SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION

SVSA MUSIC NEWS

NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2022

WWW.SVSASONGS.COM

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER FEATURE ARTICLE

What exactly *are* performance royalties?

by Soundcharts Team

Digital streaming platforms have transformed the music industry in a multitude of ways. One of them is that they've created a new revenue stream of performance royalties for songwriters.

However, while digital streaming has generated new interest in performance royalties, it's still only one part of the pie: radio plays, performances in live venues, and performing as a part of a TV broadcast, movie, or advertisement all generate performance royalties.

Besides, performance royalties are just one type of royalty, alongside mechanical royalties and sync fees. Sync licensing is a hugely complicated topic in itself, and it's typically a 1:1 negotiation. In this article, we're going to explore the performance and mechanical royalties, collected and distributed by third-party organizations: in the U.S., the PROs (BMI, ASCAP, and SESAC) collect performance royalties, while the Harry Fox Agency administers mechanical royalties.

So, how are performance royalties different from mechanicals? How do these royalties flow from music users to songwriters and publishers? And how are these royalties calculated?

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The final meeting of the SVSA this year will be held **WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 16** in the LL Rice Room at the Jefferson Center in Roanoke VA.

Doors open at 7:00 p.m.; the meeting begins at 7:30 and will last until the last song critique is finished, or 10:00 p.m., whichever comes first.

Members may submit one song for critique (on CD, phone, computer, or you can perform it live) and should provide at least 25 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.

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People are often surprised to learn that every time they hear a song in a public place, wherever it might be, that performance (if it is reported) will generate public performance royalties.

What are performance royalties?

Performance royalties are paid to songwriters and their publishers in exchange for the right to broadcast or perform a copyrighted musical composition in a public environment. This includes radio airplay, TV broadcasts, live performance in venues like bars and clubs, and, last but not least, interactive digital streams. But before we get into it we have to get through the basics, and when it comes to royalties it all begins with the music copyright.

Composition vs. Master: Two types of copyright

When a musical composition is fixed in a tangible medium, like lyrics written in a notebook or a harmony recorded in sheet music, copyright is instantly created for the songwriters and their music publisher (if there's a publishing deal in place). This copyright covers the underlying piece of music — the harmony, melody, and lyrics — and is owned by the songwriters and their music publisher.

Master copyright, on the other hand, is created for the particular expression of a composition in its recorded form and is owned by the recording artists and the record label who funded the recording.

To understand the difference between the two types of copyright, think of cover versions: each newly recorded cover version will have its own master copyright, but the original piece of music, containing the harmony, melody, and lyrics, is covered by the composition copyright.

So, only the copyright holders of the musical composition are paid performance royalties. Recording artists and labels don't. For the full overview of royalties in the music industry, check out our introductory breakdown of the royalties on both sides of the music copyright.

When are performance royalties paid?

So, public performance royalties are generated when a musical composition is performed in a live venue, played on the radio, TV, and film, or streamed on a digital streaming platform. How are these royalties collected and distributed? The royalty pipeline differs based on the medium or venue, so in this section, we explore how each type of performance royalty works.

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Radio plays (terrestrial, satellite, and internet)

Generally speaking, radio stations pay Performance Rights Organizations (PROs) for blanket licenses that give them the right to play virtually any music in existence. Then, they report the plays to the PROs through broadcast logs, which are used by PROs to distribute royalties to songwriters and their publishers. The exact calculation of how royalties are paid out for particular airplay depends on various factors, so we'll go over the details in a future post.

Digital streams

Since, under the streaming model, none of the songs we listen to are actually owned by listeners, each stream on a DSP counts as a public performance of sorts — even if it's broadcasted to the privacy of the consumer's headphones.

Sometimes, streaming services have direct relationships with publishers (if it's a massive company like Kobalt or Downtown/Songtrust or major-label affiliates). But generally, streaming services pay out performance royalties through PROs, who, in their turn, distribute them to publishers and songwriters.

The public performance royalty rates for streaming services are established by local legislation, in the US, by the Copyright Royalty Board (CRB). Streaming services negotiate performance royalty rates with PROs and then deduct this amount (typically 6-7% of the service's total revenue) from their All-In Royalty Pool — the full amount that the services must pay out to songwriters and publishers, including both public performance and mechanical royalties (which we will cover a bit further down the road).

Plays and performances in live venues

People are often surprised to learn that every time they hear a song in any public place, whether it's played at a bar, club, or restaurant, in an elevator, or a subway station, that performance is likely reported to a PRO — and thus generates public performance royalties. Most of the time, such public performance platforms acquire blanket licenses from PROs — just like radios do — and log all the tracks they broadcast back to the collection societies so that they can divide the royalties up between corresponding songwriters.

Plays in TV, film, or advertisements

When a piece of music is used in a TV show, movie, or advertisement, the owner of the composition copyright is owed public performance royalties for the right to broadcast their works. In such circumstances, public performance royalties are usually a bonus on top of the sync fees that are negotiated separately, though not 100% of the time. The thing is that sync fees are paid out for the prominent and intentional use of compositions or masters as an integral part of a broadcasted piece of content. So, a song played at random during a live broadcast does not require a sync agreement, but if the song

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EDITOR'S NOTE

For the second month in a row, no one sent in a front-page feature. **Greg Trafidlo** suggested this article that was brought to his attention by former SVSA member Neal Phillips.

Soundcharts is the leading analytics platform in the music industry. It provides global, real-time insights on the artists' performance and market trends, monitoring data at scale across AM/FM radio airplay, digital music services, and key social media platforms. Find it at **soundcharts.com**

Soundcharts

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is inserted intentionally by the producers, then a sync deal is required.

Besides, public performance royalties often become a critical point of consideration when the sync deals are negotiated. For example, if the final content will be widely broadcast, like an ad for a major company running 20 times per day on national TV — well, the songwriter can expect a lot of performance royalties to pile up on top of the negotiated sync fees — and be sure that the sync agencies will be well-aware of this fact.

Performance royalties vs. mechanical royalties: what's the difference?

So, what's the deal with mechanical royalties then? Those two types of royalties are often mixed up, since they sometimes travel through the pipe together — streaming services, for example, treat public performance and mechanical royalties as a single All-In Royalty Pool. In reality, however, they are very different. While performance royalties are paid for the right to play a composition in public, mechanical royalties are paid for the right to reproduce a composition through the process of recording, manufacturing, and distributing the work. So, if a label wants to produce a CD bearing the composition, they have to pay mechanicals for each copy they make.

In today's streaming-driven musical ecosystem, however, mechanical royalties are mostly generated when a user chooses to play a specific song on a streaming service. When it comes to streaming, the key differentiator between the two types of royalties is user choice: if the user chooses a song on an on-demand platform, then public performance royalties AND mechanical royalties are generated.

If a song is played on a non-interactive platform (like Pandora's free radio, for example), only performance royalties are paid out.

For interactive plays, the streaming platforms typically pay royalties to music publishers through PROs, while royalties for on-demand downloads and physical sales are usually paid first to the copyright holder of the master (most of the time, the record label), who then has to distribute the mechanicals to the proper publishers and songwriters.

Who receives public performance royalties?

For any musical composition, the royalties are divided into two parts: one part goes to the songwriters, and the other to

