

**WoodSongs** began in a small, humble recording studio behind a little cafe in Lexington, Kentucky.

Aside from Michael and the artists who appeared on the show, about 18 folks could squeeze into the cramped studio room, sitting on plastic chairs or pillows on the floor. We served home-made cookies and apple cider to entice our friends to show up for the Monday tapings.

The idea was simple: to create a worldwide stage that would genuinely celebrate the passion and spirit of grassroots music and art. We wanted to find that massive, global audience that didn't care "what bin you're in" or what manager you had or whether or not you were signed to a major label.

Just that you are good.  
You believe in your own music.  
You are unique and different.

**WOODSONGS**



And so, WoodSongs was born on a spring afternoon,

We had one college radio station airing the show, a couple dozen friends packed into the hot studio ... and the hope that, someday, maybe a second radio station might air our show ...

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Our audience at the very first WoodSongs taping in 1999



Michael kicks off the first show taping at Planet III Studios



The first artist on WoodSongs was Rob McNurlin from Ashland, KY



Ben Sollee's very first day on the show with Sierra Hull



Hippy Chick's first time on the WoodSongs stage



Another shot of our little audience on WoodSongs' very first day



Our first day at the historic Kentucky Theater



Amy and Greg fire up our first webcast with Insight



Dear Friends,

Starting a new project in the music business is much like getting married with a prenuptial agreement - you prepare for its inevitable demise before you even start. Everything you do - whether it is a tour, an album, a new song or even a book - is engaged with the highest of hopes and expectations. But deep inside you know full well that it probably won't work.

Every once in a while, however, something does work. The stars line up and the moon's gravitational field is balanced just so and the cosmos releases its energy at just the perfect time and all of a sudden, for no apparent reason, things flat out happen.

That can be a frightening experience for a musician.

It not only leaves us dazed and confused but also robs us of anything to whine about.

And so it is with one of my musical children, a little radio show that started as a song, morphed into an album, turned into a book and then a worldwide, live-audience weekly radio broadcast that airs, as of this writing, to millions of people on over 491 radio stations in 32 countries, plus XM Satellite Radio and Public Television stations nationwide.

And now we've reached this amazing milestone ... our 500th broadcast. There are so many folks to thank, too. Kevin "Darth Fader" Johnson offered his recording studio for the broadcasts in the early years and has remained our Chief Engineer since day one. Bryan "Flash" Klausing was with us in the early days, and has become a first class stage manager. Ben Sollee came to us as a skinny 17 year old kid wanting to play, and now he has his own record deal and touring non stop with the likes of Bela Fleck and others. And our supportive hometown of Lexington.

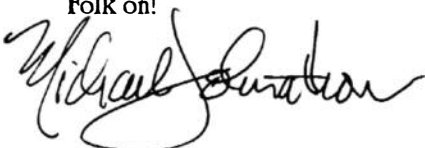
I guess what is most important for you to know is that the incredible WoodSongs Crew are all volunteers. They come in all year to set up cables, hang the WoodSongs sign, set lights and run cameras. And then when the show is done, they take it all down and put it away.

Forty four shows a year ... amazing.

And the artists who appear on the show are volunteers as well. They come to meet the audience and introduce them to their new music. It is the purest form of appreciation and love for art that I have ever seen.

Anyway, thank you for sharing this celebration of music with us. Enjoy the show!

Folk on!



folksinger - tree hugger  
michael@woodsongs.com



photos by Dr. Bob DeMattina



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Martin is the official guitar of the WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour

# The Incredible Story of the **WOODSONGS** Old-Time Radio Hour

*(as told from the book WoodSongs II)*

## In the beginning ...

The *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour* was born from the heartache of a fellow artist. A very dear friend of mine from Ireland was a poet and songwriter. He had a pleasant little career. He made a meager but honest living performing his songs and reading his poetry in coffeehouses, schools, libraries and pubs across Ireland and Europe. His songs were simple working class stories with basic three chord melodies. His poems were rhymes of love and loss. He had his guitar and his dreams and the small audiences that he found as he travelled from town to town.

He had no book deal, no record deal. So he decided one fateful day to take matters into his own hand and produce his own album and book of poetry. He also typed and printed a small booklet of his poetry at a local copy center and stapled them together himself. He placed his dreams into padded envelopes, licked them shut and mailed his stuff to the music critics.

And hoped.

And waited.

One of them landed on the desk of his hometown newspaper near Cork, Ireland. For some reason, this local music critic just didn't like my friend's work. I have found music critics often tend to be very brutal to the hometown artists. There are exceptions . . . but the critic in Cork was not. He wrote a scathing, cruel review of my friend's poetry and music.

At four in the morning while I was on the road in Iowa he tracked me down, called me and poured out his anguish over the trans-Atlantic phone line. Through tears he read the review to me and I was left speechless. What on earth can a poet do to warrant such a terse response? If the critic didn't like his stuff that's fine, he's entitled to his opinion. But to print a veritable warning to the public to stay clear of his ". . . *drivel and poetic pap*" and then to actually print the review in his hometown paper? Good god, man, just send him a note and say "you suck" and leave it at that. Please don't humiliate the poor guy in front of his family and friends.

The public assassination of his little career was so complete that he decided to do something that only an artist who has reached the very limit of his energy and heart would ever do, he quit.

