

Don't forget: SVSA meeting moved up a week

Because of Thanksgiving, the November meeting of the SVSA will be held **Wednesday, November 20** 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.

November Feature Article

The X Factor

By Mike DeGiorgi

(Segments of two critiques from a 1972 SVSA meeting transcript)

SVSA member Marc: "So KC, this song you've brought has a pretty good groove, but this line "that's the way I like it," well, it's pretty repetitive and it's out of sync with the groove. You might want to tweak it so it flows better. You know what I mean?"

KC: "Uh Huh, Uh Huh ... Thanks."

SVSA member Charlie: "Joni, this song is confusing. First, the title line is weird: 'I was a free man in Paris'? I mean, you're a woman singer. It should be 'free girl in Paris.' And this line, 'I felt unfettered and alive' ... you can't sing that word 'unfettered.' No one uses it in a conversation. Your rhyme scheme is really inconsistent too, which is a real Nashville no-no. This song just isn't very singable. Your vocal is all over the place. Try 4/4 timing and use a dobro instead of that dulcimer thingy."

Joni: "How come there are mostly only guys at these meetings?"

Fast-forward to the present ... It's a strange, mysterious brew, these songs we write. Though our critiques focus primarily on two ingredients, lyrics and melody, there are so many other herbs and spices that concoct a good tune. The

groove, the arrangement, the quality of the musicians, the emotional message and probably a couple dozen other ingredients influence how much we will enjoy a song.

The more SVSA meetings I go to, the more I'm convinced that the ingredient we often overlook a lot is the writer him/herself ... their personality, style, and songwriting eccentricities. Those qualities help create the attraction to a particular artist and they certainly make it easier to understand and appreciate their body of work.

It's easy to forget this when we critique. Most of us write within a comfort zone that is often linked to genres of music we like, as well as our own strengths and weaknesses as musicians or writers. That comfort zone easily leads to biases as a listener. I don't like the music of KC and the Sunshine Band. Too simplistic, too "disco-y," and I feel no emotional connection to his tunes. I'd be pretty dismissive of anything KC might have brought to an SVSA meeting. My own likes and preferences would be way too easy to project when critiquing his work. But ... he's had hit after hit. I have some friends who tell me they like my songs. If KC came back to SVSA with several songs, I hope I would learn to critique him within the context of what he does and what his intentions are with his music, even though I still don't like it.

Now, I really like Joni Mitchell. I have an intense emotional reaction to her music, whenever I hear it. She is engagingly cryptic, eccentric, self-absorbed, musically quirky, and challenging. Others find her to be shrill, difficult to understand, too folky, too hard to pin down to a predictable style. I wonder how she would survive an SVSA critique session. The very things that attract me to her music can push others away from it.

If I hear three or four of your tunes at SVSA meetings, I have learned some things about your musical skills and preferences. I can hear and see patterns in your writing and start to get comfortable listening for those patterns. If you break them, it's noticeable and usually in a good way, but nonetheless a little jarring. I have my own patterns and preferences and you are all probably as familiar with mine as I am with yours. I try to critique based on what I think each of your musical intentions are, the kind of music you like and the writing style and eccentricities you have established. It's easy when I like your songs and harder if I don't. One thing I've learned though is this ... if I don't like a song, that doesn't have to mean it isn't a well-written tune. It's all in how you define "good."

It's almost time to renew your SVSA membership

As we head toward a new year, here's a reminder that you'll be asked to renew your membership in January. Remember to renew early so you'll be eligible to take advantage of SVSA benefits and be able to participate in workshops, writers nights, and other events.

Elections for SVSA board will be held at this month's meeting

We will be electing the Board for 2014 at the November meeting. Email SVSA President Larry Sakayama if you're interested in nominating someone or throwing your own hat in the ring for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, or SVSA Board Member.