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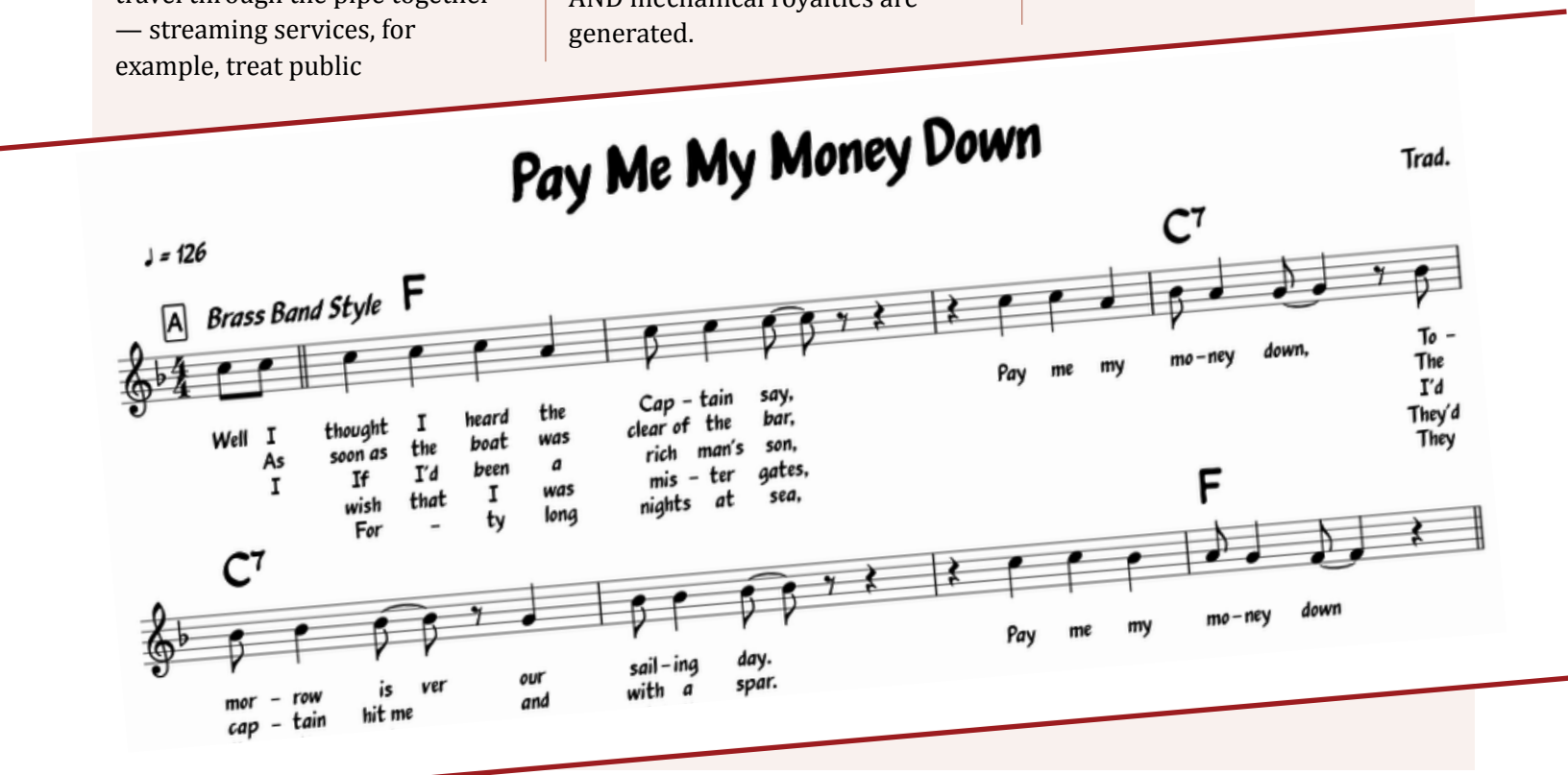

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the publisher. However, the publisher's share isn't kept entirely by the publisher: instead, songwriters and publishers typically have a deal in place, which gives a portion of the publisher's share to the songwriter. The exact percentages of those shares vary by territory: in the U.S., publishers and songwriters generally split both performance and mechanical royalties 50/50, but in France, songwriters receive 66% of the performance royalties, while the mechanical royalties are split 50/50 between publishers and songwriters. For more context on writer's and publisher's shares and how they shape the effective revenue splits, check out our Mechanics of Publishing.

Performance royalties in the modern age

The rise of digital streaming platforms has made performance royalties a critical source of revenue for many musicians. Streaming performance royalties are crucial to artists who don't perform their own, like songwriters, lyricists, composers, or beat-makers. For artists like singers/songwriters who own both the composition and the master, the public performance royalty are less important, as they typically depend on other revenue streams — although the actual revenue composition is unique for every career.

However, as the entire digital landscape grew, it also made it more complicated for artists and music professionals to get their revenue streams in order and collect 100% of the royalties due. First, there's the problem of metadata: the music industry is rife with inaccurate or incomplete metadata, and unfortunately, the collection and distribution of performance royalties are dependent on the accuracy of this data.

Then, there's the fact that performance royalties are also dependent on venues, services, and TV/radio stations faithfully reporting what they play, which they often fail to do accurately and consistently. Add to that the decentralized and overly bureaucratic global PRO system which collects these royalties, and variation in local legislation around the world about how performance royalties are distributed, and you've got a landscape that's convoluted enough to make even the most experienced music pros head's spin.

We did our best to give you a broad overview of the process in this article, but if you really want to dig into it, check out our in-depth exploration in the Mechanics of Music Publishing.

Conclusion

If you've made it this far, then now you know why publishing is considered the most complicated area of the music industry. The main takeaway for music pros is that, yes, streaming platforms have generated new revenue streams for artists and performance royalties can be a valuable source of revenue, but navigating this complex landscape requires a basic understanding of where royalties are flowing and how they're generated (as you hopefully now have). Every career is unique, but what makes a good music professional is all-around knowledge of how the system works.

The next SVSA monthly meeting
is LIVE and IN-PERSON this coming
Wednesday November 16
in the LL Rice Room at the Jefferson Center, Roanoke VA.
Check your inbox for info.

No meeting in December, holiday party instead

Meeting this Wednesday due to holiday

by Mollye Otis

We remind you that our meeting is this **Wednesday, November 16** — a week early this month allowing for the Thanksgiving holiday.

At this Wednesday's meeting, we will vote on next year's Board of Directors. Our December 10th Holiday Party will be the final SVSA gathering of the year. Be sure to check your e-mail inbox for more info.

As usual, we will open the doors at 7:00 p.m. and then begin the meeting at 7:30 in the L.L. Rice Room at the Jefferson Center.

Twenty-five copies of the lyric sheet and an mp3 on your phone or CD are all you need — or bring your instrument if you want to perform your song live.

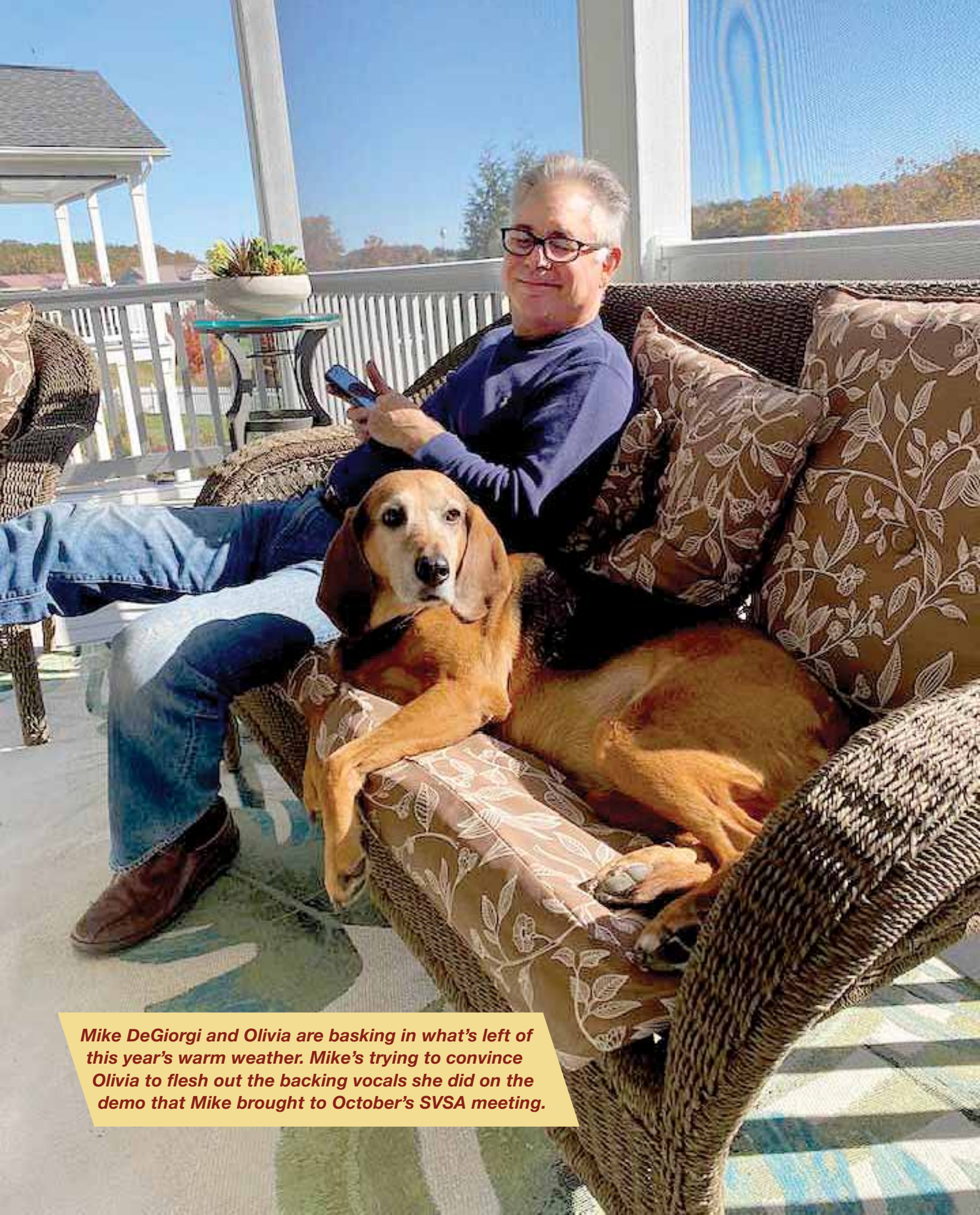
Time flies. Here's Aspen and little Alice Black at the SVSA's 2013 Holiday Party at Antique Blue (the late Mickey Nelson's store) in Roanoke VA. (Photo courtesy of Larry Sakayama.)

