

# WOODSONGS 1000

Broadcast Celebration,  
Top Secret "How-To" Manual

AND  
Musician's Manifesto



*"Listen to the sounds around you.  
As light taught Monet to paint, the Earth teaches you music."*

**Pete Seeger**

CONGRATULATIONS ON  
**1,000**  
BROADCASTS!

*fulfilling*  
Michael Johnathon's  
**WOODSONGS**  
Old-Time Radio Hour

Discover all that Lexington has to offer!  
**VisitLex.com**



What's better way to #ShareTheLex than  
the WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour.



# THE HISTORY OF WOODSONGS

or

*“How We Built A Worldwide Broadcast on Scotch Tape and Super Glue”*

Suppliment Booklet to

Michael Johnathon

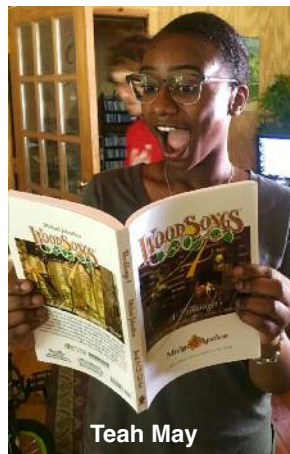


*Book & CD Gift Set*

In the book I go into great detail about the history of WoodSongs, how the idea was born and the journey we took to produce over 1000 broadcasts ... a remarkable feat for any media project, especially considering the show is volunteer run. What the book doesn't have, I offer here: the unknown behind-the-scenes stuff that created the template for the broadcast itself.

The celebration of show 1000 is really in honor of our amazing **community and the crew** that produces 44 of these broadcasts each year, more than any other syndicated show on public radio and public TV. It's a celebration of the **artists** who visit Lexington each week to bring their music and dreams, the local partners that provide dinner and beautiful hotel rooms, the hundreds of **radio** and **public TV** stations that give us airtime, **American Forces Radio** that provides an international audience in 177 nations around the world, **RFD-TV** that provides a fixed position national time slot, and the **teachers and home school** parents that use WoodSongs in their classrooms.

But most of all, **it's a celebration of you, our audience.** Without your applause, laughter and joyful spirit that fills the Lyric Theatre each week the WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour would not be here today. Thank you!



Teah May



A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Michael Johnathon".

michael@woodsongs.com

*Dedicated to Kevin "Darth Vader" Johnson & the WoodSongs Crew*

## WOODSONGS HISTORY

# “Colista’s Jam” Theme Song

The bluegrass theme song played at the beginning, mid break, and end of the show is called **Colista’s Jam**.

I was visiting Homer and Colista Ledford in Winchester and during lunch Homer’s wife spread this delicious blackberry jam on toast and placed it on my plate. She told the story about how she makes the homemade jam, how much Homer loves it and she’s been making it for decades just for him. Homer sat there with a big grin on his face and after lunch we went down into his basement workshop where I watched him create the magical instruments he is so famous for.

For the next several days I kept thinking about that jam and how special it was to Homer that his wife loved him so much she would make that a special and constant gift to him. I came up with the melody and wrote the lyrics and recorded the song with Ruth McLain on bass, Homer on mandolin, Katy Penn on fiddle, I play my Martin guitar and the amazing JD Crowe on banjo. My friend Rick Marks was the engineer.

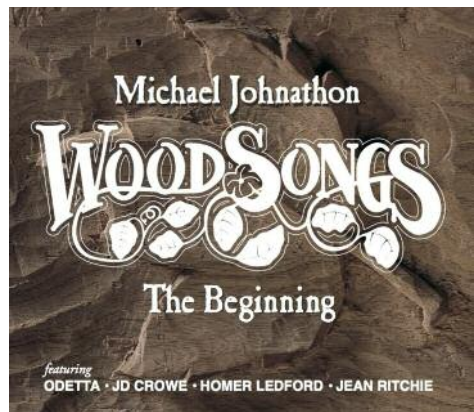
I brought the recorded song to Homer and Colista and played it in their living room, Homer grinned thoughtfully ... paused ... and said”

*“Well, I never dreamed jelly could sound so naughty.”*

When I sketched out the format of WoodSongs in my mind I decided that song, upbeat and punchy, organic and bluegrass flavored, should be the theme song. So Rick and I went back into the studio and remixed the tracks but without the vocals ... and Colista’s Jam became the musical theme for the WoodSongs broadcast.

Colista gave me one of Homer’s neck bolos as a gift after he passed and I proudly wear it every day. And when I am on stage and Colista’s Jam plays in the theater during the broadcast taping I give that bolo a little tap with my finger as a reminder and tribute to my good friend Homer and the love that he had for his wife, Colista.

The original song, lyrics and all, is found on the original WoodSongs album, recorded before the broadcast was even a spark of an idea. This is the



album that begat the book that inspired the idea that became the national radio broadcast that turned itself into a public television series and found a proactive audience that started WoodSongs Coffeehouses around the world that brought the kids onto the stage and formed the classroom program that showed how important the “front porch” is and became the national association of SongFarmers.

