

Next SVSA meeting

The next meeting of the SVSA will be held

Wed., Jan. 25

at Third Street Coffeehouse in Roanoke, VA. Doors will open at 7 p.m.; meeting begins promptly at 7:30 and will last until the last song critique is finished, or 10:30 p.m., whichever comes first. Members may submit one song for critique (on cassette or CD) and should provide at least 12 copies of the lyrics. Critiques are limited to members only but non-members and guests are encouraged to sit in on the discussions and exercises.

January Feature Article

Songwriters Are Not Regular People

By Larry Sakayama

As a follow-up to Mike Franke's October newsletter article, "SVSA Newcomers' Meeting Survival Guide," I offer this regarding song critiques.

Songwriters are not "regular" people. If you don't believe this, have a bunch of songwriters critique one of your songs and then have a bunch of non-songwriters do the same.

Regular people either like the song or not. If they like the groove, they may not even hear the lyrics. If they're listening to the words, they like the story or they don't. Unless you're using really cheesy and lame words (like cheesy and lame)*, they don't much care about any particular word. Performance matters and may be the most important influence.

Songwriters, on the other hand, will rarely completely dislike the song (we are compassionate and caring people). We will like it, but...

- "the melody at the end of the verse should move up rather than down."
- "the chords in the chorus are too similar to the chords in the verse."
- "line 1 of verse 1 has 5 syllables and line 1 of verse 2 has 7 syllables."
- "change the word 'deceptive' to 'dishonest'."
- ...

A critique by other songwriters can be nitpicky as hell.

Are all these valid? **Yes.** So who should you listen to? **Everyone.**

Everyone is a potential consumer of your song. The music listening public knows what it likes and without an audience, there's not much reason for the song to exist. Experienced songwriters have been through the mill and have an idea of what captivates or alienates a listener. Moving that melody line up rather than down may better set up the next line. Using the same chord progression for the verse and chorus can make a 3-minute

song feel like a 7-minute song. Keeping the number of syllables the same from verse to verse builds a comfortable familiarity, making the song easier to sing. Changing a single word can make a line flow easily where the original word disrupted the flow.

Should you implement all the suggestions? Probably not. One may be on the money for a country song but not particularly useful for a folk song. Should you consider all of them? Yes, then implement the ideas that will work with your target audience.

You can, as Mike Franke said, “Reserve the right to ignore all feedback.”

One last thought: Even though we don’t like to admit it, performance matters to songwriters, too. Like trying to judge a photograph with a frame, the frame becomes part of the presentation and has an impact on the perception of the photo. A good song critique will try to ignore the performance but it’s hard. (“The jury will ignore the witness’s last statement.” I don’t think so.)

*Thank you, Mike DeGiorgi for this inspiration.

Jan 2012 President’s Message

Happy New Year! 2012 already. Hard to believe. Sounds like a song title.

Let’s get this out of the way - the new year means that dues are up. \$20. Bring it to the meeting or mail it to this address: SVSA, P.O. Box 698, Salem, Virginia 24153.

In case you don’t already know, here are the results of the elections held at the November 2011 meeting:

- President – **me**, no one else wants this job (larrysak3@yahoo.com)
- VP – **Mike DeGiorgi** (mikedegi@aol.com)
- Treasurer – **Greg Trafidlo** (kirasongs@aol.com)
- Secretary – **David Simpkins** (tsimpkin@vt.edu)
- Board Member – **Mike Franke** (frankemichaelm@gmail.com)
- Board Member – **Jerry Gilmore** (gilmore22@verizon.net)

I’d like to thank Britt Mistele, our former VP, for his long service. I think he’s served as an SVSA board member in various capacities for about a zillion years. He’ll still be an active member so

we’ll continue to draw on his experience and enlist his help when we need to.

Looking back on 2011, we had a number of notable events: Songwriter showcases at the Bedford Public Library and Third Street, workshops at every meeting, and a workshop and concert with the Waymores. For me, the two most notable things are the level of membership participation and the increased attendance at meetings. The Mike Brothers (Franke, Dittrich, DeGiorgi), Josh Jones, Steve Langston, Greg Trafidlo, Randy Walker, Barb Martin, and Marc Baskind led workshops at our regular meetings, David Bowen stepped up to organize the Third Street Showcase, Britt Mistele organized our Holiday party, and Kathy Acosta takes care of these newsletters and the Website.