After the phone call I sat alone in the dark hotel room so very sad for my friend. I picked up my guitar and wrote him a song. The lyrics simply praised him for trying, for sticking it out as



long as he did. He didn't deserve to be hammered publicly like he was and I certainly understood the pain he felt. But I also felt that by quitting he was allowing this talentless, no-name judgmental critic to win. I called the song "Ballad of a Poet" and the chorus had the refrain ". . . *teach the whole world to hear your new song.*" I made a tape of the gift and mailed it off with a card to my friend and hoped for the best. Within weeks of getting my tune he did in fact quit his music and began working as an Operations Quality Control Manager at a fried chicken restaurant in England.

So much for the power of a song, I thought.

*"Pay no attention to what the critics say; for no statue has ever been erected to honor a critic"*

**JEAN SIBELIUS**  
FINNISH COMPOSER

him in a cluttered pallet of disorganization that only Homer could figure out. Rough sawn wood boards of mahogany and walnut, pine and oak lean against the walls awaiting his miraculous touch that will transform them from dormant slices of trees into living musical instruments.

The aroma of wood chips and linseed oil wafts through the workshop and transports you into an early Americana dream when every home at every farmhouse in the country had a little shop just like this.

## The Name, the Song ...

And somewhere in the conversation, amidst the wood chips and the musical instruments and linseed oil, a new word popped into my head, "*WoodSong.*"

The phrase somehow captured the feeling of music and wood that I was seeing before me. It accelerated the idea of acoustic songs and folk music with the *Mother Earth News* lifestyle that I lived and Homer embodied. I liked the word and left Homer's workshop that day determined to use it in a song. I recall driving down the road and writing the word on the back of an envelope so I wouldn't forget it. I envisioned a beautiful ballad with lyrical imagery of nature, songs and minstrels with the rich finger picking accompaniment of my guitar.

A few days later I tried writing the song and made a sad discovery: nothing rhymes with the darn thing. The only thing I came up that rhymes with WoodSong was "*footlong*" but that sounds like I'm singing about a hot dog.

So I put it on the creative shelf and waited for sweet mother inspiration to help me out. A few months later it was time for me to record my next album and I began to review my binder of

A couple of months later I was off the road and back home in Kentucky. On a sunny spring morning I found myself in the basement workshop of another friend, Homer Ledford. He made banjos, mandolins, fiddles and dulcimers in his tiny home workshop in Winchester.

Homer stood in front of his workbench in his work pants and work shirt. His carving knives and saws and sanders and other tools were placed around



Homer Ledford in his Winchester workshop



songs to see what might be worth using. One of the songs was “*Ballad of a Poet*.” I played the song a few times, settled into the heart of the tune and started to like it more. I performed it in concert a couple of times and it seemed to flow well.

Then, as I stared at the lyric sheet, it hit me. I changed the tag line of the chorus to include that evasive new word I’ve been seeking a home for. The tag line was changed to “... *teach the whole world to hear a WoodSong*” and my song expanded from just a letter to my friend into a tribute to all struggling artists everywhere. The poetry now tipped its lyrical hat to every poet, songwriter, painter, dancer and artist that ever struggled to keep their work and passions alive. *WoodSongs* transported from a song for one artist into a tune for every artist. The word turned the lyrics into something much more universal than just a personal message to my friend.

So, I made the song the foundation for the album, the cornerstone of my CD that would be a musical tribute to obscure grassroots music, artists and songs. I got my friends Jean Ritchie and JD Crowe to help me turn *Shady Grove*, a popular old-time mountain song about an over possessive stalker, into an aggressive acoustic rock anthem. A major contribution to the album was made by Homer Ledford himself who played his handmade mandolin.

# WoodSongs

Words & Music Michael Johnathon

From the CD *WoodSongs* • Performed in the key of D

**VERSE**

You ain't the one — I re-mem-ber Some-thing hap-pened to  
 you on the road, All your pas-sions have turned in - to  
 ang-er Now it fol-lows wher - ev - er you go.

**CHORUS**

Life ain't for cow-ards and law - yers Dreams don't be -  
 long to the rich Life is a song that's worth sing - ing  
 (inst.) So pick up your songs and move  
 on, Teach the whole world to hear a wood - song.

Guitar chords: D, D/C#, Bm, G, A7, D, D/C#, Bm, G, A7, D, G, A7, D, G, D, A7, Bm, G, A7, D.

I included old-timey songs like *Over the Mountain*, an old Uncle Dave Macon tune. The song that was the most fun to record was the tune I wrote for Homer's wife, Colista. "*Colista's Jam*" is a sexy, tongue-in-cheek bluegrass song that, little did I know at the time, would become a major part of the growth of *WoodSongs* as it travelled around the world.

The months went by and the album was released and, sure enough, greeted by the thunderous applause of one hand clapping. As expected, it was nothing more than another folk album in a world full of folksingers releasing folk albums to volunteer folk DJs who already had 100 folk albums on their desk they haven't had time to listen to no less play on their two hour, once-a-week folk show on a little college radio station run by a program director who can't stand folk music.

Alrighty, then. I did what every artist with their back against the wall and no money in their pocket does - I hit the road. Here's a little known fact to most audience members: the overwhelming majority of the CDs an artist sells to the public are purchased after a concert and not in the record stores. That is why artists tour so much.

In my case I got lucky and with the help of an agent friend in New York, landed the opening slot on the summer Judy Collins tour. We played big outdoor amphitheatres like Ravinia in Chicago, Wolf Trapp in Virginia, SPAC in upstate New York and other places. It's an amazing thing to stand on stage at 8:30 in the evening as the sun goes down beyond the horizon in front of a sea of 12,000 BMW driving yuppies sitting on blankets atop the grass with bottles of wine and cheese-dip heated by little sterno cans. It looks like you're performing to a Milky Way of American Express cardholders.