## WOODSONGS HISTORY

### The Emails

I get literally hundreds of emails a week from listeners all over the world, and it is rare for me to ever share any of it. I thought this one was special:

<<< Hi Michael, we listen to WoodSongs every Sunday night in Canberra, Australia. I'm a great fan, my wife has to delay dinner so I can listen to the show. We have driven up from Fort Lauderdale today and staying at Atlanta. We will head to Lexington first thing tomorrow. Could we please reserve 2 tickets for tomorrow nights show? We will call the number but desperate to get tickets. Many thanks, Bill Pearson >>>



Bill and his lovely wife did in fact come to the show, I brought him up on stage and he told the audience how he listens to WoodSongs every Sunday evening on ART FM, one of our many Australian affiliates, while sitting in his man-shed garage. I had him co-host the encore section in front of a packed theatre.



## WOODSONGS HISTORY

# Cyber Bubba and the Baseball Throw

During the first few years of the show, it always felt a tad awkward to end the broadcast and dryly say “see you next week.” It seemed rather plain and lacking any excitement.

Then we started cyber-casting and it seemed we should also say goodbye to the folks who watched us online. On the original *WoodSongs* album, there is a song called *Cyber Bubba* about a dude surfing online making believe he was some kind of hunk to impress girls. Kevin always thought the song was funny and, since it was about the internet, I thought, “*maybe we should end the show taping with that song.*” Kevin loved the idea and he really liked the big crack of the snare drum that launched the song.

So, taking a cue from Johnny Carson re-runs (*he always ended the Tonight Show with a golf swing*), I thought, since I liked baseball, I would pitch the show ending to Kevin who would hit the playback button perfectly for the big snare drum crack. Kevin, and now Jerome and Brandon, always time the snare hit perfectly. In a way, it’s still in honor of Kevin “Darth Fader” Johnson.



## WOODSONGS HISTORY

# WoodSongs Partners

How do you fill a theatre with people on a Monday evening at dinner time during rush hour traffic to hear artists they don't know sing songs they've never heard before? Why, no tickets of course.

The idea of our family of **WoodSongs Partners** is probably one of the most unique facets of the WoodSongs broadcast. It is really very simple: a Couple becomes a WoodSongs Partners for \$95 a year which supports our education program and sustains the radio and TV broadcast. In exchange, they come to the show for free ... no tickets ... to over 40 shows a year. That pro-rates down to about \$1 a seat per show. Literally one of the best entertainment deals in America.

WoodSongs doesn't have big corporate sponsors, we don't apply for grants and we don't solicit donations. WoodSongs is "sponsored" by our audience. We want the joyful noise of your family at the show. Your applause is more valuable than money, because you make WoodSongs valid in the eyes of the artists who donate their own days to travel to Lexington to be part of the broadcast. If love is the greatest transaction of the Arts, then the audience is the greatest currency of the Arts. Because of you, WoodSongs seems rich in the eyes of artists all over the world!



## WOODSONGS HISTORY

# The WoodSongs Sign

When it came time to leave the Central Library and move into the Kentucky Theater and, what seemed at the time, its huge stage. It looked so ... empty. I felt like we needed our logo on the stage but I didn't want a poster or some cheap looking banner. We needed a massive, seen-to-be-remembered 3-D logo. I wanted that sucker hitting you in the face when you walked into the theatre ... one of a kind and permanently emblazoned in your memory when you think of WoodSongs. Earthy, colorful and big. We found a sign company, oddly enough owned by one of the managers of the Kentucky Theater, that had the ability to make a sign based on the very large dimensions that I wanted.



**The WoodSongs stage sign is 14' wide and 5' high. Also pictured is one of our amazing Ear Trumpet mics.**

The day the sign arrived, Jim Piston developed the rigging to hang it and we stood back and stared at it for a while. I remember Kevin Johnson, with his unique ability to assess a situation in few words, looked at the sign and then looked at me and said, *"Well, I guess size is everything."*

That sign, and the impressive size of it, has proven to be one of the biggest driving forces of the broadcast. It became our worldwide BRAND. No matter how you take a photograph of the stage, the brand of the show is forever present. And it doesn't look like a cheap banner, it looks like we mean it, it looks like we are loving what we're doing and presenting the show as a serious effort.

Artists and public relations firms post pictures of the artists on the show and sometimes they go viral with millions of views, all advertising WoodSongs. It seemed so improbable at the time, expensive and, to some, a little vain. But it was actually the smartest thing we ever did especially when the show became a series on public television and the RFD-TV network.



If everything holds together and there is no inadvertent surprises, WoodSongs will produce its 1000th broadcast. And our big, ragged, often repaired and patched up sign will hang proudly on the stage.

## WOODSONGS HISTORY

# The Format

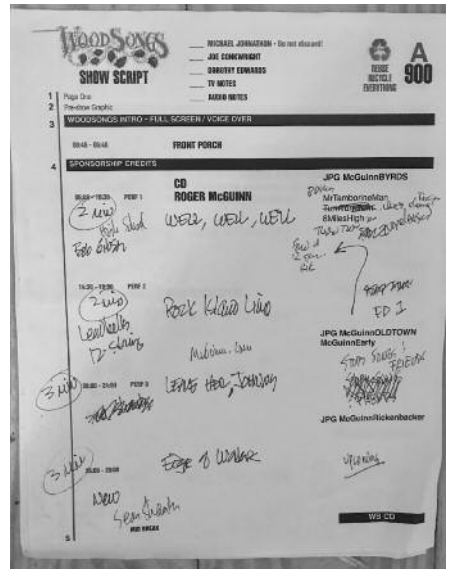
The format of WoodSongs is very unique in the world of radio. It helps us stand out apart from other fine, legacy live audience shows like *Mountain Stage*, *E-Town*, even *Austin City Limits*.