Our first meeting of 2012 will be on Wednesday, Jan 25. Mike Franke will kick off the meeting with a relevant reading or quote for discussion. David Bowen will lead the workshop – The Ins and Outs of Performing Locally.

If you have any ideas on what you’d like to see from SVSA in 2012, let me or one of the other Board members know.

Hope to see you at the meetings.

— Larry Sakayama

Monthly Meeting Report

It seems like ages since our last regular SVSA monthly meeting. It HAS been since November since an “official” meeting – the December meeting was replaced by our annual Holiday get-together.

At the November meeting, a total of 13 SVSA members were in attendance. Before getting into the regular order of business, annual elections were held. Officers for 2012 are: Larry Sakayama (returning as president), Mike DiGiorgi (new vice-president), Greg Trafidlo (returning as treasurer), and David Simpkins (returning as secretary). In addition, Mike Franke and Jerry Gilmore were appointed as the new at-large board members. This group will continue its strong leadership into the next year as well as bring in new ideas and activities.

Also at the November meeting, Greg Trafidlo delivered another installment of our ongoing “mini-workshops.” Greg spoke on “Improving A Melody” and offered up a number of interesting exercises designed to unlock creative melodic impulses and to inspire songwriters to write outside of one’s “comfort zone.” Greg suggested ways of finding new melodic paths including writing lyrics to instrumentals, writing without an instrument, analyzing hit songs and determining why those melodies are so distinct and memorable, and to vary meter patterns. Greg capped off his informative talk with a detailed hand-out containing ideas to help songwriters step up to the next

level in their melody writing. Greg’s presentation generated a lively discussion and contained helpful, compelling, and inspiring information of use to everyone.

Eight original songs were given the SVSA “treatment” in our regular critique session – an open discussion of each song with comments, opinions, suggestions, and observations aplenty. From simple guitar/vocal demos to professionally produced studio recordings, original songs submitted for critique get a thorough and non-biased listen from our membership. Critiques cover lyrics and music; perhaps the most important observations deal with whether or not the song melds the two elements into a successful whole. It’s a proven fact: A song comes out stronger when it has gone through the “wringer” at an SVSA meeting.

And, as always, the pre- and postcritique discussions were lively, and a lot of interesting and helpful information passed around the room. The exchange of information, opinions, and ideas is at the heart of what

makes the monthly SVSA meetings so worthwhile and interesting. If you haven’t been to a meeting lately, plan to make time and bring in a song for critique ... we’re always ready and willing to let you know what we think! Or just stop by and join in the discussions. Your two cents is always welcome!

- David Simpkins

The Songwriting Circle gets started in Staunton

Songwriters Barbara Martin (an SVSA member) and Valerie McQueen are starting up a songwriting gathering in Staunton, Virginia. The first meeting is Tuesday, January 24 at 7:30 p.m. at Byers Street Bistro. Barbara and Valerie intend this group to offer feedback, support, and opportunities for collaboration to songwriters of all levels and genres. Additionally, they hope in the future to be able to organize a performing songwriters' showcase in the area. Anyone wishing to attend the first meeting should bring 10 copies of their lyric sheet. Songs can be played live or you can bring a CD recording. For more information, contact val.mcqueen@gmail.com or barbara@barbaramartinmusic.com.

Follow-up: Guitars for Vets

The Salem VA Medical Center has agreed to sponsor the Southwest chapter of the Guitars for Vets program. A 6-lesson curriculum has been assembled and is available to any interested SVSA member for review. SVSA members David Bowen, Marc Baskind, and Randy Walker, along with Tom Snediker (lead guitarist of The Kind), have volunteered to be instructors, and SVSA president Larry Sakayama (through his association with the Blue Ridge Luthiers) has volunteered to build and donate a guitar. Anyone with a guitar -- of any type or in any shape -- they would like to donate to the program, or anyone wishing to volunteer to be an instructor, can contact David Bowen at acousticreset@gmail.com.