Every night I would go onstage and play my new songs from my new album, tell the stories that went with each one and end my set with *WoodSongs*. After the concert, the very shy Judy Collins would leave the stage and immediately return to her hotel room, leaving the long haired unknown folksinger to hang out for the back stage meet-and-greet (this is where the local promoter would bring the show sponsors, mayor and whomever to schmooze with the artist.)

Of course they were all looking for the very demure Miss Judy and all they got was me. I had fun, and often felt like Arlo on the Group W bench, just talking and smiling and having a great time that couldn't be beat . . . not really knowing why I was there or what to say.

And then *he* showed up.

## The WoodSongs book ...

A short, bald headed guy in his fifties wearing jeans, a suit jacket and a tweed vest came back stage after the concert in Chicago. Now, usually when people meet you after a concert they want your autograph on the CD they just bought, or they want to know what kind of guitar you play, maybe even the name of one of the songs you sang. Most of the people on this particular tour would ask me "Where's Judy, dude?" Not this guy. He marches up, sticks his hand out and bellows,

*"Michael Johnathon, you have mah-vellus sentence structure!"*

Uumm, thanks? says I. It turns out the guy is a small book publisher and he has this great idea. Why not take all those stories I tell on stage, put them in a book, package the book with



Uncle Dave Macon



the CD and let's all get rich? Sounds great except for one thing - I wasn't exactly in the mood for another well intentioned project at the moment.

So, me and my "mah-vellus sentence structure" left Chicago, finished the tour, went home and tried to figure out what to do next. And for weeks I kept thinking about that fellow's idea about writing that book. I ain't never wrote no book before. Could I do it? Heck, what can be so hard about writing a book?

Well, *plenty*.

I learned quickly that telling a story with your big mouth is one thing ... telling the same story while typing with two index fingers is another. So I started writing. First by hand on yellow legal pads which I then typed into a computer ... then to just typing them into a computer after I realized I was doing twice the work.

And I wrote and I wrote and I wrote. I wrote in hotels and Motel 6's across the country, on airplanes and in the backseats of cars, on Jean Ritchie's log cabin porch and in my living room. I even wrote backstage before shows. I was committed and I was gonna pull this off.

And you know what? Me, my two index fingers and my mah-vellus sentence structure wrote a 170 page book, over 55,000 words in just two months time. My friends helped edit the thing (my sentence structure ain't all that mah-vellus it seems). I collected pictures and drawings to illustrate the stories. I even designed and laid out the book myself, created the cover art and everything. Pete Seeger and Don McLean wrote liner notes for the jacket, and soon enough I was done.

Wow, last year I didn't know what an author was, now all of a sudden I *are* one. An *author*. My career reeked with unbridled potential and one more prenuptial agreement in the wings. All I needed in a world of six billion people was about 30,000 fans and I'd be all set.

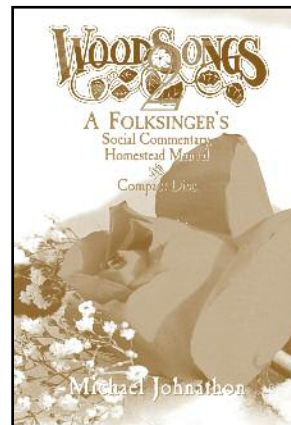
We put together a 10-month tour of concerts in bookstores nationwide to introduce the *WoodSongs Book & CD Gift Set* to the public. I played 186 concerts at every Barnes & Noble, Borders, Books-A-Million, WalMart and mom and pop bookstore we could get into. Sometimes the store would be packed, other times I would play to six or seven people. But I showed up, I was on time, did the gig and guess what? We sold a bunch of these suckers and slowly earned back the money we invested.

Lo and behold things actually started happening. The *WoodSongs* CD eventually charted on the Americana music chart, and I had a pretty good time with it all. And after a while the project fulfilled its life and began to settle into the dormant obscurity I expected. I was tired, I was happy and was ready to rest for a while.

Or so I thought.

## The birth of the WoodSongs Radio idea ...

One autumn Saturday afternoon I was on the road and scanning for a radio station to listen to. Radio has always been interesting to me. If you read my first book then you know how I left New York after high school and worked for a while as a DJ along the Mexican border in Laredo, Tx. As a songwriter, I need the support of radio desperately. In my world, commercial radio stations won't play your songs if you don't have the marketing muscle of a major record label behind you. Even then, there's no guarantee you will have a hit.



Cover of volume two of the WoodSongs book series

I was a big fan of legacy radio shows like the *Louisiana Hayride*, the *Renfro Valley Barn Dance* and the *Grand Ole Opry*. These were the shows that genuinely loved the music, the audience, and the artists. Those were the shows that introduced the world to unknowns like Bill Monroe, Uncle Dave Macon, Hank Williams and a skinny singer from Memphis named Elvis Presley.

I often scanned the airwaves looking for a left-side-of-the-dial station to listen to. On this particular Saturday afternoon I came upon a somewhat familiar voice, one that I had heard before but never really paid much attention to. It was Garrison Keillor's radio show, *A Prairie Home Companion*.

"Too much talking," says I. But this time I really listened and focused on what he was doing. You know what? It was fun. And funny.

I loved hearing the audience, they seemed to be as much a part of the show as Garrison's stories were. And the music was vibrant and rich and acoustic. I liked it. In many ways, Garrison had a real *folk* show.

As I drove I began to imagine what it would be like to merge what I learned as a DJ to what I've learned as a performing songwriter with what I just heard Garrison do on the radio.