Those great, legendary shows have one very important thing in common: they are concert performance segments taped in front of a live audience. There is no interview, there's no conversation and interaction. The artists stand in front of the theater, and perform a concert set to the theater and that is what the radio and television audience watches.

If we were going to go through the monumental effort of creating a syndicated live audience program celebrating the world of front porch music, I wanted it to be unique and different and stand out from the other available broadcasts. The world did not need one more broadcast doing essentially the same thing these other shows were doing in a very fine way.

I hate copy-cats. The responsibility of every artist is to be unique and different. I wanted to take that same approach to WoodSongs. It would be about the organic world of front porch music from an **Artist -to-Artist point of view**. That is one of the reasons Kevin Johnson and I decided to attach my name to the WoodSongs logo.

To make WoodSongs different, I created a format that would involve both music and conversation. It would be scripted by a basic "show clock" which was actually very simple. The first artist would do a song followed by 2 1/2 minutes of conversation so the audience can get to know them, how they write, what they play, how they started. Then they would perform their second song. Then it will be time for the second artist who would do the exact same thing.



The script notes for WoodSongs show 900 with Roger McGuinn

I'm not a fan the stiff feel of editing and I realized if I paid attention to the clock and brought each segment in on time, we could actually complete a broadcast taping in exactly 59 minutes which would virtually eliminate any need for editing. Or at least reduce it to a manageable scale (*brilliantly handled by Jerome Gallt*) This makes the show flow in a very organic, up-tempo and energetic way and sound very live, very real to the listeners.

A somewhat difficult thing is to make sure the artists have four songs apiece that are about 3:45 seconds in length. Singer songwriters, and I say this in the most loving manner possible, tend to be long-winded and, for some, it can be difficult to select four great songs that fit. The problem is there is only so much "real estate" in 59 minutes and we want both artists to have fair and equal performance time. In other words, both featured artists would be able to perform pretty much exactly the same amount of time each. It would be fair.

By show 20, the format and my show script got locked down and became a uniform template for each broadcast. Today the broadcast format and show script is virtually the same as it was when we first started. A huge benefit of this is, not only does WoodSongs stand out apart from other broadcasts making it unique and different... which the radio world obviously likes. It is also good for our live audience. Many radio broadcasts take 2 to 4 hours to complete and this can be fatiguing to the live audience. It is not unusual for their show to start with a full theater and then end up with half or less as the taping session concludes many hours later.

The organized pacing of the broadcast is entertaining for many of the artists who visit the show, and it's become part of the very positive reputation WoodSongs has garnered in the music world. We are not wasting anybody's time. And we are certainly not wasting the time of our beloved audience who make the huge effort to come to the theater. So we start the show on time and we do everything possible to get it done on time.

In the early days I would listen to *A Prairie Home Companion* ... a true live audience broadcast being delivered live-as-it-happens to radio stations ... and noticed how they started exactly on time, hit their breaks exactly on time, and ended exactly on time. So it seemed to me it was very possible for us to do the same thing if I could simply get it into my head how to delicately keep the conversation brief and the music going without sounding like I was trying to cut anybody off from speaking.

The trick to get that done is to make sure I was the one to introduce the album, song and artist before and after each performance. In radio world that is referred to as "front selling" and "back selling." I would be able to politely control when the conversation would end by being the one who would introduce their song, and then they would play it as soon as they heard the audience applaud.

WoodSongs is unique in this regard, and it has not been uncommon to see producers from other radio broadcasts come to our show with pad and pencil taking notes and studying how we do things. Like I said, I don't have a big appreciation for copycats, and always wished they would do what we did: study the field that's out there and then come up with something nobody else is doing.

The fact that WoodSongs is produced completely, top to bottom, with an all volunteer crew makes it virtually impossible to duplicate, anyway.

## WOODSONGS HISTORY

# My Opening Song

When we started the program it was very important that it be completely different, original and unique from everything else on the radio. That in itself is a hard thing to do, being unique in a non-unique world has disadvantages because very few are willing to try something new. Cloning something successful is easy. And safe. If we were going to do this I wanted to explore uncharted territory. We would go down in flames in the most unique original way possible.

I knew from the start that I wanted WoodSongs to be an artist-to-artist musical conversation. A chance for the audience to peer politely into the world and life of musicians and artists. The last time something like that was attempted was in the early 1960s when Pete Seeger had a tiny public television show called *Rainbow Quest*. It was produced in a small, empty public television studio in New Jersey with no audience.

I was going to walk the tight rope and add the live audience to that formula and turn the public radio and TV airwaves into a musical front porch strapped to a Saturn 5 rocket. For that to happen, obviously I needed to perform on every show to keep the Artist-to-Artist format. The opening song became a statement about what WoodSongs was intended to be. If my name was going to be on the show then I couldn't just be a host, I had to be one of the performers as well.

Let me fill you in on a little secret: that opening song is one of the most brutal, complicated, uncomfortable parts of my week. While I'm singing on stage there are a million distractions happening all at the same time. Playing on the show is nothing like the ease of being on stage performing a concert somewhere in America, where I am solely dedicated to the performance, the audience and all I think about is my instrument and the song.