SVSA Member List

Eddie Williams • Randy Walker • Greg Trafidlo • Sharayah Spears
David Simpkins • Marlon Scott • Connie Sellers • Larry Sakayama
Phillip Raintree • Neal Phillips • Mike Pearrell • Mickey Nelson • David Motley
Britt Mistele • Robby McFarland • Marian McConnell • Robert Matter
Barbara Martin • Leigh Littleton • Mike Lewis • Mark Laperle • Steve Langston
Josh Jones • Dan Hildebrand • Dale Hamilton • Pat Haley • Jerry Gilmore
Mike Franke • Linda Fowler • Paddy Dougherty • Mike DeGiorgi • Mike Dittrich
Frank Dieter • Charlie Divers • Sid Crosswhite (Lifetime Member)
Bob Coulter (Lifetime Member) • Chip Conway • Steve Clark • Ray Cassidy
Kimberly Brinkley • David Bowen • Aspen Black • Marc Baskind • Kathy Acosta

On Listening

by Dave Isaacs

We all understand what listening is, but different people might have different definitions of what it means. A skilled musician doesn't listen the way a casual music fan does, and for anyone who makes music that difference is crucial. I've developed listening skills over the years that made me a much better player and writer – more versatile, more tasteful, and ultimately more musical.

"Deep listening" might be a good term for the way professionals hear music, because it implies a level of attention to detail. "Hearing" might be simply recognizing when there is sound, but "listening" implies understanding. I don't mean just in an analytical sense, though the ability to analyze and deconstruct a piece of music can really help you understand it. I've taken and taught classes in critical listening, and it really elevates the way you hear to music. It is, however, a skill I consciously apply. I can still listen to music just as a fan even though my ears are trained to hear things on a deeper level. When I listen to LEARN something, that's when the analytical skills really kick in.

The key point is that when we understand the music we hear, every part makes sense: every transition, every chord change or melodic figure. Every part sounds like the right thing that ought to be happening at that moment. There's always more than one "right" thing that could happen,

but the rightness comes from the way the parts interact to form a whole. This doesn't take a lot of analysis, just looking for answers to a few questions. How many chords is the guitar playing in the chorus? What does the drum beat make me feel? Why does the vocal give me a chill every time I hear that one spot?

This is a less intimidating form of analysis, one that doesn't assume a lot of knowledge. You may need to find your own way to express the answers, but most of us do in some way. It's not always that concrete – we can name a chord or transcribe a melody, but that won't necessarily tell us where the emotional impact of the music is coming from. Deep listening allows us to identify the things that do touch us in the lyric, melody, harmony, arrangement, and performance.

Most likely, you'll be affected by all these things. A great song and a great recording have something special in all five of these areas. Another hallmark of a great song for me is when my attention is drawn from one part of the music to another: a great lyric, a tasty drum fill, a killer guitar sound. This way the song doesn't reveal itself in a single listen – a great hook might grab you right away while the meaning of a lyric might elude you for years. I can't think of how many times I've listened to a song I've heard a thousand times and suddenly heard it with new ears, noticing things I never picked up on before. When you make the conscious decision to listen deeply, things begin to reveal themselves.

You might be asking at this point whether I'm talking about songwriting or making records.

After all, aren't arrangement and performance the domain of the artist and producer, while lyric and melody are the songwriter's stock in trade? This is one way to think about the process of creating music, but it brings two related points to my mind. One, many songwriters who don't perform (or even play) have a much stronger sense of how they envision a song than they'll give themselves credit for. If you envision something beyond lyric and melody, you're digging deeper into the music even if you can't articulate it.

Two, think of how many songs have instantly recognizable melodic or rhythmic hooks: a Bo Diddley beat, or the opening guitar part to "Sweet Home Alabama." These finer musical details complete a song and are as important as a great lyric and a memorable melody.

All this raises another question: how do you learn to bring this deeper level of musical detail to your work? The answer goes back to the title of this article. Listen to music you enjoy, music that inspires you in some way. Choose to listen with open ears, and don't allow yourself to take the easy route and just sing along. Ask yourself questions about what you hear. I sometimes find myself listening over and over to the same five-second passage, trying to figure out exactly what's happening in that spot. You don't need to be that intense about it, but you can become clearer about what speaks to you. Whether you are a player, writer, or both, understanding in this way can only add to your own musical abilities.