My friend Pete Seeger tried a similar idea in the 1950's, a TV show called *Rainbow Quest*. He would sit around a picnic table and talk and sing with grassroots folk artists like Doc Watson or Roscoe Holcolm. But the whole thing seemed like a lot of work, so I let it go and forgot about it.

And then, as fate would have it, a few weeks later a friend of mine calls up and says that he is part of a company starting a new public radio network and would I be interested in having one hour a week of radio time for my own show and if I did what would I do with it?

Coincidence? I think not.

But for some reason I turned the offer down. I guess in my mind I pictured myself behind a desk yapping about dusty folk stories, interviewing Tom Paxton on the phone and playing old Weaver's records. Heck, I'm the only person on planet earth that would probably tune in to something like that, anyway. How could I possibly find the time for it?

*Nope*, says I ... *Thanks but I'll pass*.



The Legendary Louisiana Hayride



John Laird, Lilly May Ledford and the cast of the Renfro Valley Barn Dance



Bill Monroe on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry



Garrison Keillor on A Prairie Home Companion



Pete Seeger and Roscoe on the Rainbow Quest TV show

A few weeks go by.

*Wait a minute*, I think. Global satellite radio time ... hundreds of thousands of potential listeners each week ... a chance to reintroduce folk music to an entire generation that knows virtually nothing about it?

And *Mr. Dim-wit Banjo Player* said No???

Was I, crazy? I was determined to re-think this one.

Here was my thought process: Folk music is indeed the grandest art form of music because it is the mother that gave birth to nearly everything we listen to; blues, bluegrass, rock, country, spoken word and even jazz, all come from folk traditions. That being true, it was logical to me that folk music should have the biggest audience on the planet, bigger than rock and country combined.

And what, exactly, is folk music?

Lot's of people have arguments and discussions about this which are, frankly, boring. Mainly because they miss the point. When trying to understand folk they get lost in a discussion of the music and trying to define the sound. Folk is not the *music* . . . it's the *audience*. You my friends, are the main ingredient of what makes folk a wonderful artform. Without you the concept is inert. In folk music the audience comes *first*, the song *second*, the artist *last*.

Another point of truth: there are no stars in folk music. *The star system has no place in the folk process because it denies the right of the audience to remain first*. Sure, today there are exceptions mainly due to marketing budgets and media sources. It's a bit different now, to be sure. Long ago the music was passed on person to person, not via the media. Songs were handed down from generation to generation and passed from town to town.

In other words, folk music was played and passed along by fellow members of its own audience. My show had to be in front of a live audience. Remember, there are no "stars" in folk music which is best performed by talented members of its own audience. Don't believe me? Go to any folk or bluegrass festival. The best music, the real music is played in the parking lots and campgrounds - not on the stage. My radio show would have to have a live audience. I would be

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WOODSONGS OLD TIME RADIO HOUR





anti-blue-haired-folk-nazi ... keep a quick tempo ... sound happy. I would avoid the slow, cerebral tones of old world public radio or the crass commercialism of corporate radio. We would have *fun* on the air. In my imagination, I could actually hear hundreds of people calling out the name of the show at the end of the broadcast.

But how on earth did I expect to actually pull this off? We had no money, no resources ... nuttin. If I presented a business plan of my show to investors they would have laughed me out of their office.

So, I gathered together a small, rag tag group of volunteers in a tiny studio and secured one nearby college radio station willing to air this new radio show dedicated to celebrating brilliant but unknown artists ... artists like my embattled friend in Ireland ...

... and I called the show *WoodSongs*.

*“Folk music is like a grand, churning ocean ... and we invite the audience to board our good ship WoodSongs as we explore and travel this ocean like Vikings, discovering new and unknown waters ...”*

## Creating the WoodSongs broadcast ....

The name would be the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour*, to be exact. I wanted a high tech, fast paced contemporary broadcast that would sit on the fringes of great traditions of past radio shows but still pave the way of its own future.

I had to be completely committed to this idea. I had to be willing to extend myself and fulfill every promise I made, every obligation I took on. I had to be zealous about this and see it through to its end. The first decision I had to make was when to do the production. I picked the best possible day of the week to do a show like this - Monday, downtown during dinner time and rush hour. Before you think I'm crazy, you'll see why I picked Monday in a few paragraphs.

The next thing I did was the most important decision of all. The first person I called and pitched the concept to was my good friend Kevin Johnson. Kevin, or *Darth Fader* (as in the Faders on a mixing board) as I refer to him on the air, is simply the best audio engineer in the state. He also has a daring sense of adventure and I hoped he would jump on this.

Well, jump he did. We met for coffee one day and I told him of my Monday show idea. Since Monday's are usually a slow business day for everyone, Kevin offered the use of his recording studio as a place to tape the production.



Kevin “Darth Fader” Johnson

And such was the birth of the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour*, the most adventurous, fast paced grassroots music show on planet earth. I liked the name of the show. We had the engineer and place to record the program. We had a crew to pull it all together. We even had a little college station willing to air it.

Now all we needed were artists to perform ... that would be the easy part. You see, Lexington sits in the center of a six hour media circle that has 32 million people in it. We are at the crossroads of several main interstates, less than four hours from Nashville, Knoxville, Louisville, Indianapolis, Asheville, Cincinnati, Columbus, Chattanooga and Charleston. Extend the circle to six hours and you embrace cities like Chicago, Memphis, Cleveland, St. Louis and many more. We are also the gateway city to the Appalachian mountains. Artists of many skills, statures and genres pass our way every day.

