

MARCH 2014

## Time to renew your SVSA membership

If you haven't already done so, here's a reminder that it's time to pay your annual SVSA membership dues. Your \$20 makes you eligible to take advantage of SVSA benefits and be able to participate in workshops, writers nights, and other events. See treasurer Greg Trafidlo at the next meeting to pay your dues, or send a check to SVSA, P.O. Box 698, Salem, VA 24153.

The next meeting of the SVSA will be held **Wednesday, March 26** 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.

## March Feature Article

### Cover Some New Bases

*By Mike DeGiorgi*

If ever there was a primer on “what not to do when performing covers,” it was on the recent Grammy special honoring the Beatles. A bunch of pop stars and a smattering of talented musicians performed several of the most recognizable Beatle tunes. Almost all of them fell flat. Some were just sloppy. Others became ego trips for the performer. Katy Perry’s rendition of “Yesterday” screamed “look at me, I’m Katy Perry out-singing Paul McCartney.” It was soulless. When Paul and Ringo finally took the stage, the contrast between them and the other performers was even more striking. There was electricity, anticipation, and flawless performing. Finally, the goosebumps I was waiting for happened!

Cover tunes present a unique opportunity for songwriters to use their

creative skills. There really are only two strategies when doing a cover: Mimicry and Transformation. The mimics want a cover to sound as close to the original recording as possible. This will appeal to audience members who have a constant craving for the familiar. The problem, of course, is the inevitable comparison to the original. Did you hit the high notes? Was the lick accurate? Why did you put the chorus in a different place? Do you really think you sound like John Lennon? It can be a setup for audience disappointment. There are degrees of mimicry that range from a scary “tribute band” cover to more tasteful renditions that still get close to the original version.

Transformation involves taking a cover song to a new place. You honor the essence of the original by putting together a unique arrangement or presentation. David Wilcox covers the Four Tops’ “It’s The Same Old Song” in this way. It’s a stripped-down, acoustic presentation, delivered in a slow, mellow style, in one of Wilcox’s signature open tunings. Laurence Juber’s acoustic arrangements of Beatles classics are another example. One of the best and most unusual covers I’ve recently heard is Paul Simon’s cover of the Beach Boys’ “Surfer Girl” (you can watch the video at <http://bit.ly/1iS3Qow>).

He completely transforms the original and actually makes the listener develop a new appreciation for the original song. It seems to me that the transformation strategy is enhanced even more when there is already a stark stylistic contrast between the original performer and your own style. David Wilcox is as far away from the Motown sound as it gets. Paul Simon doing a Brian Wilson song ... are you kidding? Yet it can be a recipe for magic.

The hardest covers to mimic may be the ones that are most familiar to listeners. You want to sing “Yesterday,” “Fire and Rain,” “Your Cheating Heart”? You sometimes have to fight the urge to sound like the original performer. I’ve heard performers actually sing in an English accent and then suddenly switch to a country twang or BeeGees vibrato. It makes me wonder who they really are. It’s almost easier to cover songs that are more obscure. No one has any expectations. You can relax more and you might be introducing something new to an audience. I would have never heard of John Hiatt, J.D. Souther, or Lucinda Williams, had I not heard other performers covering their tunes.

So, next time you want to add some covers to your set list, think about a couple of questions:

- **Can I really satisfy the audience by being completely faithful to the original?**

- **Are my performance skills strong enough to pull off a total mimicry?**
- **How might I add value, interest or a new twist, while still respecting the original?**
- **Can I apply some of my unique musical or writing strengths to an arrangement that will pleasantly surprise my audience?**
- **How fresh is the original? Has it been overplayed?**
- **How does a cover actually enhance and blend with my own songs? Will my stuff favorably compare?**

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## SVSA President's Message, February 2014

Some thoughts from Jeff Tweedy:

“I think the single most helpful thing is just to train yourself to sit down with a notebook and fill up pages without stopping yourself. And then it's really good to put stuff away and forget it; when you go back and read it months or years later, it sounds like it was written by a different hand. It's much easier to be objective. I always end up finding stuff I really like and then highlighting it, and it would have been much more difficult to have those judgments in the moment.” See more at <http://bit.ly/1gOOB4t>.

### *Too many chords?*

I sometimes get accused of using too many chords. It could be dangerous to my music career. A rock and roll guitarist plays 3 chords to thousands of people. A jazz guitarist plays thousands of chords to 3 people. Hmm...

Larry Helms will lead a workshop on the topic of “copyright” at this month's meeting On Wednesday, March 26. See you there.