SVSA Performing Members' Gigs

Marc Baskind

FRI. AND SAT.,
FEB. 3 AND 4

Solo. Hotel Roanoke
Pine Room, 9 p.m. to 1
a.m.

FRI., FEB. 10

With the Walter Scott
Group, The Greenbrier
Garden Room, 9-12
p.m.

FRI., FEB. 17

With Caravan. Annie
Moore's Irish Pub,
Roanoke, 7:30-10:30
p.m.

SAT., FEB. 18

With the Walter Scott
Group, The Greenbrier
Cameo Ballroom

SUN. FEB. 19

With Glenn Buck & Co.,
Mardi Gras Luncheon,
11 a.m.-2 p.m. Holy
Trinity Lutheran
Church, Lynchburg,
Virginia

Mark Laperle

SAT., JAN. 28

309 Winery, 309 N.
Bridge St., Bedford,
Virginia, 7-10 p.m. See
www.309wine.com for
more information.

Barbara Martin

FRI., JAN. 27

Barbara and Mac Walter,
Bedford Library, 321
N. Bridge St., Bedford,
Virginia. 7:30 p.m. For
more information see
[www.friendsofbedford
library.org](http://www.friendsofbedfordlibrary.org).

David Bowen

SAT., JAN. 28

House Concert (Private),
Blacksburg, Va.

FRI., FEB. 3

Main Street Café,
Radford, Va., 6-8 p.m.

SAT., FEB. 25

"The Merc," Draper, Va.,
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Upcoming at Third Street Coffeehouse

- Jan 27 John Powell
- Feb 3 Lee Robertson
- Feb 10 Mark Kroos
- Feb 17 Randolph Walker's
Original Old
Fashioned One-Man
Band
- Feb 24 Sherwood (Robyn &
Marian)
- Mar 2 Joshua Sherman
- Mar 9 Chris Shepard
- Mar 16 The McKenzies
- Mar 23 Blue O'Connell
- Mar 30 Randolph Walker &
Marian McConnell
- April 6 Ragtop
- April 13 25th Anniversary
Celebration Special
show (no open mike)
- watch for details!
- April 20 Wyatt Law

Third Street Coffeehouse is a non-profit coffeehouse established in 1987. We are open every Friday. Sign up for open mic 7-7:30; open mic performances 7:30-8:15; featured performer from 8:30-10. Third Street is a smoke-free, alcohol-free, no-cover-charge venue! We "pass the hat" for donations to the featured performers. For more information please contact Marian McConnell at 540-309-4707; or email marian.mcconnell@gmail.com. Check us out online at: www.YouTube.com/user/3rdStreetCoffeehouse and on Facebook.

SVSA Members' Recordings



eyes on the horizon



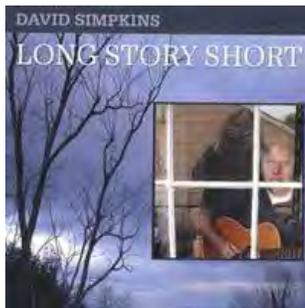
kaleidoscope



crossing over time



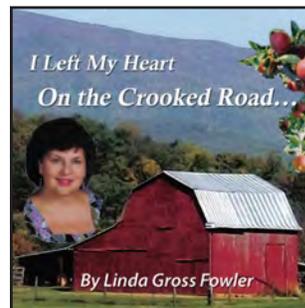
marc with a "c"



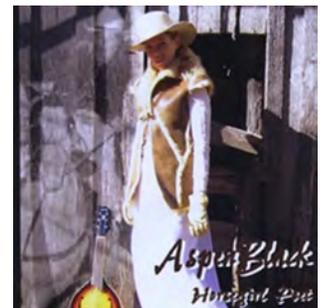
long story short



cup of contradictions



i left my heart on the crooked road



horsegirl poet

Barbara Martin

EYES ON THE HORIZON — Jazz and all originals with Robert Redd on piano, Chuck Redd on drums and vibes, Steve Wolf on bass, Mac Walter on guitar, Bruce Swaim on saxophone, John Jensen on trombone, and Matt Finley on flugelhorn.