Wishing you a

WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON

To SVSA Members
and to Everyone:

Be good, Be kind, Be creative!



Mike DeGiorgi and Olivia are basking in what's left of this year's warm weather. Mike's trying to convince Olivia to flesh out the backing vocals she did on the demo that Mike brought to October's SVSA meeting.

New album in the works

On November 4, SVSAer Aspen Black started recording her new album in Nashville TN with engineer Drew Middleton. Black says she's really happy with the sound and can't wait to cut the rest of the songs.

Whole lotta recordin' goin' on! SVSAer Forrest Baldwin, above, welcomes fellow member Mollye Otis into his Tribal Sounds Studio. Says Mollye, "Forrest made the process sweet and easy. His expertise and artistry created a sense of support and trust."

Spousal input results in music video

by Bill Stanton

A few years ago, I wrote a song I called *Feel Like Love*. I was excited about it because 1) the song had meaningful lyrics to me and 2) the song had chord changes that I thought were unique considering my rather limited knowledge of chord progressions as a songwriter.

I brought the song to be critiqued at the February 2018 SVSA meeting,

Three of the most interesting aspects of those critiques involved the following criticisms:

1. Change the title ... Change "like" to something else.

2. The chord changes sound like thousands of other commercial songs ... (This comment came out in the discussion part of the feedback.) and

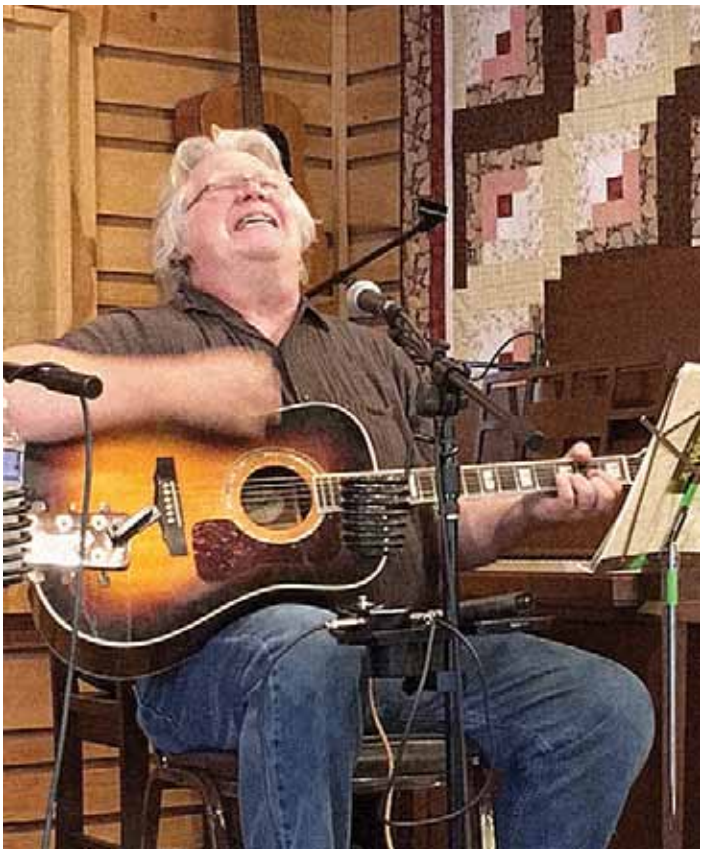
3. Liked the chord changes a lot. Don't change those.

Anyway four years later, I did change the title of the song to *Feel The Love*, which was my wife Debbie's suggestion.

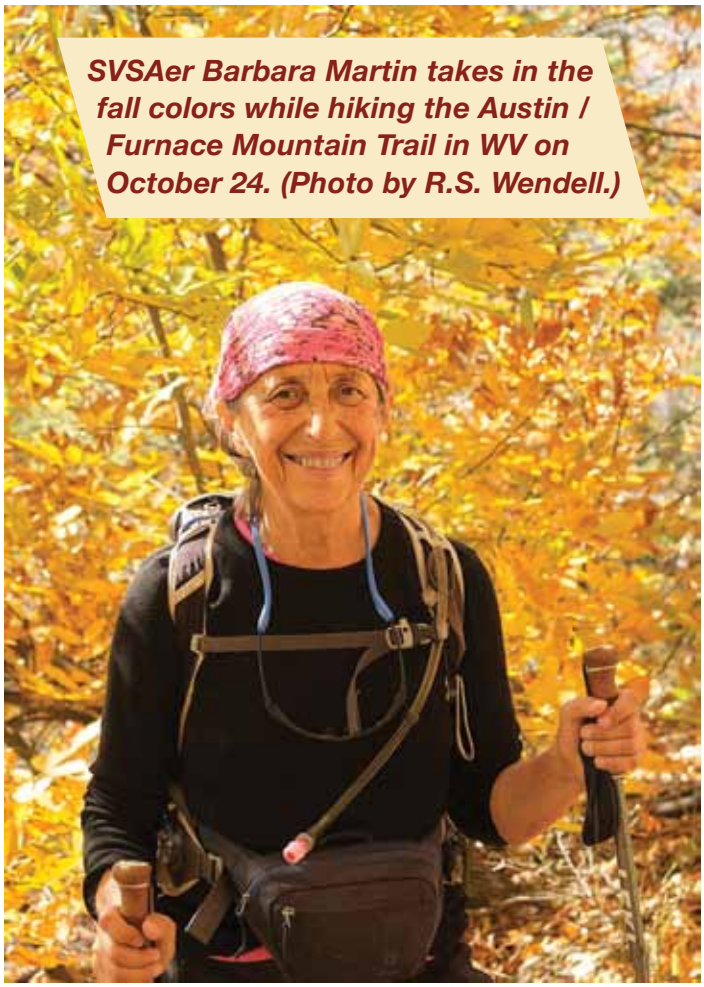
I have for many years been a slightly prejudicial fan of my wife's considerable photographic skills and, after months of gentle persuasion, she consented to help create a video that combined her photographs with *Feel The Love*.

The final product relied on SVSA member **Randy Walker**'s wonderful instrumentation and technical expertise on the audio part of the video. Skip Brown helped with the visual structure of the final product.

And now this family affair is available on YouTube to enjoy at **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eK6kZl08zyo**



Says David Simpkins: "When Greg Trafidlo first submitted these to me for publication, my first thought was that I could easily find a dozen shots of other musicians who were raising their heads and shouting to the heavens like Uncle Dave Macon (the first Grand Ole Opry star) is doing. Then, I remembered that ol' Uncle Dave was my father's favorite back in the 1930s radio days. I figured that, yeah, maybe these photos ARE connected in some weird way ..." (Photo of me by Judy Larson.)



SVSAer Barbara Martin takes in the fall colors while hiking the Austin / Furnace Mountain Trail in WV on October 24. (Photo by R.S. Wendell.)

SVSAer Aspen Black rocks the Ponderosa Brewery in Albuquerque NM on November 9.

Father/Son duo makes inaugural appearances

Tucker Franke and his father, SVSAer Mike, played several father/son gigs in Harrisonburg VA at the Madison Hotel. Pictured above is a flyer the two put together to advertise one of their performances. Tucker plans to move to Nashville TN in December.