- Larry Sakayama

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## Monthly Meeting Notes – January 2014

The February SVSA meeting saw a total of 20 members attending plus three guests. Our workshops and 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.

One informative and entertaining element of our meetings is a talk or workshop given by an SVSA member on various topics of interest to our

songwriting community. At the February meeting, David Simpkins gave a talk about how to go about recording a full-length music project in a professional studio. David, who has been a part of making three full-length band projects, one full-length solo project, two extended-play band projects, and a number of guest appearances on outside projects, set forth a long list of considerations and questions that a novice musician might consider, encompassing pre-, during- and post-project elements. As usual with SVSA workshops, there was a lot of back-and-forth information swapping during the workshop. David's talk included a take-home handout worksheet.

The February meeting also saw 11 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. While most songs are submitted on CD, cassette, or mp3, submissions may also be performed live.

As always, the pre- and post-critique 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.

**- David Simpkins**

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# Writing and Life Purpose

**By Cindy Angell Keeling**

I once heard “life purpose” defined this way: We all have a general life purpose, which is learning to love more. We also have a purpose that is specific to each of us. The speaker went on to take the mystery right out of it: **What do you love to do, or are drawn to do? What are your natural talents or gifts?**

What I loved about this was that “life purpose” went from being an intangible concept to something that made perfect sense. Why wouldn’t our natural talents and gifts be part of our life purpose? And it could be anything: writer, doctor, parent, teacher, artist, professional athlete, gardener, musician, and on and on.

There is a retired minister at the nursing home where my mother lives. I’ll call him Reverend Bill. In his mid-nineties, he has lived there for many years. Confined to a wheelchair, he uses his feet to slowly propel himself along. His fingers are bent and paralyzed, and his tongue protrudes at a right angle from between his few remaining teeth. And yet ... his mind is still sharp, and he likes to visit with staff, fellow residents, and visitors despite having impaired speech. He is a bright spark!

He and my mother are old acquaintances. I was touched when he made the effort to come down a long hallway to wish us Merry Christmas when I visited in December. The next day we met him in the lobby. Each time, his face and eyes would light up as if we were the ones he most wanted to see in that moment. As he chatted with my mom, it occurred to me that he is still living his life purpose. Even with all his physical limitations, Reverend Bill continues to be a vehicle for love and light.

As I think about my goals for 2014, I feel grateful for the gift of writing. What can I accomplish this year? How may I be a bright spark for someone else? I’m reminded what a blessing our talents are, and how much (or little) we can choose to use and develop them. To that end, an underlying goal this year is to write with (life) purpose and gratitude.

*Cindy Keeling is a songwriter, freelance writer, and budding novelist. She co-wrote “Carved in Stone” with SVSA member Greg Trafidlo. For more information, see her website, [cindyangellkeeling.com](http://cindyangellkeeling.com).*

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## Second annual Rocket Boys songwriting contest now accepting entries

The Rocket Boys Festival “Aiming High” Songwriting Contest is now accepting entries for its second annual competition.

First prize is \$500; second prize \$300; third prize \$200. The theme of this year’s contest is “Places.”

Preliminary entries will be narrowed down to five contestants, who will compete in “5 Live” at Coal Camp Church in October. The artist performing the song (does not have to be the songwriter) must agree to compete in the live final round in October.

For more details about the songwriting contest, see [http://rocketboysfestival.com/2014\\_aiming\\_high\\_song\\_writing\\_contest](http://rocketboysfestival.com/2014_aiming_high_song_writing_contest)

Deadline for song submissions is September 6. There is an entry fee of \$25 per song.

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## *notable quotes* (discovered in songwriter Tom Kimmel’s newsletter)

“Songwriting is too mysterious and uncontrolled a process for me to direct it towards any one thing.”

— James Taylor, songwriter and artist (b. 1948)

“Every professional songwriter I know—people who do it 100% for their living—is terrified every time they sit down to write.”

— Janis Ian, songwriter and artist (b. 1951)

“Everything in the world of soul has a deep desire and longing for visible form.”

— John O’Donohue, author, priest & philosopher (1956-2008)

“The best work that anybody ever writes is the work that is on the verge of embarrassing him, always.”

— Arthur Miller, playwright and essayist (1915-2005)

# SVSA Performing Members' Upcoming Gigs

## **Marc Baskind**

**Saturday, Mar 29:** Annie Moore's Irish Pub, Roanoke VA w/Caravan, 7:30-10:30 p.m.

**Sunday, March 30:** Brunch, Preston's, The Inn at Virginia Tech, 10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**Sunday, April 13:** Brunch, Preston's, The Inn at Virginia Tech, 10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**Saturday, April 19:** With Caravan, Annie Moore's Irish Pub, Roanoke, Virginia. 7:30-10:30 p.m.