Monthly Meeting Report: September 2013

At last month's regular SVSA meeting, a total of 13 SVSA members attended, along with one guest. Our workshops and our regular monthly meetings are of great value to songwriters at any level. And for new and long-term members, a steady influx of new membership keeps our meetings interesting, lively, and progressive.

At the lively October meeting, various topics stirred up a lot of enthusiasm and a sharing of information. Almost always, we can use this information to better ourselves as songwriters and performers.

The October meeting also saw six original songs brought in to be given the SVSA "treatment" in our regular critique session, which features an open discussion of each song with comments, opinions, suggestions, and observations. 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. A popular new option gives members an opportunity to perform their submissions live and in person. Members have been taking full advantage of this opportunity.

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!

Non-members are encouraged to attend as well. You can sit through a meeting or two and see for yourself whether or not you think the SVSA would be beneficial to your songwriting efforts. The pay-off might not be immediate -- but the long-run benefits are many and valuable. You'll find SVSA members with nearly every level of experience who are willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with you on your songwriting journey.

Note that there will be no regular monthly meeting in December. The SVSA Holiday Party will be held in lieu of the meeting. So plan now to kick off the new year right and to attend the next regular meeting on Wednesday, January 23, 2014!

- David Simpkins

Follow-up Performance Workshop in the works for January

Greg Trafidlo is planning a performance workshop, complete with critiques, as a follow-up to the mini workshop at the October meeting. Please let Greg know if you are interested in participating (kirasongs@aol.com). You can participate as a performer, critiquer, observer, or any combination of those. If you are really interested in taking your overall performance to the next level, you should seriously consider full participation.

Are You Getting Paid to Play?

By Dave Isaacs, from the [Songwriters Connection E-tip](#)

I walked into my first writers night on my very first trip to Nashville fifteen years ago. There were four people on stage in a line, and everyone was playing and singing together. I don't know whether they already knew each other's material or not, but I loved the energy and the way everyone's participation lifted the song. But over the ensuing years I've been struck by how rarely I've seen that happen again.

In fairness, the last thing any of us want is for someone to try to play along who can't "hang," as musicians say. Someone noodling over your song and

contributing nothing is distracting and sometimes disrespectful. On the other hand, someone who can jump in and enhance the music by contributing another dimension helps lift the song to a new level. To some people this seems like a magical ability, but it's a specific skill that anyone can learn to develop to some degree.

If you don't have quite so many ways to wiggle your fingers, it's worth keeping in mind that instrumental ability isn't really the point – it's about the ears more than the hands. I've seen plenty of accomplished players jump in and distract rather than enhance because they weren't good listeners. My parents were folkies and took me to folk music retreats when I was a kid, where it wasn't unusual to have ten people in a circle ALL playing together without stepping on each other. And I guarantee that not everyone knew every song, nor was everyone a great player. But they were all good musicians in that they could find a way to contribute to the song with the abilities they had, because they were listening.

You might be asking why this matters to you, the songwriter or artist. After all, for most of us our own music is most important – sometimes all we play – so where's the value in playing someone else's song if your songs are what you perform? Simple question with a simple answer. One, it's fun and when you can do it well it really does enhance the song. (It's my favorite part of playing music. I love the interaction and the synergy that it can create. A whole that can be greater than the sum of its parts. Listen to any great group in any genre). Second, and more relevant to your development as a writer and artist, it makes you better. Not just a better player but a more attuned one, which can only enhance your ability to communicate. We have a collaborative culture in Nashville, and creative teamwork is the norm. Why shouldn't this extend to making music in real time along with the more deliberate process of songwriting?

If you agree that it could and should, the obvious next question is how to get there. And once again, the answer is probably simpler than you think. You've heard the expression before (thank you, Nike): just do it.

But wait ... I don't know how ... I don't know that chord ... it all goes by so fast ... I'm not a musician ... I don't want to embarrass myself ... that's not what I do...

But it is. You write by stringing ideas together, lyrical and musical. No matter how many chords you do or don't know, there's a vocabulary there. Once you know a G chord you can recognize when someone else plays one.