On WoodSongs, I am responsible not only for performing but directing and producing the program at the same time. There are hundreds of people in the audience, crew members talking behind cameras or walking in front of me and I never know for sure if there's a problem, do we keep on going or stop the show?

Try doing that while also remembering the lyrics and where you are in a song performance. It's enough to drive you crazy, and some weeks it does. Other broadcast shows have paid directors, producers, plenty of stage crew and production assistance that frees up the creative space of people like Chris Thile or Garrison Keillor, who are true masters of the genre.

Our little shoestring operation doesn't have that luxury so many of us involved with WoodSongs handle multiple tasks ... including me.

Here's another little tidbit you might not be aware of: Many think that I open the show with the song because of ego, like I want to show off or insert myself like I'm the first one in line.



Here's another brutal truth: The first five minutes of any public radio or public television broadcast is *the lowest rated portion of the broadcast hour*. That's when everybody is roaming the dial, seeing what's on commercial stations and movie channels. By the time they've switched around and landed on WoodSongs my performance is over and I am introducing the artists on the show.

Performing my song at the very start of WoodSongs is an act of respect to the artists who have traveled a long way and giving up an entire day of their career to be on the broadcast. I am essentially sacrificing myself to give them the highest rated portion of the broadcast. It allows the Artist-to-Artist intention of WoodSongs to exist. I'm not just a commentator or generic host of a broadcast, I am a fellow artist who tours, records, writes, tours, stands on stage when my instrument goes out of tune, and struggles with the normal day to day life style of an artist in modern times. Just like they do.

More than one program director has suggested that I move my song to the mid break when the listening audience swells, and I have steadfastly refused to do that. Instead the midbreak is when we have our WoodSongs Kids segment. Opening the show with a song is fine by me and I'm glad to do it that way.

Here's another fine little fact very few people realize:

About 2002 when the show was really starting to gain traction I was on Old Richmond Road near Lexington, slowing down to turn right into a driveway and some idiot speeding along behind me didn't notice my car in front of him and decided to pass me on the shoulder of the road while I was turning right.

The crash rolled the car I was in three times as it's settled into a cornfield and so damaged my right arm that I was in therapy for a year and almost lost my ability to play the guitar and the banjo. I remember my friend Glenn Wilson would watch me do the opening song and as soon as I was done help re-apply the cast to my right arm as I continued with the program, never missing a beat and never stopping the show to do it. For six years I was stuck playing the same ballads on the show in order to keep the program going and the format intact.

To make these songs creative, or at least sound that way, we put together the Hippie Chick String Quartet which added an elegant atmosphere to these tunes even though I was playing the same 18 or 20 songs over and over again.

I did the best I could and I'm glad to say the last four years I've been pretty much recovered, although my hands and fingers will often go completely numb during stressful moments, like the opening song of that ding dang show, the numbness makes it almost impossible to play.

I think I learned a great lesson from all of this, and that is the power of love in somebody's heart is like fuel that drives them forward over every single obstacle in front of them.

It even propels you forward in the face of unkind ridicule and criticism.

These days, as the crew becomes masters of their domain and things function virtually week after week so smoothly, the opening song becomes a welcome and musical paradise for me and I'm really enjoying it more these days.

## **WOODSONGS HISTORY** **Why Mondays?**

It's not been an uncommon question: Why do we produce Woodsongs on Monday evenings? Wouldn't we have bigger audiences on Saturday nights? Yes. Wouldn't the show be more financially stable with ticket sales if we did the show on the weekend? Absolutely.

We have four reasons for doing the show on Monday:

1) **ARTISTS:** Artist availability and willingness to come to Lexington increases tenfold on a Monday evening. They are either heading home after a big weekend or they are sitting in a motel somewhere desperately waiting for Wednesday night. Most artists have nothing to do on a Monday evening and would fall all over themselves to find a project with such a big audience available to them. That's why so many incredible artists appear on our broadcast... They are available.

2) **CREW:** when you run a volunteer broadcast you have to be very considerate about the schedule and needs of the crew willing to help you. How unkind it would be to interrupt volunteers on the weekend when they should be out visiting family, on vacation, being with friends or doing other activities that they want. If somebody is going to volunteer to be part of the broadcast they are undoubtedly available on Monday evenings because there is very little competition for their attention and time and they are more than happy to be part of something this exciting. That's why we have such a large and stable crew under the mentorship of Bryan Klausung, Tina & Isaac May, Amelia Wisner, Maria Klarich, Jerome Gallt. They are available.

3) **HOTELS:** One of our great partnerships is with the **Bluegrass Hospitality Association**, the collective of most of the hotels in the Central Kentucky area in partnership with **VisitLEX.com**. What they do is provide a spectacular welcome to the visiting artists by giving them free hotel rooms while they are here to do the broadcast. Woodsongs would not exist without the partnership of **VisitLEX** and the **Bluegrass Hospitality Association**. In return we are inviting 2.1 million listeners in 177 nations to come to Lexington on vacation and visit their hotels. On Monday evenings most of the hotels have plenty of available rooms as that is usually a very slow night for them. We do WoodSongs on Mondays because the hotel rooms are available.