**Friday and Saturday, April 25 and 26:** with The Walter Scott Trio, The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs, WV, 7-10 p.m.

## **Greg Traftidlo**

**Monday, March 24:** Jackson Park Library, Roanoke, with Barbara Martin, 6-7:15 p.m.

**Saturday, May 10:** Americana Afternoons at Floyd Country Store, Floyd, Virginia, In the Round with Britt Mistele, David Simpkins, and Ron Ireland. Noon to 3 p.m.

**Friday, May 30:** Third Street Coffeehouse, backing up David Simpkins

## **Barbara Martin**

**Saturday, March 29:** Workshop on "10 Tips to Spice Up Your Songwriting," 2-5 p.m., Barbara in concert, 7 p.m. BeARcade Music Studio, 6661 Artillery Rd., Port Republic, Virginia. Suggested donations: concert - \$15, workshop only - \$15, both concert and workshop - \$25. Space is limited; for reservations contact Gene Bowlen at 540-421-4756 or gene@bearcademusic.com. (Workshop attendees who want to bring a song for critique should bring 10 copies of lyric sheet.)

**Friday, April 11:** Barbara solo, "Comfortable Concerts," Gaithersburg, MD. 8 p.m.; doors open at 7:30. Email Robin at kmarkle6@hotmail.com for reservations and directions (mention Barb's website, barbamartinmusic.com, in your email). Suggested donation \$10-\$20. Appetizers and beverages available.

**Saturday, April 19:** Jazz Instrumental and Vocal workshop, 3-5 p.m. (\$15); CD release concert at 7:30 p.m. for "Fresh Air" by Barbara Martin and Vince Lewis (\$15). \$25 for both workshop and concert. Rapunzel's, 924 Front Street, Lovingston, Virginia. For more information: 434-263-6660.

## **David Simpkins**

**Saturday, April 19:** Solo, Our Daily Bread, Blacksburg, Virginia, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**Saturday, May 10:** Floyd Country Store (Americana Afternoons), Floyd, Virginia, noon-3 p.m. with Britt Mistele, Greg Traftidlo, and Ron Ireland

**Friday, May 30:** With the KGB. Third Street Coffeehouse, Roanoke, Virginia, 7:30-10 p.m.

**Friday, June 13:** With the KGB. Appalachian Spirit Art Gallery, Marion, Virginia, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

**Saturday, September 27:** Vinton Farmers Market, Vinton, Virginia, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. In the Round with Greg Traftidlo and Britt Mistele.

## UPCOMING AT THIRD STREET COFFEEHOUSE

Schedule as of 3/18/14

- Mar. 28 Rob Williams & Paulo Franco (N. Chesterfield, VA)
- Apr. 4 The McKenzies (Lynchburg, VA)
- Apr. 11 Lee Robertson & Keith Bowniece (Roanoke, VA)
- Apr. 18 Mike Franke, Dan Hildebrand & Chuck Schaeffer (Roanoke, VA)
- Apr. 25 Jazz Consultants (Newberry, Greenstreet, Nichols) Roanoke, VA
- May 2 Mary Roach (Roanoke, VA)
- May 9 Rivertown Gypsies (Ronceverte, WV)
- May 16 SVSA Showcase (No Open Mic)
- May 23 Acoustic Reset & Friends
- May 30 David Simpkins
- June 6 Meadow Street Band (Ashland, VA)
- June 13 Jared Minnix (Roanoke, VA)
- June 20 Paul Rucker (Roanoke, VA)
- June 27 John Tracy (Charlottesville, VA)
- July 4 Dan & Marian McConnell (Catawba, Virginia)
- July 11 Bob Grubel (Floyd, Virginia)
- July 18 Lauren Lapointe (Savannah, GA)
- July 25 Chris Shepard (Roanoke, VA)

*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](mailto:marian.mcconnell@gmail.com).*

## SVSA Classifieds

### FOR SALE

**KORG CR4 4-track Recorder.** \$200, great for songwriters, only used a few times, works great. Contact **Dan Hildebrand**, (540) 765-9104.