But on Mondays, my friends, Mondays are when most artists have *nothing to do*. Musicians don't perform on Mondays. Often times they are on the road and stuck in a hotel on Mondays waiting for the next gig. Or they are on the road heading home after performing Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On Mondays most musicians would give their right arm to perform in front of a live audience and on radio at the same time. I wanted to feature two artists per broadcast. I sent emails to my musician friends describing what I was doing, and, lo and behold, I had the first eight weeks of the show booked solid in less than 24 hours.

OK, what next?

Now we needed the Audience.

Ahhhh, this was the hard part. So it seemed. To make the schedule work best for me, Kevin and the artists we committed to tape the show every Monday evening. *Monday??* We actually expected people to attend a radio show on Mondays, 7PM, downtown during rush hour at dinner time to see artists no one ever heard of sing songs nobody knows?

And we expected an audience for this?

How? Free tickets and crunchy homemade *WoodSongs cookies*.

Why cookies? First of all we were taping the shows Monday at dinner time. Second, I figured if we were going to be starting a big dream on a penny budget, we might as well be as old-timey as we could get. I came up with a cookie recipe that I liked. My wife at the time, the best cook on planet earth, agreed to bake homemade cookies, brownies and serve cold apple cider in cute little cups (*not her . . . the apple cider*) for the whole audience at every show.

We needed all the bribery we could get. A reporter for the Associated Press described Kevin's small studio facility as "*. . . ramshackle*" and with good reason: it was a converted

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*Try making the WoodSongs cookie that helped launch the radio show!*



## Homemade Walnut & Raisin Cookies

As the live-audience WoodSongs broadcast became a reality, the one thing that kept rolling around in my head was the idea of this cookie. I could picture the audience coming to the show and enjoying this snack while listening to great music. So, I came up with a pretty good recipe I included in my book ... and an amazing number of you folks would come to my concerts with cookies, home baked and still warm on the plate. Being the kind-hearted and friendly fellow I am, we would often sit down together and share ourselves a cookie. Or two. Or three.

Or four.

Soon enough I realized that I needed me a cookie that will keep my jeans less tight and my body less fat. So, here is a kitchen-tested, children approved and caloric-revised recipe for you to try out. The *WoodSongs* cookie is a tasty, natural, whole house treat. Crunchy and real easy to bake!

2 cups organic flour  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1/4 tsp ginger  
1 tsp baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 1/2 cups lg walnut pieces  
1/2 lb real butter, softened  
2 large brown eggs

1/3 cup of honey  
1/2 cup white sugar  
1 tbsp vanilla extract  
1 tbsp of natural peanut butter

1 cup raisins  
2 cups oats  
1 tbsp cinnamon  
*(don't you dare use Skippy)*

OK, pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees and get yourself some bowls and a mixer. With the mixer beat together the butter, eggs, vanilla, honey, sugar and peanut butter until creamy. Then, in a separate bowl, mix together by hand the flour, salt, ginger, baking soda and cinnamon. Add that mixture to the batter. Stir well by hand. Finally, add the other stuff and mix well with a wooden spoon.



Now, take a shiny, light colored baking tin (if you only have a dark pan use aluminum foil, dull side up) and grease it well with Crisco. If you don't, you'll end up with *WoodSongs Crumbs* when you try to get them off. Drop a spoonful of dough for each medium sized cookie.

Bake the cookies until they are golden brown at 350 degrees for 12 minutes. Let them set in the pan for another 5 minutes, then place on a plate or wire cookie rack and let them cool before you serve them. This recipe will make about 24-30 cookies, depending on size. Personally, I like my cookies crunchy around the edges and a bit moist at the center. For crunchy, let them cool in the 'fridge. For softer, store them at room temperature.

*Serving suggestions:* Baked best in October after chopping firewood while wearing jeans and an old flannel shirt. If you have children, give your kids a baking assignment and help them be part of the process. But you got no kids? *Weeeeelllll* . . . you and your sweetheart should sit down together in front of a warm fireplace after supper with a few of these cookies and a goblet of two year old Merlot wine. If you do as I say you can 'spect some extra kids to start joining the family about nine months after making these WoodSongs cookies.



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*Sullivan*

and More...

outbuilding next to a garage behind an old cafe. It had worn out carpet and plywood walls. The equipment was first class as was the man running it was too, but it simply didn't look like much. The most it could hold after setting up for the crew and artist performance area was about 18 folding chairs. Even then it would prove to be a struggle to fill it. The first couple months we only averaged about 12 audience members. I vividly recall my heart in my throat when we would anxiously eye the door hoping someone would walk in, desperately in fear of the thunderous sound of one hand clapping.

And what made all of this possible? What was the glue that bonded the idea, the music, the artists, the studio and the audience all together into a strong tapestry that ended up broadcasting all over the world?

## The amazing all-volunteer WoodSongs Crew ...

That's right. As in the beginning until this very day, nobody associated with the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour* gets paid a penny for all their hard work and effort. I work for free. Kevin works for free. The artists don't get paid a thing, no matter if they come from New Zealand or New York, Austin or Australia.

We decided from the start that WoodSongs would be an act of *passion*, not *payment*. I have learned that people will work harder and be more loyal when motivated from the heart than from their wallet, and such is the case with this amazing crew. I will confidently put their skills, loyalty, love for music and appreciation for the artists up against any crew at any show anywhere in the world anytime. They are the best, to a person honourable, and also great friends to me. Among our crew members are lawyers, school teachers, retirees, students, accountants, math professors and general tie-dyed, granola-chompin' hippy types that love the idea of doing a global multi-media broadcast in their spare time.