BLUES IS AN ART

by Mike Franke

Typical blues forms are admittedly predictable. We all know when the chord changes are expected, and we all recognize the turnaround when it comes around. There are many among us (you know who you are) who find this musical form boring, even "beneath us," as songwriters.

I'm here to differ with that opinion.

Yes, the constraints of the blues form are perhaps more rigid than other forms of music. But by how much, really? I think most popular music is similarly formulaic whether it's pop music, rock, country (which pretty much covers most "popular" music) — or even our beloved folk genre.

My son's songwriting and performing career got a kick-start when his girlfriend dumped him. We had forced him to sit through piano lessons during his childhood, but he only picked up a guitar after the big breakup.

That was less than two years ago. He recently took a three-hour gig for which he had to learn more than 30 songs in about two weeks. With four chords and a capo, he was remarkably successful.

Four chords covers a *lot* of popular music. (If you haven't watched a group called "Axis Of Awesome" perform their *Four-Chord Song* bit, you should look for it on YouTube. You may be surprised).

Musically, I believe that it is the very constraints in the blues that provide the guardrails for improvisation. Improvisation translates to emotion.

Also, it is the rules themselves, and how we bend and break them, that make the art. Anybody who has ever tried to clap their hands with Son House on *Death Letter Blues,* or count bars with any John Lee Hooker tune, knows what I mean.

But let's talk about lyrics. As Julia Simon states in her *American Music Journal* article, Vol. 31: "Blues songs from the folk tradition are often characterized as lacking a coherent narrative structure."

I have written a pretty good catalog of songs in the past few decades, but very few of them are strictly blues tunes. Why? Because I, too, have fallen into the trap of thinking that the blues, as a form structure, is not worthy of thought-provoking, emotion-dripping lyrics.

I mean, really, how many times can you sing "woke up this mornin'" and "my baby she treat me bad" and "I'm so lonesome I could cry" (okay, not the blues) before it gets old?

I was in my truck today,

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driving for about 90 minutes, and I did something that I seldom do anymore: I put in a CD. Yes, my truck has a CD player, and yes, I have a collection of CDs in the truck.

Because I've been encouraged to play more slide guitar, I was drawn to go back to the roots. I put in Son House's "Father Of The Delta Blues: The Complete 1965 Sessions.'

The first track is a tune called *Death Letter Blues.* (You can Google it.) It's played on a resonator guitar, and it's a slide tune. I don't know what kind of guitar it is, but I have to believe it is a cheap one. There's very little sustain or resonance, and it sounds damn near a little out of tune.

The rhythm is a very strange syncopation. I can't imagine what it would be like to notate it in tablature.

This "simple" blues tune is a fantastic story about a man who gets a letter about his woman being dead and how he deals with it — or — it's a tragic love story in which a man learns of his deceased wife and comes to terms with his feelings about her.

I've included the lyrics below, with a translation for those of you who don't speak "blues."

Original lyrics:

I got a letter this mornin'
I say now, how do y'all reckon it read?
I said I got a letter this mornin'
I say now, how do y'all reckon it read?
It said, "Hurry, hurry! 'cause the girl you love is dead"

Translated lyrics:

I received a letter this morning.
How do you suppose it reads?
Make haste! The woman you love is deceased!

Original lyrics:

You know, I grabbed up my suitcase
And I took off down the road
I grabbed up my suitcase
And yeah, I took off down the road
You know when I got there
She's layin' on a coolin' board

Translated lyrics:

I packed up my belongings
And departed as quickly as I was able
When I arrived, she was lying on the coroner's table

Original lyrics:

Well, I walked up right close
And I looked down in her face
Yeah, ooh
Yeah, I looked down in her face
You know she was good ol' gal
She got to lay here 'til the Judgment Day

Translated lyrics:

I approached and gazed lovingly upon her face
She would remain forever in this place

Original lyrics:

Well, it looked like ten thousand people
Was standin' round the buryin' ground
Yeah, looked like it was ten thousand people
They were standin' round the buryin' ground
You know I didn't know that I loved her
Until they began to let her down

Translated lyrics:

There were a great many people, standing around the grave
As the casket was lowered, my love for her was revealed in a sudden wave

Original lyrics:

Ohh, I folded up my arms
I said I, I slowly walked away
I folded up my arms
Yeah I, I slowly walked away
I said, "Farewell, farewell honey
"I'll meet you on Judgment Day"

Translated lyrics:

I made a slow exit, containing my strife
I said "Farewell, my dear. I will see you in the next life"

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Original lyrics:

Yes, I went in my room
I said I bowed down to pray
I went in my room
Yeah, I bowed down to pray
I said but the blues came along
Yeah, and drove my spirit away

Translated lyrics:

I retreated to my chambers to meditate
Sadness overwhelmed me; I could not self-regulate

Original lyrics:

I gets up in the mornin'
Feelin' so sick and bad
Yes, I gets up soon the mornin'
I said, I be feeling so sick and bad
You know I'll be just thinkin' about the good times
And assume that I once had

Translated lyrics:

I wake each day, feeling ill and in despair
Reminiscent of the days when I had no care

Original lyrics:

You know I didn't feel so bad
'Til the good Lord sun went down
You know I didn't feel so bad
Until the good Lord sun went down
You know I didn't have a soul
To throw my arms around

Translated lyrics:

I was feeling reasonably well, as long as the sun shone
When I realized I was alone

Clearly, this is a heartwarming, passionate tale of a broken heart — not just another "woke up this mornin'" blues ditty.

For a more in-depth analysis, I refer you back to the *American Music Journal* article by Julia Simon.

If this was informative, I'll continue in January with an analysis of Son House's *Preacher Blues,* which is a memoir of the author's life.

LINKS OF INTEREST:

Four Chord Song:
h2ps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pidokakU4I

American Music Journal
https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/americanmusic.31.1.0050

Son House, *Death Letter Blues:*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdgrQoZHnNY

The last of October finds SVSAer Forrest Baldwin in the Shenandoah National Park.

SVSA CONCERT REVIEW

SAM ROBBINS AT THE KING GEORGE B&B, ROANOKE VA

by Dan Hildebrand

On Sat Nov 5, a special Traveling Troubadour House Concert was hosted by Lynn Hunt of the King George B&B in Roanoke VA. The historic home once was the house of Lt. Henry Trout who was not only the mayor of Roanoke but also a state senator.

The house concert was the fourth and final of the Traveling Troubadour Concert Tour in 2022.

The featured performer was Nashville's Sam Robbins, one of six winners of the prestigious Kerrville Folk Festival and a young rising star. Sam has also appeared on the reality show "the Voice" and has recently released his second album, 'Bigger Than In Between.'

Opening was SVSA's own **Mike DeGiorgi**. Mike provided his usual brand of witty humor and jazzy style that has made him a favorite among his peers. Mike included a lot of crowd favorites including *The Casserole Song* and *Buzzard Blues,* which drew a lot of laughs.

After a ten-minute intermission, Sam Robbins took the stage.

There aren't enough superlatives to describe the professionalism, poise, and confident-yet-humble manner in which Sam showcased his talent. His voice had amazing tonality and range. Sam's style is a mix of David Wilcox, John Mayer and Don

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SAM ROBBINS

PHOTO BY MOLLYE OTIS

BOB SCHMUCKER and SAM ROBBINS

PHOTO BY DAN HILDEBRAND

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McLean. He was simply captivating.

The other thing that impressed me was the young man's likability. Seriously, the kid is so charming, funny, and relaxed on stage. Many came away greatly impressed!