(Never mind whether you have to look, looking is allowed. Recognition one way or another is the point, and the visual reinforces the sound). When I jump in to play a song I've never heard, I'm not reading minds and I'm not going to decide I know what's coming when I don't. I hang back and listen, or watch if I have to, and contribute when I have something to say. (This is the trap that some pickers fall into. You need to wait to hear where someone's going before you can go there along with them!) Even if your vocabulary is limited, I'm sure you can recognize whether or not you know the chords someone is playing. If you do, you can follow along. Maybe you learn a new chord in the process, or a way you hadn't thought of to use one you do know.

The best way to get yourself started is to learn songs you already know by heart. We all have favorite songs we didn't write, or wish we had. Start learning to play cover songs! Not even to perform them but just because it feels good, and because it's the best way to build vocabulary. Look at the song from a writer's perspective: how does it flow, how does the beat feel, what are the different parts and how do they fit? Making this a thoughtful process makes it easier to pick things up on the spot, because you'll recognize a chord sequence or groove when you hear it again in a different setting. Play along with songs you can follow to build your confidence. You don't have to be able to follow someone else on the spot right away – maybe you never do – but if you look at the learning process as a muscle you can work out, it's not hard to imagine that you will build the skill. Work out every day and you get stronger. Simple.

Short story: learning songs you didn't write makes you a better player and a better writer. Ultimately it makes you a better musician (whether you call yourself a musician or not). If you do get to the point where you can follow a song on the spot, it enhances your creativity because you become able to access more musical ideas more quickly. And did I mention that it's fun? So step one is to start learning some songs just because: This is practicing the learning process. Step two is playing songs with someone else: This is practicing execution of what you learned. Step three is where the magic happens – your musical mind starts to recognize other combinations of chords you already learned. Once you start to get comfortable you'll probably keep going through the process. It's the way I learned to play, and still is. Start closing the circle and you will find that it gets easier and easier, and the next time you find yourself at a guitar pull you can jump right in.



SVSA member Greg Trafidlo backing up folk legend Tom Paxton at the Birchmere in Alexandria on Nov. 2. The concert was a birthday celebration for Paxton. Photo by Ron Goad.



SVSA members Britt Mistele, Kathy Acosta, and Greg Trafidlo (AKA the KGB) backing up fellow SVSA member David Simpkins at the Floyd Country Store "Americana Afternoons" show on November 8. Photo by Judy Larson.

SVSA PERFORMING MEMBERS' UPCOMING GIGS

Marc Baskind:

Fri Nov 22: Big Lick restaurant, Lynchburg VA with Grooveline, 8-11 p.m.

Tues Nov 26: River Laker Cultural Center at 16 West, Roanoke VA with the Marc Baskind Jazz Trio, 6-9 p.m.

Thurs. Nov 29 and Fri. Nov 30: Greenbrier Main Dining Room, White Sulphur Springs, WV with the Walter Scott Trio, 7-10 p.m.

Dec 6: Tanglewood Mall Tree Lighting Ceremony, Roanoke VA, Solo, 10:30-11 p.m.

Dec 18: River Laker Cultural Center at 16 West, Roanoke VA with the Marc Baskind Jazz Trio, 6-9 p.m.

Dec 25: The Inn At Virginia Tech, Banquet room brunch, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Dec 26: Gillie's Restaurant, Blacksburg, VA, Solo, 7-9:30 p.m.

Linda Fowler

Dec. 14: With the Blue Spruce band, Boone Tractor Christmas party and dinner, Bedford, Virginia.

Greg Trafidlo

Dec. 8: A featured performer at WDBC-FM Radio's Holiday Hoot Folk Festival at the College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

Travel down "Western Highways" with McConnell and Walker

SVSA members Randolph Walker and Marian McConnell will present their multimedia show "Western Highways" twice on the weekend before Thanksgiving.

"Western Highways" is also the title of the new CD by the folk-rock duo.