These days, the crew shows up at the Theatre each Monday at 2pm and assembles the WoodSongs set from scratch. They are amazing and I couldn't praise them collectively or individually enough. So, on behalf of all of them I will tell you about a few:



The mighty *WoodSongs Crew* when we took the show on the road to Jonesboro Arkansas, October 2007

One of the first crew members is music lover and artist, Glenn Wilson. Nicknamed the Kernel (*with a K because he's so Korny*). He is positioned next to me off stage till this day during the broadcast. I couldn't imagine him being any place else.

Another early crew member and still with the show is Bryan "Flash" Klausing. His first job was to hold up a little yellow sign taped to a paint mixing stick that had the word "Applause" written on it. He would flash the sign to the audience so they knew when we wanted them to clap, thus his nickname.

Another was Corday Lee, crew captian, on-air personality and all around organizer for several years. She's now married to our TV Director Jim Piston. They have a little baby, Jude Harrison.



Mary Gilmartin on the very first show we taped



Corday Piston, the day we moved into the Kentucky



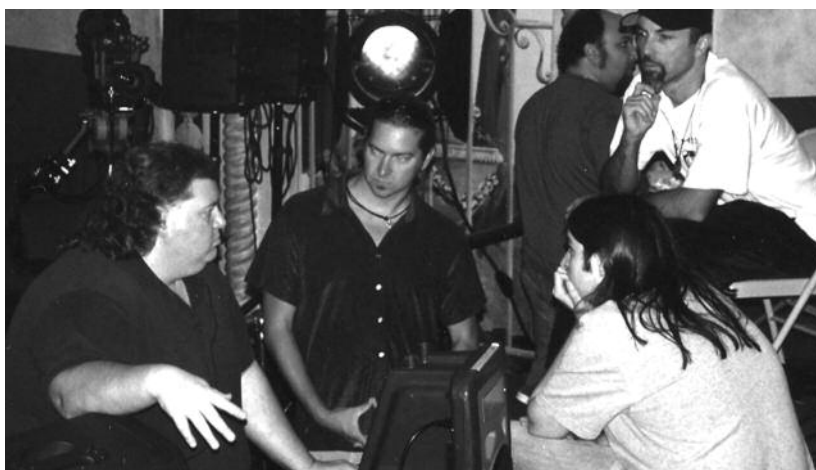
Jim Piston  
behind the camera



The super alert, always ready-to-go  
Brandon Eaves



"Kernal" Glenn Wilson



Kevin Johnson takes time to explain in great detail why it's "not that simple."



Bryan "Flash" Klausing



The first on-air cast I had included a lovely woman with a Irish accent named Mary Gilmartin. Her sweet accent gave WoodSongs such a delightful international air.

*International* ... a big word that described big dreams even though we only had one small college station airing the program.

That's right. One.

For the first 53 weeks of the show, as I struggled to find WoodSongs' voice, we had only one little station airing us, and that fine. I was more interested in refining what I was doing and getting myself, the crew and the artists to sound as national as possible without losing that living room atmosphere I envisioned.

I started with a "script clock" or a minute-by-minute ledger of what would happen during the hour long show. That clock, as amazing as this is to me, is exactly the same now as it was the first day we began taping the show. I don't use a written "script" per say, just some brief notes. Most of the show, we sorta wing it. We usually have two artists per broadcast, each show is 59:30 minutes long. Mathematically, that gives each artist equal time for four songs each.

That has proven to be the one main problem with the show, as most songwriters tend to be lyrically long winded. It's hard for a writer who loves their nine-minute epic to chop it down to fit WoodSongs. But it's important if we are to give each artist equal time on the show. If artist "A" takes too much then time artist "B" is the one who will get robbed. We once had one artist from Canada get nervous and sang a tune that lasted for seven minutes. The second artist, who drove all the way from California, got her last song bumped because we simply ran out of time.


To be honest, the time limitations also help me keep my original vision for the show intact: something new happens about every three minutes or so, keeping the program crisp, fun and fast paced. This is vital for WoodSongs to help unknown artists compete for an audience in radio land.

And guess what?

It worked. About ten months after we started, the show was finally ready to present to other stations. The technical term for these stations are "affiliates." Every new station that added WoodSongs to their airplay schedule would become an affiliate of our show. So, who would want to air our project? What stations would be most likely to even give it a listen?

How about the radio stations that already had Michael Johnathon's music on their playlist? They would obviously be the first to give the idea of WoodSongs a shot.

A  
490



AT  
Please do not record  
Thanks!

WOODSONGS INTRO	
00:45 - 00:49 MJ	Young & Alone
SPONSORSHIP CREDITS	
CD	Father/Son
05:45 - 10:30 PERF 1 JAKOB DYLAN and the GOLD MOUNTAIN REBELS	
Jakob Dylan George Hoff - Bass Fred Ellingham - drums	SURE IS ALIVE AND WELL
14:30 - 19:00 PERF 2 JAKOB DYLAN and the GOLD MOUNTAIN REBELS	
	WILL IT GROW
CD	SEEKING THURS
20:00 - 24:00 PERF 3 JAKOB DYLAN and the GOLD MOUNTAIN REBELS	
	THIS END OF THE TELESCOPE
25:00 - 28:00 PERF 4 MINTON SPARKS	
Steve Conn - Keyboard	SIN SICK
4	TITLE
29:30 - 30:30 MJD	
WS CD	track 5

Here's the actual script Michael used on the broadcast that featured Jakob Dylan



So, we mailed samples to stations on cassette.