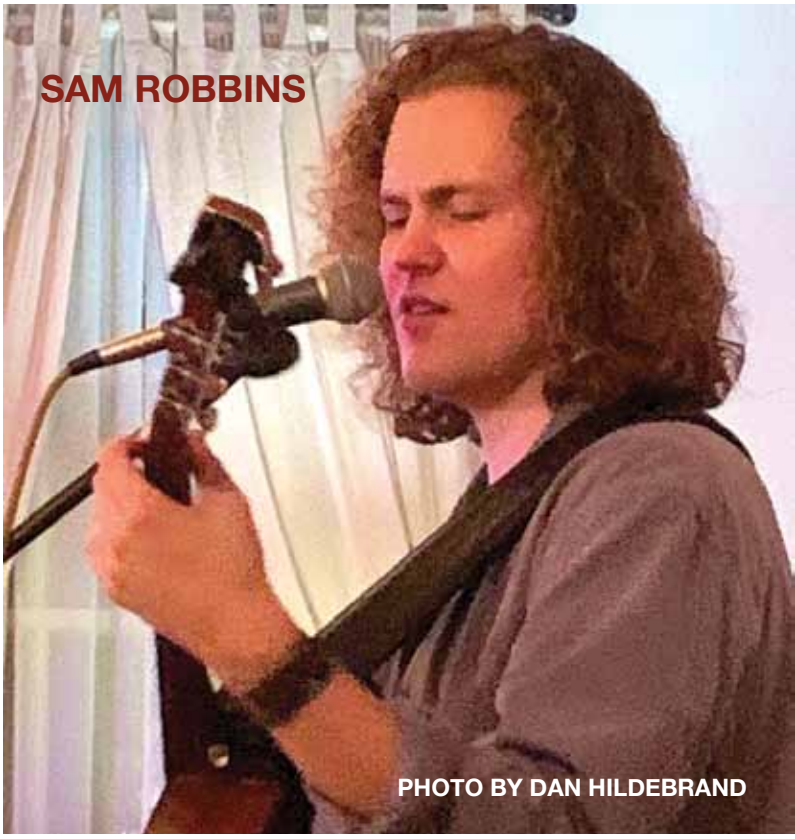
Tips were generous for our featured performer and Sam seemed to do quite well at his merch table while signing autographs afterwards.

The evening also featured an outstanding spread of pot luck treats including clam chowder, lamb stew, and other delicacies. There was a good crowd at the concert — 40 by our count — and a short open mic afterwards.

The SVSA was well represented by members **Bob Schmucker** (who sang with Sam on a cover of John Prine's *Paradise*) **Mark Baskind, Dan Hildebrand, Mollye Otis**, and of course **Mike DeGiorgi**, the evening's opening act.

Sam Robbins will be coming back to Roanoke VA and performing at the 3rd Street Coffeehouse on Fri Mar 10, with the Dan & Adonna Show opening.

The Traveling Troubadour House Concert Society will present another great concert series for 2023, so stay tuned, friends!



HOW I WRITE SONGS

Editor's Note: This year, the SVSA Board decided to forego scheduling "pro" workshops in favor of requesting its own members to deliver their own presentations. The workshops will cover various topics. One major one will be the "How I Write Songs" series. **Mike Pearrell** was the fourth presenter with this discussion-producing insight into his own songwriting process.

The craft of songwriting can be studied, practiced, learned, and improved

By Mike Pearrell

At our meetings over the last several months members have been sharing their approach to songwriting and what they've learned over the years. My turn has come around.

When I hear "I wish your song had another verse," I take that as a compliment and not a criticism, no matter which way the speaker meant it. Two verses, a chorus, maybe a bridge, and get out. Maybe I'm lazy and don't want to put the effort in digging deeper into the song. (That is certainly the case sometimes). Nevertheless, my philosophy includes short and sweet.

I'm a fan of Bob Dylan and his appetite for words, but I like the Byrds' shorter version of *Mr. Tambourine Man* better than the all verses, Full Monty version. I think even *Tangled Up In Blue* could be a little shorter as long as "I must admit I felt a little uneasy when she bent down to tie the laces of my shoe" stays in.

I believe Ian Tyson said, "Say it — don't feel you have to explain it." I am a practitioner most times of straight-ahead lyric writing. I love good similes, metaphors, and lots of details, but I don't want to be obtuse or too deep into allegory. Say it — don't think you have to explain it.

> "I don't consider myself an artist. I want to be a craftsman."

I enjoy many lyrical and musical styles, but if there is a **Mike Pearrell** style it is a cross between Buddy Holly and Tom Russell. I'd like to be more modern, but so far, I am not. In the last couple years, I have been throwing in more "jazz" chords, but I am certainly not writing jazz.

I am probably more recognized in our group (if I am recognized at all) for my lyrics, but many of my songs have started out with short musical ideas. I might start out banging on a G chord (an F for my tuned-down guitar) until a line comes to me. I've also learned little chord moves that have defined where the song is supposed to go.

I decided once to write a song with short phrases followed by longer ones. Sometimes I have started one song and it morphed into another.

I never want to downplay the magic of the Muse and inspiration. Still, while I think a few of my songs are "art," I don't consider myself an artist. I want to be a craftsman. There is mystery and magic to songwriting, but one can study and learn the techniques of the craft, so I disagree a little with downplaying the importance of learning vs. only relying on

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the muse. We learn the craft in different ways.

Books, seminars, and camps have worked for me. I think I'm a better songwriter for them. Now I've gone to camps and felt I learned nothing. I put them in the same category as the continuing education I've taken to maintain my CPA license — it's not what you learn in one class or one year, it's the compound effect of courses over time.

I've also learned craft by coming to SVSA meetings all these years, even when I haven't a song to present. Sometimes I've learned from listening to good songs and sometimes from bad songs. I've learned what my ear likes and what it doesn't and that has shaped my songwriting. I've gained insight from listening to other's critiques. Some members have wonderful ideas for re-ordering verses or asking questions like "were you trying to say this?"

I'm a vain guy. I start off believing all my songs are great, perfectly written, and no one's going to make me change anything. Often, I don't. But sometimes, I get comments that make me think I should go back and revisit the darned thing.

Many years ago, I was at a songwriting weekend in Little Washington VA, hosted by Paul Reisler of Trapezoid. He had Steve Seskin and Beth Nielsen Chapman there as teachers, both highly successful Country writers.

Steve talked about the importance of emotion and details. He said if you must leave out one, keep the emotion. He also talked about the Rule of Doubles. This rule says change it up after twice. Have a melody line, repeat it. The audience will say "Oh, I like that" when they hear it the second time. If you repeat it yet again, often the interest will fade. This is true for lines and sections. Verse, verse go somewhere else. Verse chorus, verse chorus go somewhere else. It's a good rule I try to follow — it's almost ingrained in me now. But

> **"I start off believing all my songs are great, perfectly written, and no one's going to make me change anything."**

I don't follow it blindly. Serve the song.

I have used little musical changes to break up songs getting repetitive. These give the listener a little break and then pulls them back into the song. Part of the Rule of Doubles.

Now I have many songs that only use I, IV, VI, and V chords and I try to mix them up as much as I can. But I also like to put in a little twist, probably an unexpected chord to catch the listener off guard. The more I've fooled around though, I find that these twists are simply borrowing from keys related to the one I'm working with.

Let's jump to lyrics.

One of the things I've encouraged as SVSA president this year is doing little writing exercises — six-word stories, object writing, etc. The purpose of these is not to get a song out of them (although some authors think that is possible.) I view them like playing scales on guitar or piano — warm-ups to get you to the real stuff.

Now, I am preaching "Do as I say, not as I do." Every now and then I work on those exercises, but not as often as I should.

The one thing I do try to keep up with and I am fairly good with is writing "morning pages." This concept comes from Julia Cameron's book, The Artists Way. The idea is to get up and write three pages, straight through, no stopping and to do it every day. No editing. I've been keeping up with it but have learned not to judge myself when I miss days or if my attention lags.

Often, I have nothing to say, or I simply end up whining. Sometimes I tire of writing about my boring life and write three pages of fiction. I hope that the whining gets out of my system so that when I start working on a song, the crap is out of me.

I believe storing up hooks and titles is a good idea. I should do better at that. **Mike DeGiorgi** says he finds a title then works on different scenarios that work with it, then chooses one. That is a fantastic idea.

I suffer from input load and slow fingers. I understand more than I can do. I write on guitar, so my melodies lie too easily in the

See Songs, page 20

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

chord progression, so harmony before melody. Because I am not a good singer, I don't spend enough time creating intricate melodies. I still need to work on editing my music as much as my lyrics.

I agree and disagree with everyone who has given their time and thoughts on songwriting. The theory that songwriting is a magical mystery is true and that the great songs simply flow from the Muse to you. I'll give you one or two of those. Mostly though, I believe there is a craft to songwriting that can be studied, practiced, learned, and improved. It's why I have a lot of songwriting books, many of which I haven't completely read, but I have picked and chosen parts that work for me. I've attended workshops and music camps with the same idea. At one of the workshops, someone said take what you want and let the rest fall away.

Another benefit of those camps has been expanding my community of friends with the same interests. That's the same reason I come to SVSA meetings.

