumbleweeds are rolling into history***

***By Michelle J. Mills, Staff Writer  
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***Last year was a very good one for the Sierra Madre western group The Tumbling Tumbleweeds.***

***Its tight, warm harmonies and plucky performances have garnered a clutch of honors: the Western Music Association Crescendo Award for Most Promising Talent; the Marilyn Tuttle Harmony Award of the Year for Best in Show in the harmony competition during the Western Music Association festival; and the Academy of Western Artists Will Rogers Award for Western Music Duo/Group of the Year.***

***It has also been named as one of the Top 10 Live Acoustic Acts by Larry Wines in FolkWorks magazine. The group's album hit No. 1 in the Top 10 Cowboy/Western Music CD Chart in Western Way magazine.***

***Sierra Madre baritone Rob Wolfskill, Long Beach baritone Cade Parenti, Hollywood tenor Chris Acuff and guitarist R.J. Mills of San Juan Capistrano make up the core of The Tumbling Tumbleweeds, often now joined by Jean Sudbury on fiddle and mandolin and Dan Dungan on upright bass. This past year also saw the release of the group's debut effort, "The Tumbling Tumbleweeds."***

***"The biggest honor so far has not been any of the awards, but just getting the mentorship of the famous people in the Western world," Parenti said. "We get to rub elbows with the people who pretty much ran things in the '50s and '40s. Now they're so accessible for us."***

***During the evening of the Western Music Association awards ceremony in November, the group members waited anxiously to hear the***

***presentation of the Crescendo Award and thought they had missed it. Finally singer/songwriter Juni Fisher took the podium and began to describe what traits and work made an artist deserving of the coveted award for most promising talent.***

***"You just get that nervousness and time slows down to a halt and that quiet occurs," Mills said.***

***Fisher read the nominees and then announced the winner: The Tumbling Tumbleweeds. The group members didn't get up right away, as they were honestly surprised.***

***After the win, the men found themselves being congratulated by artists such as Jean Prescott, Les Buffham, Marilyn Tuttle and Belinda Gail, who also offered support and words of wisdom.***

***"They could see us evolving and moving forward and they gave us advice," Wolfskill said. "Juni Prescott pulled me aside and said, `you guys are this close to the top and what you need to do is just enjoy the ride for now because when you get there, it's going to be busy and hectic and you're going to be scrambling for some time off."***

***The awards and honors have garnered interest in The Tumbling Tumbleweeds from a range of retailers. OutWest Marketing, a company specializing in Western and automotive-inspired apparel, accessories and home decor is now a sponsor. (It is based in Santa Clarita and has a showroom in Pasadena.) Others vendors, such as the Autry National Center of the American West and CD Baby, now sell the Tumbleweeds CD.***

***"What we've yet to do is to tap into a market outside of Western music and really popularize" it, Parenti said. "It's tough for Western music because as music grows, it branches out from itself... Country music has continued to go and it's developed into this whole poppy thing that's not really even country music."***

***"But there's this grassroots movement that's happening in Western music and there are younger people like us who are getting involved in the genre," Wolfskill said. "One of the groups we were nominated with, Carin Mari and Pony Express, they're all teenage kids. It's really exciting to see this evolution of younger people getting involved in the genre both in the performance level and in the audience, because one breeds the other."***

***The group also sees that today's economy and modernization has people, particularly seniors, seeking a return to the comfort of their roots, which the Tumbleweeds' music provides.***

***The music speaks of the less stressful times of cowboys resting under starry skies after a long day of riding the range and herding cattle.***

***"This is our American folk music," Wolfskill said. "It's equivalent to Celtic music, it's equivalent to zydeco. It's connected to our history, especially us as Westerners, it's important and significant because the genre and the music itself is connected to something that's a lot bigger than just us. This is part of our history as Americans."***