Yes, *cassette*. Usually, syndicated shows are transmitted digitally by satellite or sent via compact disc. Not us. We were so poor the only way we could get the show to radio was on a cassette they had to flip over halfway through the show.

When I think back on that now and I am dumfounded we even got the opportunity to get WoodSongs on the air at all. But over 40 stations signed up during the next 10 weeks. Our very first real affiliate station, apart from our host station, was WJJC in Commerce, Georgia who aired the *WoodSongs* faithfully every single Tuesday morning . . . yes, on cassette.

Slowly, word began to spread about this new fangled, old-timey-sorta-sounding-but-not-really radio show that was hosted by this folksinger guy. As other stations began picking up the show, our local audience began to sense that WoodSongs might have some validity to it after all, and began filling our little studio each week to overflowing.

One of the regulars who came each week was a young man named Raja. His family is from India and he completely enjoyed WoodSongs. We could tell he was there because of this brown leather hat he would wear. Raja came with his older brother Harsha, who later joined our cast as the famous *Hotlicks Harsha Sen*. Harsha was a retina eye surgeon and guitarist ... and played every song in the "*Key of C*". If you can't figure out the joke, ask a WoodSongs Partner.

When Harsha heard about the low quality cassette distribution of the show he immediately offered to help buy a multi-unit CD burner. Without Harsha's help WoodSongs may not have lasted through its cassette days. Soon, we were sending brilliantly recorded shows rich with acoustic music to radio stations on mastered CDs . . . and the number of radio affiliates began to explode nationwide!




Hotlicks Harsha Sen



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"Make a joyfull noise..." Ps 95:1

## Moving Day ...

And wouldn't you know it, just when things began getting easier and we were hitting our stride, Kevin calls me with a big announcement: His studio was moving a half hour out of Lexington in a town called Versailles (*pronounced: ver-Sales*).

I was nervous about this, although this was in fact a great opportunity for Kevin. After all, who on earth was going to drive that far to see this show? Versailles is a nice, historic small town but they certainly didn't listen to our little host affiliate in Georgetown. Our coffin was pretty much nailed shut when I phoned the editor of the Versailles weekly paper to interest him in a possible story about WoodSongs moving to his town and was told that "... *they weren't very interested in this kind of thing.*"

Kevin says, "*Cheer up, our new studio can hold 75 chairs!*"

Oh, great, says I. Twenty people in a room with 75 chairs will look like a dismal failure to the audience. As we were now, people had to be turned away at the door . . . which sounded like we were huge. *You can't get seats at WoodSongs! It must be a great show!* This was the illusion of success that I was banking on, which was now being dismantled by the availability of a bigger, more comfortable room.

How untimely. So, with a heavy heart and my head hung high, I travelled to the small but lovely horse farm community of Versailles to tape our first broadcast in the new studio. I walk in and, just as he promised, Kevin had four rows of 20 seats spread across the back of his studio. Oh, brother, this will be humiliating, I think. I walk into the control room to collect my thoughts and meet with the artists, telling them about the show, helping them select their songs. And to wait. After a while the clock ticked away: it's showtime. I tune my guitar. I pick up my notes and walk through the door leading into the studio.

And guess what . . . the darn place was packed wall to wall.

I couldn't believe it. "*Where on earth did all these people come from?*" I thought. "*Eighty people? Eighty?? To see our little radio show?*" The artists (Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer) were excited and Glenn Wilson was grinning ear to ear. The show was wonderful. What was especially moving was the sound of the audience. Compared to what we were used to, 80 people sounded like a coliseum to us. The audience was finally taking over the sound of the show because their numbers were growing. My heart was filled to the brim with pride and I knew, I just knew that this show would *someday* be theatre bound.

"Someday" came pretty quick ...



### Central Kentucky Radio Eye

[www.radioeye.org](http://www.radioeye.org)

Central Kentucky's only nonprofit Radio Reading service  
for people who are visually impaired and physically disabled

Congratulates WoodSongs on its 500th taping.

*You keep playing and we'll keep reading!!!*



## The Central Library theater and our first Sponsor ...

Actually, "someday" came faster than I could have imagined.

Week after week Kevin's studio would fill to capacity. I loved it, but I also saw the practical need to get back into the area's media center, which is Lexington. My concern was that our little balloon of success would pop and we would be left with no media support to publicize the shows when we needed it most.

The upside is that the show had a better chance to succeed if we moved back to Lexington. The downside was cost. We would have to literally build an on-site recording studio from scratch. With Kevin's studio, everything we needed was right there already, cost free.

So, with the help of David Lord with Lexington Convention & Visitor's Bureau, I eventually got an appointment with the head of the Kentucky Tourism and Development Cabinet at our state capitol in Frankfort.

I pitched my idea: How would Kentucky like to have its own *Grand Ole Opry*, *Mountain Stage* or *A Prairie Home Companion* broadcasting its good image and name worldwide? What was most helpful was that I wasn't presenting a concept just on paper. I had a broadcast already airing on 67 radio stations at this point.



My idea was simple:  
How would Kentucky like to have its  
own *Grand Ole Opry*, *Mountain Stage*  
or *A Prairie Home Companion*  
broadcasting its good image  
and name worldwide?

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Where the Music

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And the Scenery

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Lexington often boasts about it's unique Southern charm.  
Thoroughbred horses. Eclectic regional dining. The world's best bourbon.

Thanks, Woodsongs, for adding music to the list.