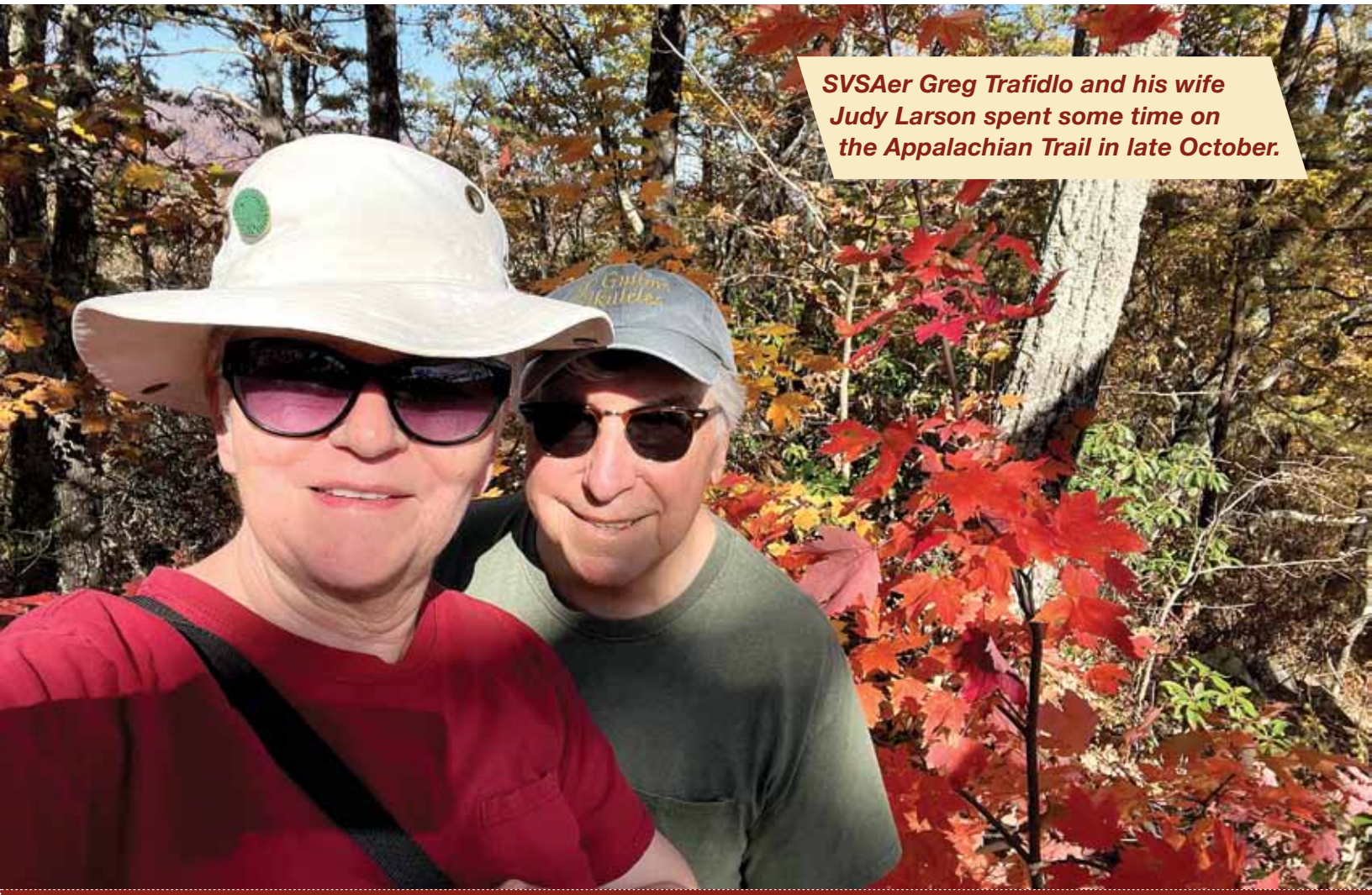
We are all reaching out to share an emotion we care about with an audience.

So here are my needed areas of improvement — maybe yours, too:

- Record what I write and annotate it, so I don't lose the song.
- Work on the music as much as the lyrics.
- Catalogue old materials for ideas.

And here are Mike's Rules:

- Let your song present one true emotion.
- Try to follow the Rule of Doubles if you can.
- Try to have one musical twist.
- Say what you want and then get the hell out of the song. And finally, it's your song — so screw 'em if they can't take a joke.



SVSAer Greg Trafidlo and his wife Judy Larson spent some time on the Appalachian Trail in late October.

SVSAer Dan Hildebrand and Adonna Lemon brought their "Dan And Adonna Show" to the Red Valley Fall Festival on October 29.

SVSA For Sale

SVSA member **Britt Mistele** is selling an **Emerald X30** carbon fiber six-string guitar. Candy-stripe Paduk top. It has an LR Baggs Anthem pick-up system and plays like a dream. No worries with heat or humidity. Comes with a Hiscox hard-shell case. Mint condition. **$3000.00.** Contact Britt at **276-728-6529.**

3rd Street Coffeehouse is selling a brand-new-in-box (never opened) Insignia™ 55" Class F50 Series QLED 4K UHD Smart Fire TV. Comes with Amazon Fire. It sells at Best Buy for $339.99 plus tax but you can get it for **$300 obo**. Call SVSA board member **Bob Schmucker** at **540-521-4507**.

The SVSA Music News functions for members in many ways. One of the most overlooked is the **FREE** classifieds section.

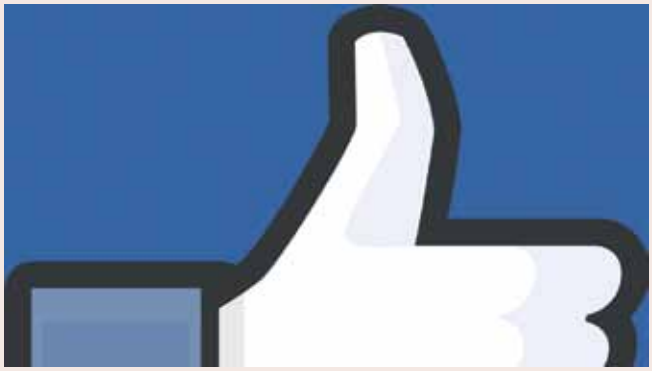
There are two restrictions: One is that all classifieds must be music-related; the other is that classified ads may be submitted by paid members only. And that's it!

Remember: An ad is much more successful when accompanied by a clear photo and a complete and detailed description. The ad must contain a working e-mail or cell number. *The SVSA Music News* will not forward ad enquiries.

Take advantage of this free service now. Classifieds will run monthly until pulled by the person who submits the ad.

Members, e-mail your classifieds to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com or amosflame@aol.com.

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION



WOULD YOU "LIKE" TO HELP THE SVSA GET MORE FOLLOWERS ON FACEBOOK?

That's all we need you to do. Just go to our Facebook page and "like" us. That's it. Your "like" will cause Facebook's algorithms to start considering the SVSA's page for shares, postings, and a greater all-around presence.

Of course, we'd also appreciate your input. You can share things to our page, comment on posts, memes, and images, and generally help make our page become more active and seen by more Facebook users.

As we said, it doesn't take much. Just pop the following URL into your Google (or whatever) search box, go to the Facebook SVSA page, and "like" us. We'd really "like" it if you'd help us out! Thanks!

https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=southwest%20virginia%20songwriters%20association

Help SVSA sustain Jefferson Center Music Lab

by Mollye Otis

SVSA is a sponsor of The Music Lab, a progressive music and production program at the Jefferson Center in Roanoke VA. We are making an annual contribution of $300 to the tuition fund that is distributed to worthy students from the greater Roanoke area who show talent and promise.

The Music Lab presents an extraordinary opportunity to about 30 students each year, offering state-of-the-art production studios, music lessons, and learning alongside professional guest artists.

Mickey Nelson, a longtime SVSA member, astute songwriter, and frequent performer saw the value in supporting the next generation of writers and co-founded The Music Lab. The SVSA created The Mickey Nelson Songwriter of the Year Award in his honor as an incentive to the Music Lab students, a way of "earning" our investment.

Jordan Harman, the Education and Outreach Coordinator for the program will guide and advise the students who will create and submit their work to an SVSA committee for adjudication at the end of the Spring Semester.

A plaque featuring Mickey Nelson is now prominently displayed in the Music Lab Production Room. Another plaque that will displayed will show the names of the winner of The Mickey Nelson Songwriter of the Year Award each year. Then, also yearly, a public presentation will recognize the winner and SVSA's part in this program.