4) **ME:** Like the artists I have to work to support a home, career and family. So my work usually involves my weekends just like the artists that come on the show. Just like the artists I am very likely available on a Monday. So wherever I am on a Sunday I travel back to Lexington to do Woodsongs on Monday evenings. On Mondays I am available.

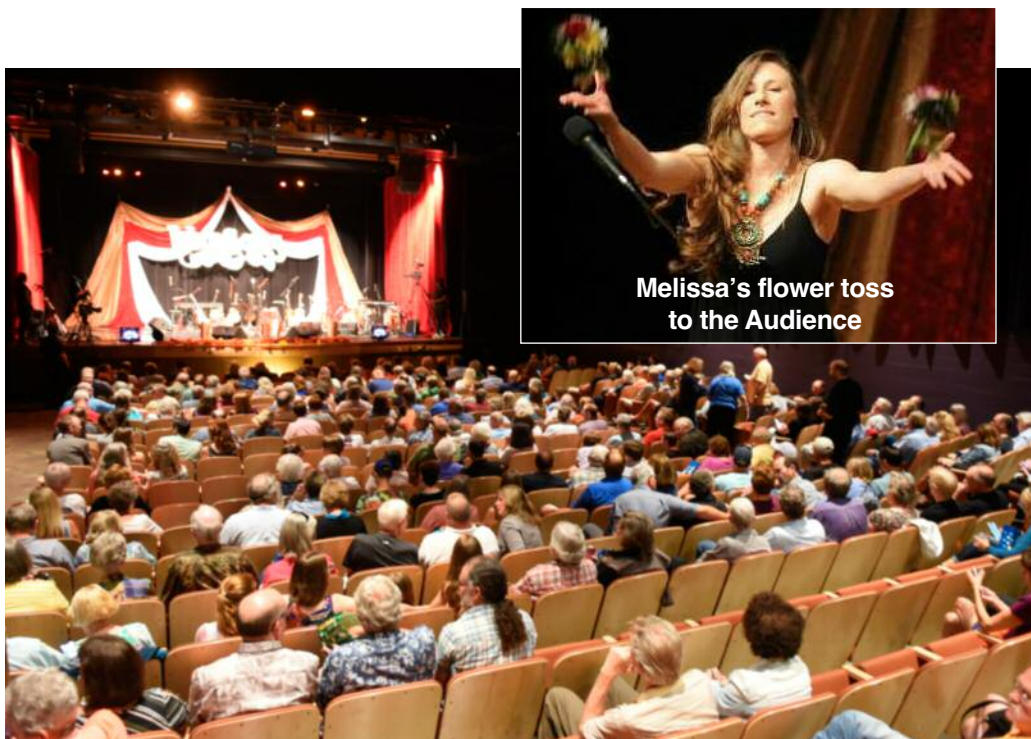
So basically what I'm pointing out is WoodSongs is not money driven ... it is accomplishment driven. We want the show to work and we want it to work in the most efficient, practical and fun way for everybody involved. If we were going after money probably we would not do the show on Monday evenings. But it is a practical and loving thing for everybody concerned to be able to make WoodSongs possible leaving the income factor far behind.

And it has worked out very well in that regard.

To be honest often I stand on stage in total amazement to see the Lyric Theater virtually full on a night everybody thought we were crazy to establish WoodSongs on, to see hundreds of people assembling to see artists they don't know sing songs they've never heard before. Every week.

On a Monday, of all things.

The WoodSongs audience is spectacular and they fill the theater because on Monday nights ... well, they are available.



This is what the Lyric Theatre looks like as the audience fills the Lyric Theatre about 15 minutes before a WoodSongs broadcast taping begins. Doors open promptly at 6:20, pre-show starts about 6:55 when Dorothy and Joe (sometimes Josh) walk on stage.

I try to get the show done, start to finish, in 59 minutes and, most of the time, we manage to do that. It always amazes me that you good folks fill the theatre on Monday evening, downtown at dinner time during rush hour traffic to hear artists you don't know sing songs you've never heard before.

You are incredible!

# The WoodSongs Crew

*The Power of Yes!*

I say it on stage every week ... the WoodSongs Crew is among the most amazing and professional folks in all of broadcasting. And no one get's paid a penny. It is a testament to the powerful community of Lexington, KY, I honestly don't believe WoodSongs would have happened in any other hometown in America. I could blather on poetically about how special each one is, but I also believe a picture is worth a thousand words. So here are a few pages of the WoodSongs Crew in action when they show up to the historic Lyric Theatre on Monday afternoons, create and wire up the WoodSongs stage, take care of the artists and then break it all down and put it away. They are amazing!