The multimedia show, featuring slides of landmarks such as Monument Valley, Route 66 and the Painted Desert, will be presented at Third Street Coffeehouse on Friday, Nov. 22 from 8:30-10 p.m., and at the Floyd Country Store on Saturday, Nov. 23, from noon to 1:30 p.m. There is no charge for either event.

Due to her recovery from recent emergency eye surgery, Marian will not be able to make the Floyd performance on Saturday but she will be at the Friday show at Third Street Coffeehouse. Saturday's show will either be solo by Randolph or will feature Lisa Angell filling in for Marian.

"Western Highways" is described as a trip through time and space, evoking the open spaces, imagery and mythology of the American West through rock and folk-rock songs and instrumentals. McConnell has traveled extensively through the West and took many of photos in the show.

For more information, see www.facebook.com/randolphandmarian.

UPCOMING AT THIRD STREET COFFEEHOUSE

- Nov 22 Western Highways CD Release Party – Randolph Walker & Marian McConnell
- Nov 29 Closed for Thanksgiving
- Dec 6 John Sines, Jr.
- Dec 13 Robert Craig
- Dec 20 Closed for Holidays
- Jan 3 Closed for Holidays
- Jan 10 Chris Shepard
- Jan 17 The Flying Davenport
- Jan 24 Tenbuckshoes (Mary Roach)
- Jan 31 John Powell
- Feb 7 Joy Truskowski

Third Street Coffeehouse is a non-profit coffeehouse established in 1987. 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. For more information contact Marian McConnell at 540-309-4707; or email marian.mcconnell@gmail.com.

SVSA Classifieds

FOR SALE

Alvarez Yairi DY-70 6-string guitar. Solid aged Spruce top and flame Maple back and sides. Perfect condition. Has an under-saddle pick up system (9 volt) and comes with a Yairi hard shell case. \$450. Call **Britt**, 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 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.

randolph
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music

Guitar Lessons
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randolphwalker@cox.net
www.randolphwalker.com
(540) 588-5826

SVSA MEMBERSHIP

As of November 2013

Kathy Acosta	Dan Hildebrand
Marc Baskind	Josh Jones
Aspen Black	Mark Laperle
Alice Black	Leigh Littleton
Clay Blevins	Bob Lowell
David Bowen	Barbara Martin
Dee Bowlin	Marian McConnell
Steve Clark	Britt Mistele
Bob Coulter (Lifetime Member)	Eric Mosley
Sid Crosswhite (Lifetime Member)	David Motley
Leo Cullen	Mickey Nelson
Mike DeGiorgi	Mike Pearrell
Mike Dittrich	Neal Phillips
Charlie Divers	Larry Sakayama
Paul Douglas	Marlon Scott
Linda Fowler	David Simpkins
Mike Franke	Andrew Smiley
Jerry Gilmore	Greg Traftidlo
Mary Gordon Hall	Randolph Walker
Dale Hamilton	Melissa Webb
Larry Helms	Eddie Williams

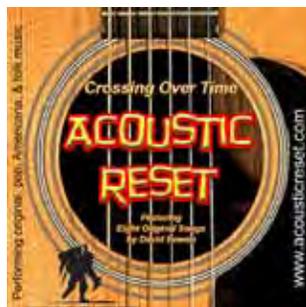
SVSA Members' Recordings



eyes on the horizon



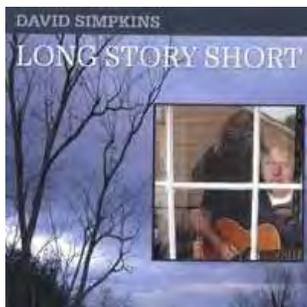
kaleidoscope



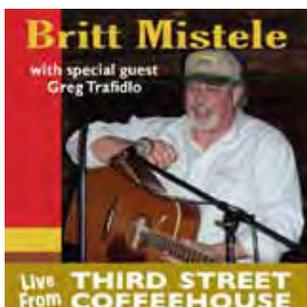
crossing over time



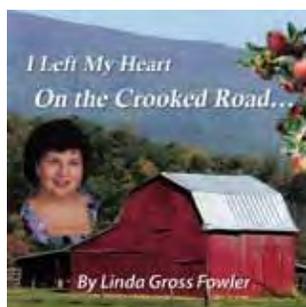
marc with a "c"