Please consider donating $5 on behalf of the Mickey Nelson Award to help support our commitment.

There are two ways to pay, either by clicking the tab on the pull-down menu within the dues-paying page of the SVSA website or by sending a PayPal payment to **SVSAFunds@gmail.com**. You may also mail a check to PO Box 2901, Roanoke VA 24011.

We value songwriting as we value our organization and its members — and we hope you might make a small donation to help sustain this important outreach.

NEWS & NOTES FROM

3RD STREET COFFEEHOUSE

Swap meet, fund drive, more great shows

by **Bob Schmucker**

As we wind down the 2022 performance year, we've still got a lot of cool stuff to look forward to. Here's some of what's going on and what to expect:

We rescheduled another Musicians Swap Meet for Sat Nov 19 from 11:00 a.m. till 2:00 p.m. at the coffeehouse. Musicians are invited to rent a table to sell or trade their underused instruments, equipment, or music related wares (including CDs and records). Suggested donations for reserving tables are as follows:

- 6 ft tables $15 in advance and $20 the day of the swap meet.
- 4 ft tables $10 in advance and $15 the day of the swap meet.

For advance registration, please contact Bob at **manager.thirdstreet@gmail.com**.

November is our Fall Fund Drive month. It's been a bit thin on the financial side this year and, like our friends at public radio, we need to add to our bank account to keep our bills paid and to be able to provide the type quality venue we all enjoy. If you are able to contribute a few dollars it would be greatly appreciated. Any amount helps, but we have special gifts for those who can contribute at the $25, $50, or $100 and above levels. You can send a check to the 3rd Street Coffeehouse (305 Mountain Ave SW Roanoke VA 24016) or pay by PayPal to e-mail address **gramps1842@gmail.com**.

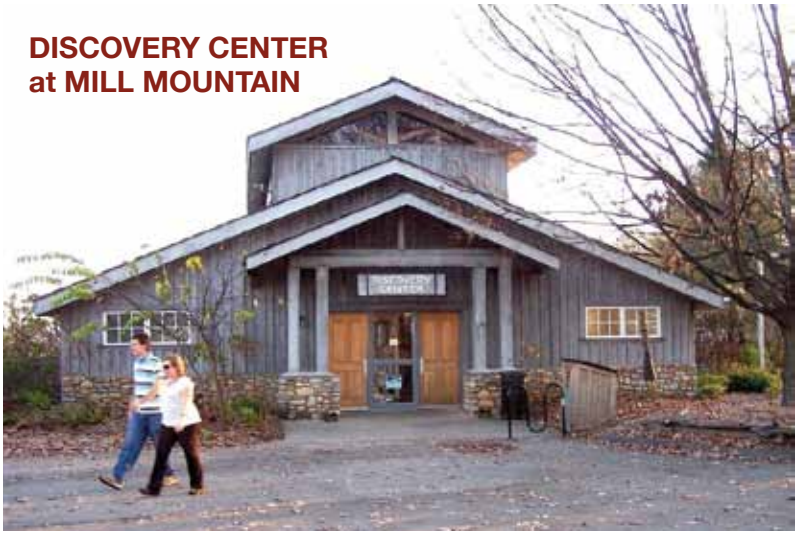
On Sun Dec 4, we'll be hosting the "Alabama Astronaut," Abe Partridge. Abe is one of the most original and unique songwriters we've seen in quite some time. Produced by our good friend Shawn Byrne and co-host of the Alabama Astronaut podcast, he's finishing up a tour and we are lucky to bring him to our stage. SVSA stalwart **Forrest Baldwin** will open at 3:00 p.m. and Abe will hit the stage at 3:30 p.m. We don't do Sunday shows too often, but when we have the opportunity to present someone truly special, you know that's what we'll do!

On Fri Jan 6, we'll be having a special "**Josh Jones Appreciation Night**" to celebrate Josh's huge contributions as our booking agent for the last six years. As Josh moves on to new projects, we want to give him a proper send-off and we hope you'll join us. More details to come.

We are currently in negotiations with Fleming Artists booking agency to bring back Canadian singer-songwriter Scott Cook and Pamela Mae at the end of April for a show and possibly a songwriting seminar, mostly likely another Sunday show. Scott and Pamela put on a truly memorable show on our stage about a year ago. If you were there, I'm sure you'll want to see them again. If not, you *have* to see them Stay tuned for details!

See 3rd Street, page 25

DISCOVERY CENTER at MILL MOUNTAIN



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We are finalizing a partnership with the Roanoke City Parks and Recreation Department which will host our "Guitars Under The Star" guitar pulls at the Discovery Center atop Mill Mountain for the winter months. This partnership is a great opportunity to reach more people and the folks at the Parks and Recreation Department are thrilled to have live music as an attraction during the cooler months.

We still have two available volunteer opportunities on our staff. The first position is "Audio-Video Wizard" to augment our audio-video team for expanded broadcasts, like Season 3 of Tuesday Tunes for Feeding Southwest Virginia. You can see the complete job description at **https://www.facebook.com/jobs/job-opening/3218919171756790/?source=job_ats**. The other position that we are trying to fill is "Social Media and Promotions Wizard." The complete job description can be found at **https://www.facebook.com/jobs/job-opening/400056591981789/?source=job_ats**.

We hope everyone has a safe and healthy holiday season and that we all continue to create awesome new music!

As for the rest of our Fridays, here is the schedule (subject to last minute changes):

Date	Feature	Opening
11/18/22	Eric Sommer	Art Katz
11/25/22	Judy Paster	Bob Schmucker
12/2/22	The Paninis	The Dan and Adonna Show
12/4/22	Special Sunday Show: Abe Partridge (AKA the Alabama Astronaut)	
12/9/22	Andrew Kasab	Still Frisky
12/16/22	SVSA Showcase (no opener)	
1/6/23	Josh Jones Appreciation Night	

SVSAer Steve Clark performs at an open mic at the Rivermont Bierhaus in Lynchburg VA back in June 2022.

The ceiling at 3rd Street Coffeehouse in Roanoke VA.

Above, a swarm of SVSA members performed original music for three hours at the Americana Afternoons Songwriters Showcase held on June 11 at the Floyd Country Store in Floyd VA. From left, Larry Sakayama, Kathy Acosta, Britt Mistele, Mike Pearrell, Mike Franke, and David Simpkins. (Photo by Mollye Otis.)

Coming back soon

LOCAL, REGIONAL OPEN MICS

Many local and regional open mics shut down due to coronavirus concerns.

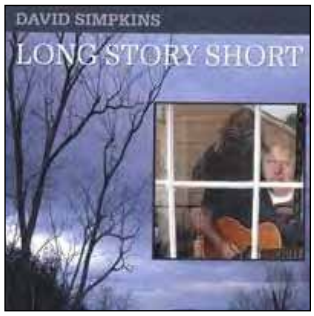
The good news is that many of those same venues (and new ones as well) are finally re-opening. Keep an eye out for the return of our comprehensive Local & Regional Open Mic listings. It'll be sooner than later!

www.svsasongs.com

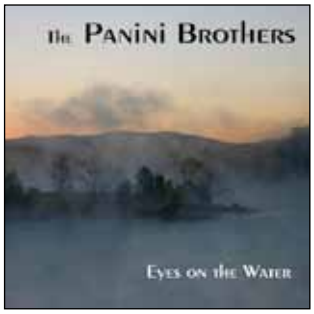
SVSA Members' Recordings

what's done is done

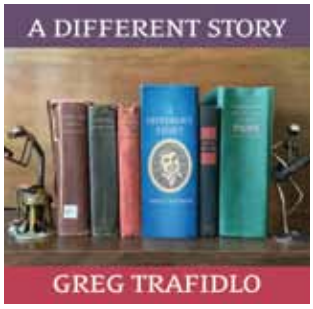
marc with a "c"



long story short



eyes on the water



a different story

the crawlspace tapes

carved in song

folk singular

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.

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.

The Panini Brothers

EYES ON THE WATER — Debut CD from a group comprised of SVSA members Larry Sakayama and Mike DeGiorgi as well as Chip Conway, Mark Earnhardt, and Scott Thomas. Jazzy, bluesey, eclectic, original tunes.

Greg Trafidlo

A DIFFERENT STORY — An eclectic combination of originals and covers featuring old friends and new, competently and professionally recorded and performed. And, as always, straight from the heart.