**The amazing WoodSongs Crew pictured with the legendary ROGER McGUINN after producing our 900th broadcast.**





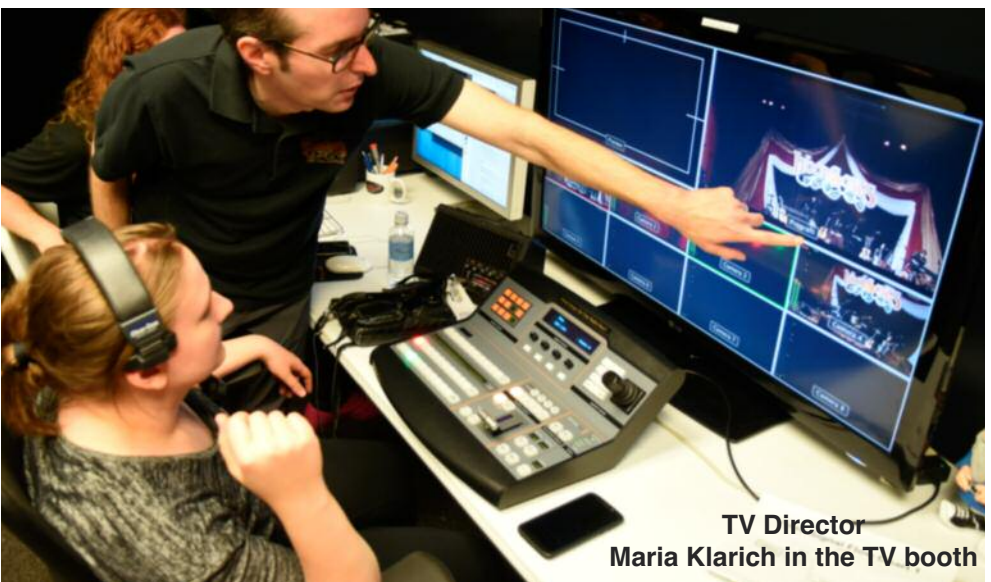
All photos by our WoodSongs photographers  
Larry Neuzel and Steve Haggard



Hanging the  
WoodSongs sign



Stage Manager, Artist Liaison  
and all around nice guy  
Bryan Klausing



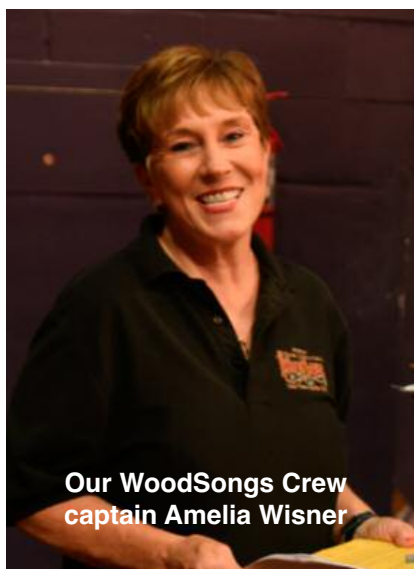
TV Director  
Maria Klarich in the TV booth



Soundcheck before the broadcast



Chief audio engineer  
Jerome Galt



Our WoodSongs Crew  
captain Amelia Wisner



The post-show audience merch line  
in the Lyric Theatre lobby.



**Eric Anderson**



**Melissa "Lobby Lady" Jurgensen**



**SJ Matthews**



**Jack Harvey**

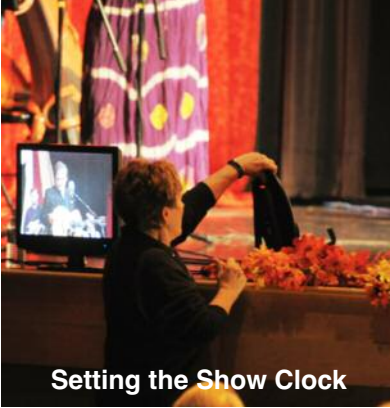


**Nia  
"Coffee Girl"  
Garth**



**Brandon Eaves  
wiring up the audio console**

Technical Engineer and  
TV Editor Isaac May  
and his TV posse



Setting the Show Clock



Judy Collins

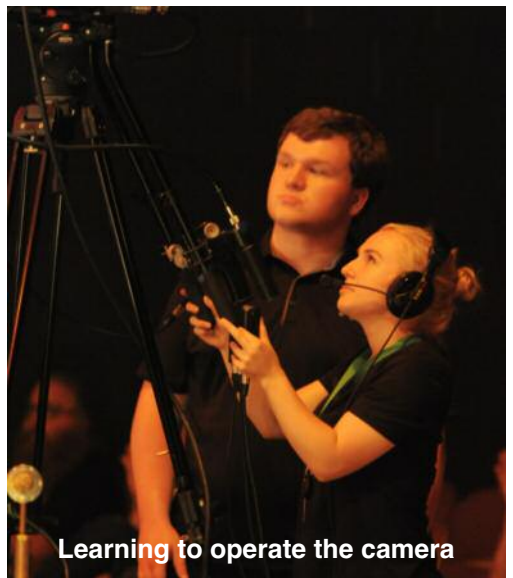




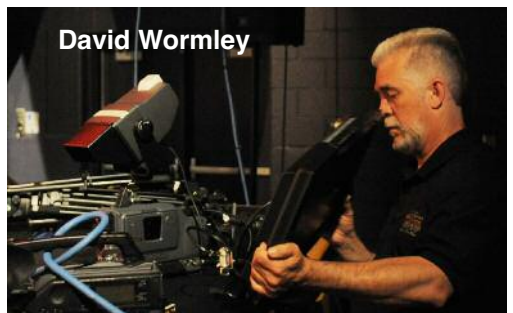
Jack Harvey, Bob Stange and Bryan Klausing