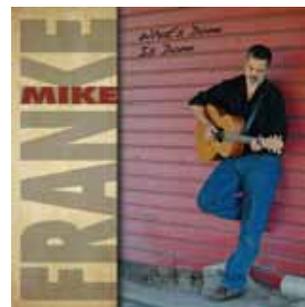
long story short



live from third street
coffeehouse



i left my heart on the
crooked road



what's done is done

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.

Britt Mistele

LIVE FROM THIRD STREET COFFEEHOUSE — Four original songs and 11 covers, recorded live at Roanoke's Third Street Coffeehouse. With special guest Greg Trafidlo..

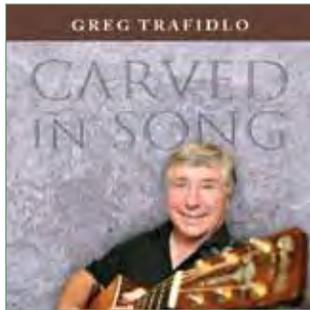
Linda Fowler

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

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.

SVSA Members' Recordings



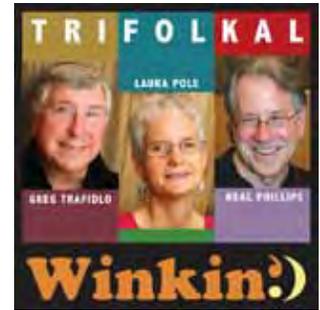
carved in song



folksingular



dog joggin'



winkin'



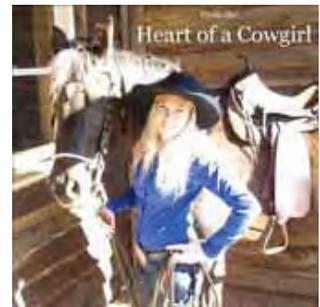
cup of contradictions



dimestore detective



horsegirl poet



from the heart of a cowgirl

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.

FOLKSINGULAR — Greg's third solo CD reflects the diversity of his songwriting and production skills. With SVSA-ers on background vocals, and Marc Baskind on guitar and vocals.

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.

Mike Pearrell

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

DIMESTORE DETECTIVE — Mike's first solo CD features 14 original songs. Produced by Greg Trafidlo; with a number of guest SVSA musicians. Available at Mike's shows.

Aspen Black

FROM THE HEART OF A COWGIRL — S28 original spoken word poems adhering to the Western Music Association guidelines for the cowboy poetry genre.

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.

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.

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. E-mail submissions 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.

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
Britt Mistele - Board Member
Kathy Acosta - Newsletter Editor



SVSA
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Seen on the

**Musical
Scene**

photos of music performances in Southwest Virginia



Colin Hay (lead vocalist of Men at Work in the 1980s) in a solo show at Kirk Avenue Music Hall in Roanoke on October 1. Photo by Leigh Littleton.



From a show by Sam Bush and Jerry Douglas at the Jefferson Center in Roanoke on November 7. Douglas is a member of Alison Krauss's band when not touring on his own. Bush is a "newgrass" innovator and notable mandolin player. The concert was divided into a set with Jerry and his band, a set with Sam and his band, and a set with everyone on stage together. Photo by Leigh Littleton.



Sarah Siskind and Travis Book at Kirk Avenue Music Hall in Roanoke on November 9. Travis is a member of the Infamous Stringdusters but sometimes tours on his own, especially with his wife Sarah, a songwriter. The couple recently moved to Nelson County in Virginia.