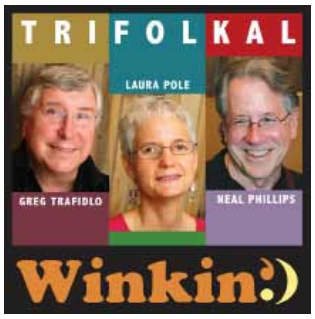
THE CRAWLSPACE TAPES — Greg's most joyful CD is a compilation of all his funny and goofy stuff. Tom Paxton says, "Loosen up, sourpusses. Greg is on the loose again!"

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

FOLK SINGULAR— 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.

SVSA Members' Recordings

silver



winkin'

pacing the moon

cup of contradictions

dimestore detective

dog joggin'

songwriter sessions

tales from the fire pit

Trifolkal

SILVER — The trio celebrates 25 years together with a "fan favorite" collection of covers from the Beach Boys to Tom Paxton.

WINKIN' — This top-notch release from that "trio fiercely dedicated to fun" tempers the fun with poignancy and heart.

Josh Jones

PACING THE MOON — Thirteen of the strongest songs Josh has written. For lyrics, short audio clips and additional information, please visit www.jonesgroupmusic.com.

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.

Steve Clark

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

The Entwined

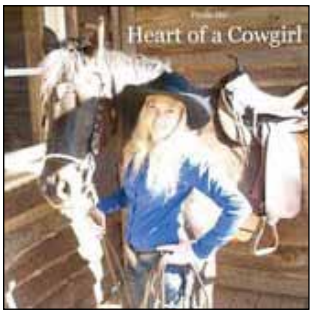
SONGWRITER SESSIONS — The CD was released at Francis Ford Coppola's Turtle Inn Resort in Belize in 2018. It's a mix of 13 songs written by Dan Hildebrand ranging from real-life ballads to feel-good ditties. Recorded at Blackwater Studios. Percussion and harmony by Adonna Lemon.

TALES FROM THE FIRE PIT — The most popular CD in Placenia, Belize for one week in 2018, the latest from the Entwined was recorded at Bad Monkey's music studio, located at the couple's home in VA, and features 10 original works.

SVSA Members' Recordings

tales from the road

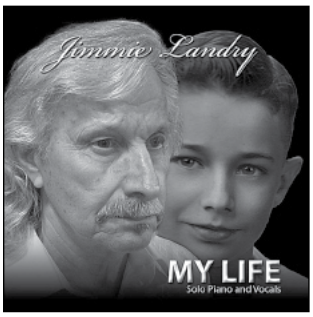
eastern western cowgirl



from the heart of a cowgirl

horsegirl poet

lovin' the west



my life

gumbo

style

Aspen Black

TALES FROM THE ROAD — 15 original poems with musical backup. Every poem has a tie to a road, although the road is never the subject. Either the road runs through it, shows up in a fleeting moment, or the whole story was inspired by, or witnessed "on the road."

EASTERN WESTERN COWGIRL — Eight original Contemporary Western songs. Available at CDBaby.com/aspenblack7.

FROM THE HEART OF A COWGIRL — Original spoken word poems adhering to the Western Music Association guidelines for the cowboy poetry genre. Available at CDBaby.

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

LOVIN' THE WEST — This is the latest CD released by Western Music Association singer/songwriter – and SVSA member – Aspen Black. It features 10 original selections, seven of which are road-tested favorites.

Jimmie Landry

MY LIFE — Jimmie sings stories about his friends, family, and life on the road. A jazzy-blues New Orleans-style piano and vocals paint a picture of 60 years in music.

GUMBO — Hot and spicy down-home jazz, funk, and soul that goes down easy. Ten originals and three covers.

STYLE — A blend of standards and one original in a variety of grooves like straight-ahead swing, samba, jazz, waltz, and funky second-line blues.

"When communicating, 'know your audience' easily becomes 'pander to your audience.'"

~ Morgan Housel

SVSA Members' Recordings

electric bill

acoustic bill

songs for veterans & patriots

eyes on the horizon

kaleidoscope

touch the sky

Bill Stanton

ELECTRIC BILL — Ten original songs of Bill's lyrics and melodies accompanied by former bandmates on electric instruments and vocal harmonies originally recorded in the 1980s.

ACOUSTIC BILL — Ten original songs with lyrics and melodies by Bill accompanied by former bandmates on acoustic instruments and vocal harmonies recorded from the early 1970s through 2000.

Jerry Gilmore

SONGS FOR VETERANS & PATRIOTS — covers topics concerning Vietnam veterans, POW/MIA warriors, the United States flag, military holidays, and the Medal Of Honor. The original compositions are performed in country, bluegrass, and southern rock styles. Available from CDBaby.

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.

TOUCH THE SKY — Swinging acoustic blues and jazz from Barb Martin and Mac Walter.

SVSA DUES ARE DUE
Pay $35 on-line on our web site
or mail a check / money order to
PO Box 2901, Roanoke VA 24011

www.svsasongs.com

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 **amosflame@aol.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. Email articles and information to the Editor, David Simpkins, at amosflame@aol.com.

SVSA is a non-profit organization.

2022 SVSA Board Members:

Mike Pearrell – President
Mike Franke – Vice President
Celie Holmes – Treasurer
Mollye Otis – Secretary
David Simpkins – At-Large Board Member and Newsletter Editor
Larry Helms – At-Large Board Member

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION

Southwest Virginia Songwriters Association
101 Church Ave SW
PO Box 2901
Roanoke VA 24011

www.svsasongs.com

THE SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION

WHO WE ARE

The Southwest Virginia Songwriters Association (SVSA), founded in 1981, comprises approximately 40 songwriters from diverse musical backgrounds who share the love of songwriting and interest in developing our craft. Our core mission is to meet monthly, listen to fellow writers' songs, and share feedback with one another in a supportive, encouraging, and engaging process.

The SVSA also offers workshops, social events, and performance opportunities for its members, along with a newsletter, web site, and a Facebook page that focus on members' creative engagement and outreach to Roanoke and the region.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this vibrant songwriting community, we invite you to audit two of our monthly meetings and then decide if you'd like to join the association. Once you've paid yearly dues, you can submit songs and contribute to the feedback sessions, plus participate in all our activities.

The greatest joy we have as a group is seeing writers growing and reaching their potential because of the work we do together. If you would like be a part of this songwriting community, please contact us at **info@svsasongs.com**

A BIT ABOUT OUR ASSOCIATION

We have among us people who range from seasoned professional and semi-professional performers to those have never been in front of an audience. Some of our members have many albums to their credit, while some have never set foot in a studio or on a stage.

Several members have sold songs to famous artists or have film and TV placements. Some play multiple instruments, and most play guitar or piano/keyboard but there are also non-instrumentalist lyricists in the mix. Some are singers, some non-singers, some with extensive music education, many with credits in the school of life experience who play by ear. There are writers who focus more on melody and harmony, and others who focus more on lyrics. Some writers are skilled producers/arrangers with a depth of technical know-how.

Our membership includes people of all ages representing a broad range of musical influences including folk, Americana, blues, gospel, rock, jazz, zydeco, pop, contemporary, country, bluegrass, Celtic, and theatre/cabaret. With this mix of diverse styles, interests, and skills, we share a rich knowledge base and learn through the exchange of expertise from multiple perspectives.

OUR METHOD

Unless otherwise indicated, The SVSA meets in the L.L. Rice Room at the Jefferson Center in Roanoke VA every fourth Wednesday of the month (with holiday exceptions). The doors open at 7:00 p.m. for meet, greet, and catch-up time. At 7:30, we may have business to discuss, then perhaps a brief period of activities such as writing exercises, mini-workshop presentations, videos, or other creative activities. Songs are then presented for listening and feedback sessions. On any given night, we discuss the songs in a robust, healthy exchange of comments and ideas. The meeting ends when all the songs have been presented or we close at 10:00 p.m.

Members and guests are required to submit their Covid vaccine record at check in, or, alternatively, email a photo of your card to: **mollyeotis@gmail.com**

Members may receive written feedback from other members in addition to the verbal feedback at live or virtual sessions.

Members are coached to be honest, thoughtful, and supportive of one another and respectful of the work. Our experience has been that our songs invariably improve after going through the feedback process.

If you would like to hang out with this welcoming group of songwriters, we would love to meet you! You are invited to audit two monthly meetings and then, should you decide to join, pay yearly dues of $35. Once a member, you may submit songs for consideration in our feedback sessions and will be eligible to participate in events and benefits of membership.