### 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](mailto:barbara@barbaramartinmusic.com).

### 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](mailto:thejonesgroup@rbnet.com), (540) 473-3598.

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

# SVSA Members' Recordings



eyes on the horizon



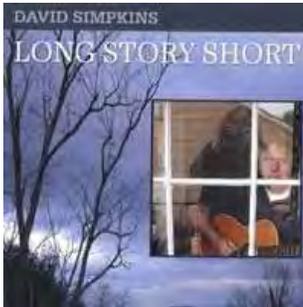
kaleidoscope



crossing over time



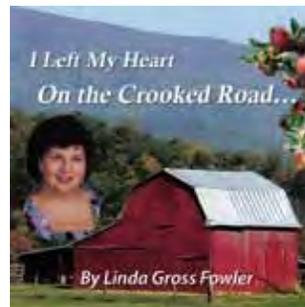
marc with a "c"



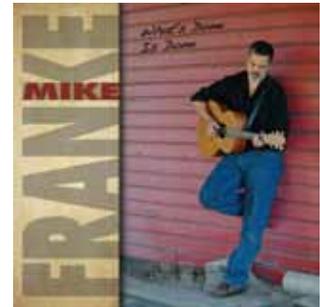
long story short



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](http://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..

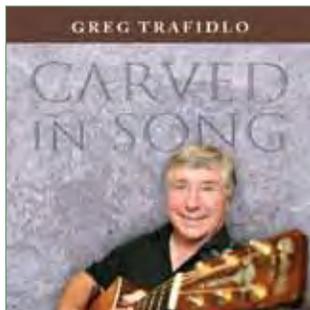
## Linda Fowler

**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



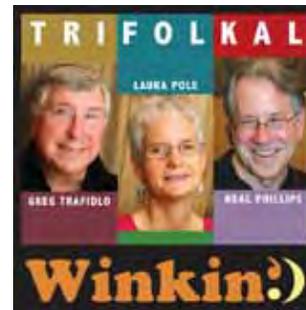
carved in song



folksingular



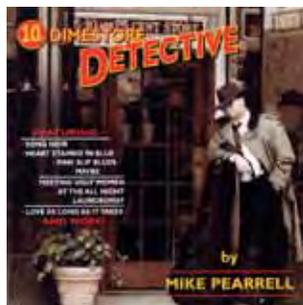
dog joggin'



winkin'



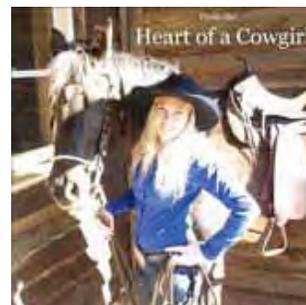
cup of contradictions



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](http://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](http://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



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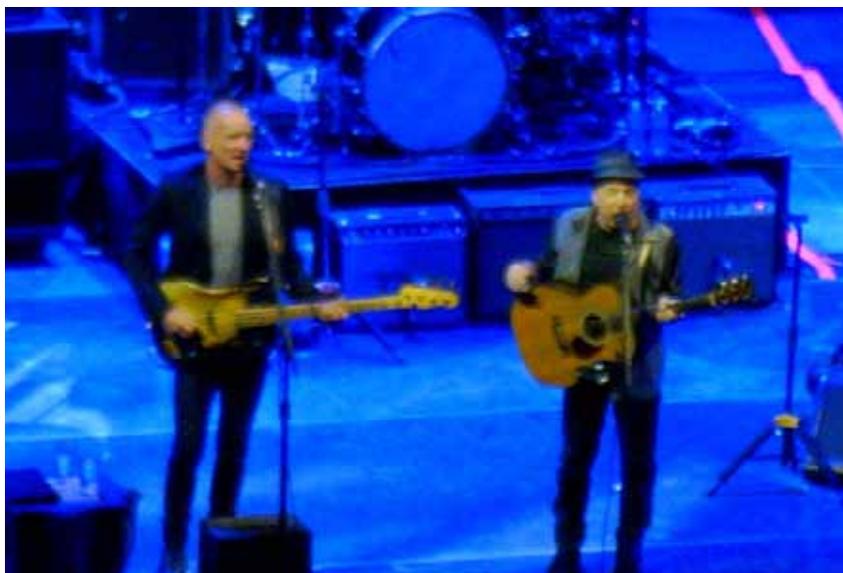
# Seen on the Musical Scene

photos of music performances in Southwest Virginia



Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn at the Jefferson Center in Roanoke on March 7.  
Photo by Leigh Littleton.

A photo from the nosebleed section of Sting and Paul Simon at the Verizon Center arena in Washington D.C. on March 13. Photo by Leigh Littleton.





Travis Book at Kirk Avenue Music Hall in Roanoke on January 25. Travis is a member of the Infamous Stringdusters, but was performing solo. Photo by Leigh Littleton.

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The Farewell Drifters at Kirk Avenue Music Hall in Roanoke on January 25.  
Photo by Leigh Littleton.