On stage at the historic Phelps Stokes Theatre at Berea College



Learning to operate the camera



David Wormley

Isaac May running TV cable in the lighting grid



You can't be a real "Old-Time" radio show without a real, old time Applause sign



Caleb & Makayla future WoodSongs hosts





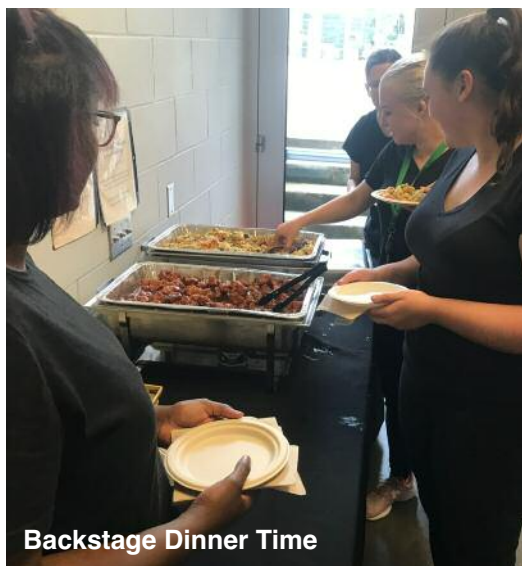
WoodSongs "Feng Shui Lady" Sylvia Davis making the stage Autumn-pretty every week



Joe Conkwright and Dorothy Edwards



Backstage Dinner Time



Kurt "Iron Man" Jefferson on camera



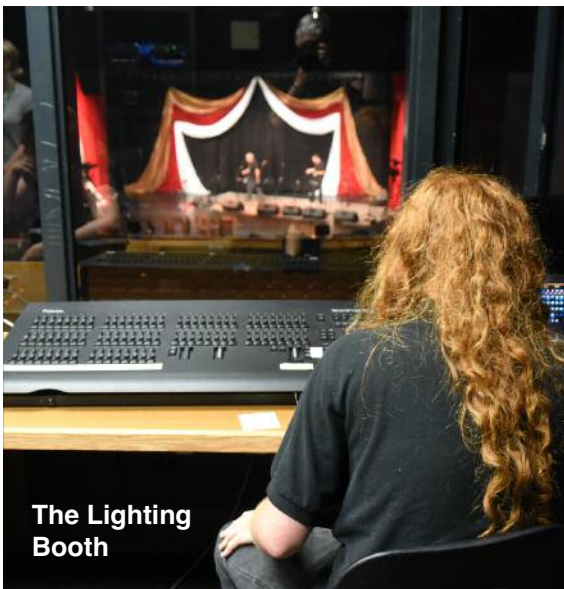
Logan Smith



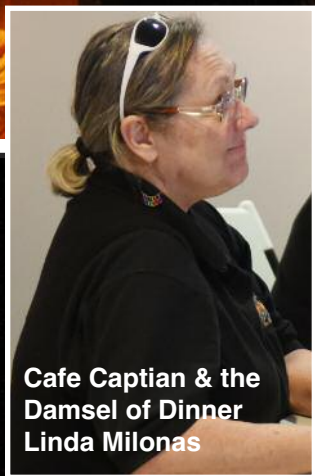




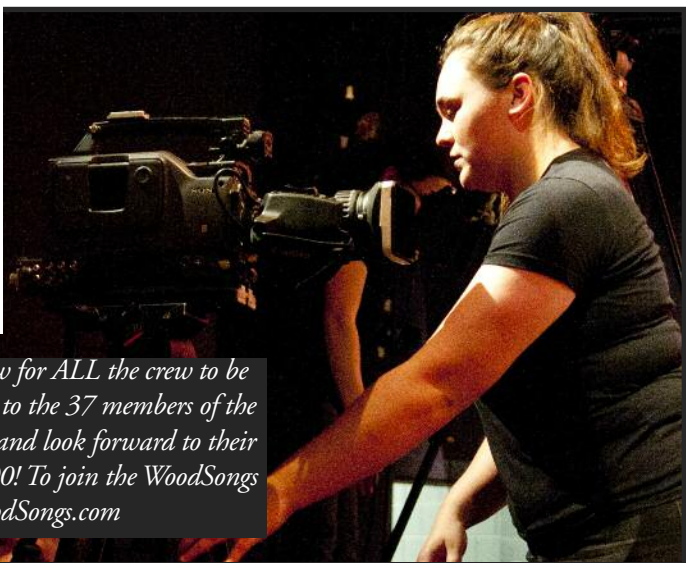
Sound Check



The Lighting Booth



**Cafe Captian & the Damsel of Dinner**  
**Linda Milonas**



*Obviously space doesn't allow for ALL the crew to be pictured, but we are grateful to the 37 members of the amazing WoodSongs family and look forward to their group picture after show 1000! To join the WoodSongs Crew, visit [WoodSongs.com](http://WoodSongs.com)*

# MY MUSICIAN'S MANIFESTO

## *What Is Actually Happening Out There?*

The contradiction is mind boggling. Last year, the art and cultural world contributed over 800 billion dollars to the US economy (*based on reports from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)*). The arts generated nearly 5% of the American GDP, with roughly 4.9 million Americans working in the arts.

However, the unspoken truth is that the music business is collapsing around the world of artists, many of which are unable to make a living anymore.

Here's why: the arts in general is thriving because people love art, music and all things creative. It is what makes hometowns special, communities thrive and people and families happy. Unfortunately, the corporate music world is beholden to old, archaic business models unwilling to recognize the failure. It is as if they are living under the illusion that if they keep marketing rotary phones in a digital age they will come back in style. The old business models no longer work and the audience is, in turn, being abused.