KALEIDOSCOPE — Barbara's jazziest CD. All original songs, with co-writes with Joel Evans, Mac Walter, and Greg Trafidlo.

David Bowen (Acoustic Reset)

CROSSING OVER TIME — Featuring folk-pop tunes. Eight originals and eight covers accented by solid guitar licks and accompanying instruments. Available at acousticreset.com.

Marc Baskind

MARC WITH A "C" — Sampler CD of covers and original songs offers a taste of the varied styles of this accomplished guitarist/singer.

David Simpkins

LONG STORY SHORT — Offers 12 original Americana tunes blending rock, folk, blues, and country.

Linda Fowler

I LEFT MY HEART ON THE CROOKED ROAD — Features 12 original compositions.

Mike Pearrell

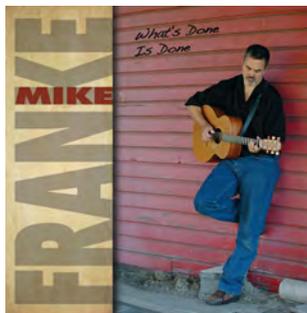
CUP OF CONTRADICTIONS — 13 original songs. Lots of SVSA musicians.

Aspen Black

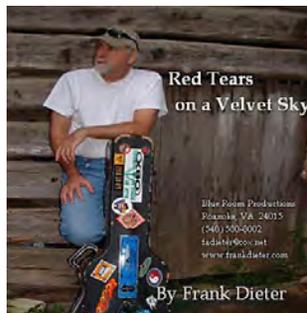
HORSEGIRL POET — Songs and poems about horses, cowboys, and rural life.

A HUNDRED YEARS TOO LATE — All original music for horse lovers and those who yearn to preserve the spirit and lands of the last American frontier.

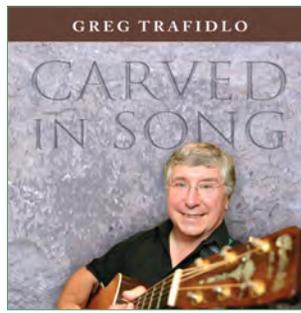
SVSA Members' Recordings



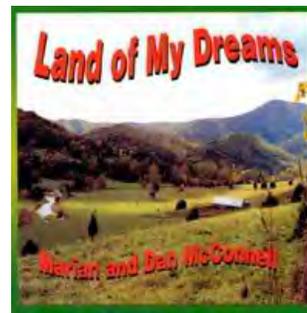
what's done is done



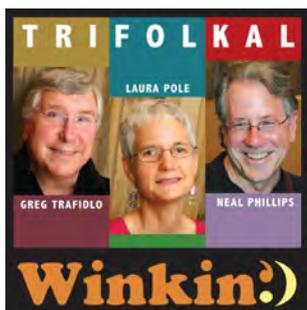
red tears on a velvet sky



carved in song



land of my dreams



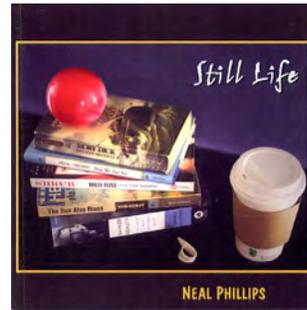
winkin'



winds of change



dog joggin'



still life

Mike Franke

WHAT'S DONE IS DONE — A debut release of 14 original folk and blues tunes about everyday life and interesting people, featuring Mike's fingerstyle and slide guitar.

Frank Dieter

RED TEARS ON A VELVET SKY — A collection of home studio demos, all new except one.

Greg Trafidlo

CARVED IN SONG — Most songs co-written with some of Greg's favorite songwriters. Listen to audio clips and see the lyrics at gregtrafidlo.com.

Neal Phillips

STILL LIFE — Strong songwriting, excellent multi-instrumental musicianship, and eclectic insight (and a clever swipe at TBTP).

Paddy Dougherty

WINDS OF CHANGE — Paddy's newest release is available at www.paddyd.com.