Here's what I mean: *there is not a single record store chain left in America, cars no longer have CD players in them and even computers are now sold without a CD slot.* The mechanical royalties system, the way artists are paid when somebody buys an album, has virtually disintegrated.

**Venues are shutting down** because of a licensing model that was established decades ago that no longer works. Many venues, coffee houses, clubs and small theaters no longer present live music because the legal fees for them to do so makes it financially cumbersome. The business model of venue licensing virtually guarantees that the PROs, the performing rights organization's, are collecting a massive amount of licensing money from venues but have no real clue who to pay it to. The artists are not getting paid. The music world needs to convert from venue licensing to artist licensing, but it will take an act of Congress, literally, to make that happen. Artist licensing will free the venues to begin presenting live music again and guarantee that struggling songwriters will actually get paid for all the songs they've written being performed by others. But the music world is so beholden to the old business models that it is unlikely that will happen unless a very powerful politician comes forward and gives a damn about it, which is unlikely.

**Downloads and Internet streaming** is based on a corporate friendly business model that essentially leaves the artists last in line to be paid. A few can make a living at it but for the overwhelming majority they are receiving a fraction of a penny per play and can barely put gas in the car with what they receive.

There is a movement right now to increase royalties to songwriters by 44%, which in theory sounds great doesn't it? It will be a disaster because it will guarantee that only popular artists with an existing audience will have their music played by streaming services, leaving the newer and unknown artists out in the cold. Streaming services will not pay the increased fees to artists that do not have an audience already. This will be a disaster for the music world under the illusion that it's going to help these poor artists make a living. It will not.

**Media** has also become an issue. Years ago if you got a feature story in a hometown newspaper artists would see a bump in tickets or record sales. These days you can get a half page feature in a newspaper and nobody even notices it because nobody reads the newspaper anymore. Having a story published online is almost irrelevant because unless you know the story is there to begin with, which is counterproductive in theory, nobody's going to read that either.

Another issue is the **consolidation of radio**. The majority of hometown radio stations, a business model on quick decline especially with beloved hometown AM stations, have their playlist controlled by consultants based in other states that have no idea what the hometown wants. Even the playlists on many public radio stations are decided and dictated to by out-of-state consultants now. This leaves the majority of small, independent, hometown artists out in the cold as programmers are beholden to the playlist designed by the consultant they are paying who have no clue or desire to know the hometown artists even exist.

And oddity of all of this are **music organizations** that still operate under the old business model, selling the illusion that there is a golden ring for artists to grab onto that frankly no longer exists anymore. To be clear, it costs more to attend a music conference than most artists will make in a year ... and that in itself proves that the business model is wrong. That doesn't mean the people involved are not sincere in wanting to help artists, it just means that they are still hoping the "rotary phone" of the business model they're using will come back in style someday. It will not. It is a lie. And it's time everybody began facing the actual truth. Artists deserve the truth even if it is painful.

This leaves **the final horizon of income for most artists**: the only way artists can sell CDs, T-shirts, merchandise and reach their fan base is at live shows. Because they no longer receive income from record deals, mechanical royalties, and airplay royalties the only real income left is concert fees. Artists are making the same huge mistake newspapers are making, they are charging a higher and higher fees to presenters as they wrestle to reach an increasingly frustrated audience.

This is **driving the cost of concert tickets through the roof**. The audience is tolerating this ... to a degree, but I am seeing every sign of audience fatigue because of high ticket prices. I'm sure you have noticed concert and festival ticket prices have nearly doubled over the last five years. This is because it is the only in-

come stream left that most artist can depend on to pay for agents, managers, band, travel, publicists, their mortgage, food on the table, their children's education.

This has left literally thousands of bands, musicians and songwriters... filled with the same spirit, passion and energy they started with years ago... out in the cold with no place to go. Record labels have collapsed in record numbers, no pun intended. Booking agents rarely sign a new artist because the available venues to make a living for them are in decline. Even the world of publicity is under strain as the audience has changed the way it receives information.

Don't misunderstand, this is not all gloom and doom. Honesty is not a negative, truth is never a bad thing. This is why we started the SongFarmers community. It's a way for these passionate brilliant artist to use their music and their energy in a way that actually does some good. You may not be able to make a livelihood with your music... and that is the brutal truth of it all... but it could still be a very powerful part of your life.

Music, this wonderful world of vibrating air, is coming full circle and returning back to the front porch it started on before somebody found out that you could sell vibrating air on a plastic disc with a hole in the middle of it. Before the internet loomed, Pete Seeger wisely said, *"Folk music should never become a business ... and I'm sorry I had anything to do with leaving that impression."*

As music drifted from the front porch to corporate board rooms and now back to the front porch again, Pete was right. Today, doing "good work" with your music is the equivalent of a hit record. Doing things within the reality of your reach, for most their hometown and their families and their neighbors, is the equivalent of a hit record. To me, that is what WoodSongs was when we started, it is what it remains today.

I believe that love is the greatest transaction of the arts, and I wanted WoodSongs to prove it. For many, music is no longer a livelihood. It is still a powerful and passionate part of America's front porch, it's part of life.

If you're looking for a way to do something wonderful with your art, visit [SongFarmers.org](http://SongFarmers.org). Be part of a thriving community of front porch musicians doing something truly meaningful with all that heart and passion.



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