Steve Clark

DOG JOGGIN' — Eleven sweet and true amusing tunes comprise this quirky singer/songwriter CD. Available at cdbaby.com.

Trifolkal

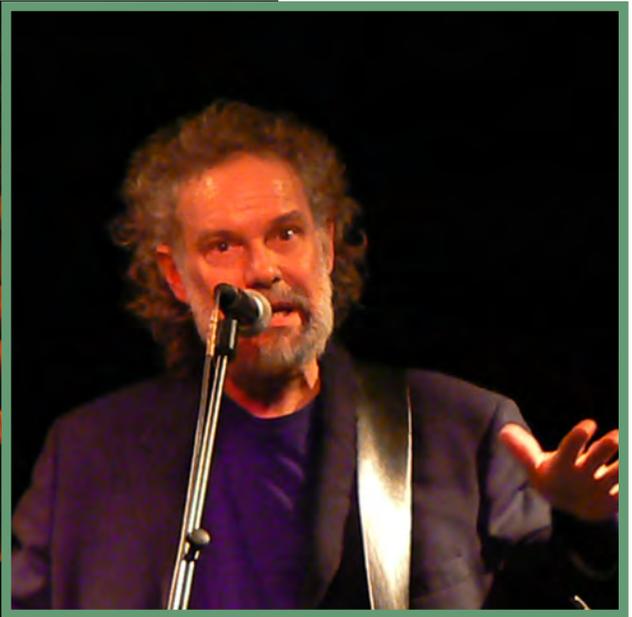
WINKIN' — Newest release from that "trio fiercely dedicated to fun" tempers the fun with poignancy and heart.

Marian and Dan McConnell

LAND OF MY DREAMS — A musical excursion in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia through 14 original folk songs with celtic and country/rock underpinnings. Available online at cdbaby.com.

Seen on the Music Scene

Photos and captions by SVSA member and photographer Leigh Littleton



Shots from a really excellent show by John Gorka at Kirk Avenue Music Hall on January 20.



IONA is a Gaelic music group headquartered in the Washington, D.C. area. They've been performing for 25 years or more. These photos are from an excellent concert at Kirk Avenue Music Hall on November 12, 2011.

The Lonesome River Band, in concert at Kirk Avenue Music on December 9, 2011.



SVSA Classifieds

FOR SALE

1998 Taylor W14-C Walnut guitar. Very few made, and plays like a dream. Pick-up installed. Purchased from original owner who got it at the factory and had the bone nut and saddle upgrade installed there. Comes with plush Taylor Red Velour HSC. ~~\$2100.~~
PRICE REDUCED to \$1850. Call Britt at 540-745-6771.

DEMO RECORDING AND PRODUCTION

The Shop in Fincastle, Virginia. Clean, high-quality multitrack recording and mixdown with an all-digital recording system. I can make MP3s and CDs from the mix. I'm a capable session player and can add guitars, keyboards, bass and percussion, as well as arranging and sweetening. \$25/hour for SVSA members. Contact **Josh Jones**, thejonesgroup@rbnet.com, (540) 473-3598 for more information.

GUITAR LESSONS

Private lessons \$15 per session. I have passed the Praxis test required of public school music teachers in Virginia. For more info, contact **Randy Walker** at randolphwalker@cox.net or 588-5826, or check out my instructional videos at www.randolphwalker.com.

FOR SALE

Alvarez Yairi WY1-12 guitar. Bob Weir of Grateful Dead fame designed this and a 6-string for Yairi. All solid Cedar and Rosewood, with a Series 600T electronics package. Very comfortable to play, and the best looking guitar I have ever owned. Comes with a beautiful luggage-like, hard shell case. \$800. Call Britt, (540)-745-6771.

FOR SALE

1932 Gibson L50 acoustic archtop guitar with bridge pickup installed. In great condition with a gorgeous sound. Perfect for anyone who plays old blues, jazz or old time music. **Barbara Martin**, (540) 886-2966, barbara@barbaramartinmusic.com.

FOR SALE

Carvin MX842 Stereo Powered Mixer. \$200. Built-in spring reverb and effects input/outputs for outboard effects unit. 2 band EQ, effects, gain and pan for each channel. **Barbara Martin**, (540) 886-2966, barbara@barbaramartinmusic.com.

FOR SALE

2 Carvin LM12 Molded 12" 2-Way Main/Monitor. \$200 for both. **Barbara Martin**, (540) 886-2966, barbara@barbaramartinmusic.com.

WANTED

12- or 16-channel mixer, powered or unpowered. Prefer Peavey, Yamaha, or Mackie. Built-ins a plus (i.e. effects, EQ, etc.) (Would love to find a Peavey XR1200 in good shape). Everything must work. **Audio Snake - 12 X 4 X 50 or 16 X 4 X 50** (or near that). 1/4" returns and box on stage end important. Reply to **Sid Crosswhite:** crosswhite@verizon.net.

FOR SALE

2007 Guild D50 Bluegrass Special 6-string guitar. Solid Red Spruce top and Solid Indian Rosewood back and sides. Tortoise shell binding, Pear Guild logo and Chesterfield logo. D-Tar electronics. Guild HSC. \$1200. Call Britt at 540-745-6771.

FOR SALE

Rare 1986 Alvarez Yairi FY65 guitar. Solid Cedar top with Coral Rosewood back and sides. Signature series. OM or Folk size 6-string. Very nice Maple binding with the triple slash head-stock inlays. Comes with a ragged HSC. \$500. Call Britt at 540-745-6771.

DEMO RECORDING AND PRODUCTION

Need a pro demo or independent record really well-produced? Contact Inside Edge Studios in Nashville - your SVSA Nashville studio connection. Owner and producer is SVSA member **Mike T. Lewis**. Great gear, great results, great Nashville musicians, reasonable rates. 64-bit digital recording, Neve, Calrec, Neumann, and other top-notch equipment. Clients include Ben Thomas of Olivia Newton John's record label, Kerrville finalists, the Twangtown Paramours, and SVSA's own Greg Trafidlo. If need be, your project can be mailed to us and produced in Nashville. For more info, see www.insideedgestudios.com, call Mike at (615) 730-7665, or email info@insideedgemusic.com.

SVSA Music News free classifieds may be submitted by paid members only. All classifieds must be music-related.

About Classifieds:

SVSA Music News free classifieds may be submitted by paid members only. All classifieds must be music-related.

Members, e-mail your classifieds to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com by the second Tuesday of the month.

About articles and other written contributions:

SVSA members write feature articles for the SVSA Music News throughout the year. Members can submit other articles and features at any time. Non-members may also submit articles and other written contributions but their inclusion will be subject to time and space constraints. All articles may be edited for space considerations and will be edited, as time allows, for spelling and grammar. Remember -- it'll have YOUR name on it, so do it up right before you submit it for publication. E-mail submissions by the second Tuesday of the month to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com.

About Announcements:

SVSA members may list music-related announcements in the SVSA Music News. E-mail them to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com by the second Tuesday of the month. Announcements from members will be e-mailed to members as soon as they are received and, if still timely, published in an upcoming issue of the SVSA Music News. Announcements from non-members will be held for publication in an upcoming issue of the SVSA Music News.

About Members' Gig Listings:

SVSA members may submit their upcoming performance schedules for publication in the SVSA Music News. The submissions will be printed as submitted; the more information you provide, the more likely the response. Please follow this format:

Date of Gig
Member's Name
Name of Venue, Time
Additional Information

E-mail gig listings by the second Tuesday of the month to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com.

SVSA DISCLAIMER

The ideas and opinions contained in this newsletter are intended to be helpful to songwriters. The companies and organizations mentioned are believed to be legitimate; however, SVSA does not endorse any products or services and offers no guaranteed success based on the content.

We are always looking for articles about SVSA members and articles of interest to the songwriting community. Send articles and information to the Editor, Kathy Acosta, or svsa.songwriters@gmail.com. SVSA is a non-profit organization.

SVSA Board Members:

Larry Sakayama – President
Mike DeGiorgi - Vice President
David Simpkins – Secretary
Greg Trafidlo – Treasurer
Mike Franke - Board Member
Jerry Gilmore - Board Member
Kathy Acosta - Newsletter Editor



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