*Congratulations on your 500th program!*

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*Kentucky*  
UNWINDED SPIRIT

Well, it took one thirty-minute meeting for them to decide to help us. Within a couple of weeks, we had the funding in hand to buy the mixing boards, amplifiers, cables, mics and stands, stage equipment, recording and mastering gear . . . everything we needed to move the show into a theatre.

Now, I can't even begin to say how important an underwriter is to WoodSongs. We broadcast to upwards of two million people a week on 491 radio stations, XM Satellite Radio, full online streaming and archiving plus Public Television stations nationwide on a weekly ticket income of UNDER \$400 a week ...

*"We broadcast to upwards of two million people a week on 491 radio stations, XM Satellite Radio, full online streaming and archiving plus Public Television stations nationwide on a weekly ticket income of UNDER \$400 a week ..."*

The financial lifeline of the show is our underwriters and WoodSongs Partners. In effect, WoodSongs is sponsored by the audience. So the venue we chose for the audience was critical.

But which theatre?

I didn't want to blow the illusion of success by moving to a venue too big for the show to handle. What if we moved into a 1000+ seat theatre like Garrison Keillor has and only eighty people showed up? Not only would we look like idiots, but the artists would feel like they wasted their time and the audience would be so uncomfortable they may not show up again. Whereas if eighty people show up in a studio that holds seventy-five, it feels like a rip roaring success and everybody is excited, everybody is happy.

But it's still only eighty people. Since our show is in fact about the audience, I needed to find a theatre that would keep the reality of the audience and their needs in perspective.

And I found it downtown at the Lexington Public Library.

I didn't realize it before, but my hometown is one of the few cities in America with a fully functional small theatre in its library. It has a nice stage, a clean back room area for storage and, most important, 150 brand new cushioned seats. How the audience *felt* became very important to me. How they saw the stage and heard the music and the way they were welcomed into the theater when they arrived became critical. Folk music is like a grand, churning, magnificent ocean ... and we invite the audience to board our good ship WoodSongs as we explore and travel this ocean like Vikings, discovering new and unknown waters ... it had to be a special trip for them.

So, we were all set. We picked the date of the move. The little theater looked great and sounded great and they agreed to give us the room free of charge in exchange for all the publicity the radio show would bring to the library.

Several members of the crew got together and installed donated carpet on the stage to soften its sound. The crew now had a big job ahead of them. At Kevin's studio the gear was always set up. Now, we walked into a barren theatre and had to set up and break down the gear before and after every single show. So, the crew practiced. Under Kevin's guiding hand the crew set up all the gear several times to make sure it all worked, hung black curtains to dress the stage and more. I remember the Sunday before our first show in the new theatre, standing on the stage and looking into the theatre . . . it seemed so huge and cavernous. How are we possibly going to fill 150 seats for a show about unknown artists singing songs nobody heard before, downtown on Mondays during rush hour and the dinner hour?



Monday morning finally came and I set about getting ready. Bryan was there working the phones getting the artists situated. Kevin called and checked in. Mayor Miller called and she said she would be there. Several TV stations would be there. The staff of Kentucky Tourism would be there.

Everything was falling into place, everyone was working . . . for FREE mind you . . . and doing their respective jobs. Thanks to our wonderful and loyal crew, the show went off perfectly. I have been told many times that it was a landmark show for WoodSongs. I remember Mayor Pam Miller coming on stage saying on the air: *"Hi, I'm Pam Miller the Mayor of Lexington, and I loooove to have my G-String plucked. That's why I'm in the theater audience of the WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour"* and the audience roared with laughter.

As the weeks and months went by, my music life and WoodSongs continued to rise and crest and dip and turn. Remember, while all this was going on I was also trying to make a living, nurturing my personal career, on the road performing, writing new songs, recording another album and being a good dad.

Moving the show into the library theatre turned out to be the right decision. It felt bigger, it felt professional. It retained the intimate nature of WoodSongs that we had grown to love but in a grander setting. It was easy for the audience to get to because it was in the center of Lexington, downtown with plenty of free parking.

Best of all, the audience showed up in droves every Monday. Our little theatre packed out wall to wall every week for 57 weeks in a row. We had a special phone number 859-252-8888 that we called the *WoodSongs Reservation Hotline* and we began encouraging folks to call ahead to make reservations; and they did. Word on the street was that the show was doing so great that it was hard to get tickets, making folks *want* to get tickets. It was not uncommon for the show to be reserved solid for up to four weeks ahead of time.

Over a year passed in our little theatre and the show really took off. More and more artists would submit to be on the show, more stations would take the risk of airing us, our number of affiliates stations swelled and the audience continued its support each week.

*"The financial lifeline of the show is our underwriters and WoodSongs Partners. In effect, WoodSongs is sponsored by the audience...."*

**FREE TICKETS - BECOME A**



Become a WoodSongs Partner online at [www.woodsongs.com](http://www.woodsongs.com)  
KEENELAND is a major sponsor of the WoodSongs Partner program.



## Moving to the Kentucky Theatre ...

Fifty seven weeks in a row the little theatre was reserved out. It was time to allow WoodSongs to grow yet again. Up the road from the theatre was another beautiful hall, the historic Kentucky Theatre. Fred Mills, the longtime proprietor, is a very kind and gentle man whose main expertise in his professional life is the movie business. He also makes the world's best popcorn. This is the place to go for artsy movies, motion pictures with foreign subtitles, or small indie films that mainstream theaters won't give a chance. The Kentucky is the avante-garde art center for downtown Lexington, and I wanted WoodSongs to be there.

The theatre is a beautiful, remodeled room designed to look like an English garden. Hand painted murals on the wall, star lights twinkling in the ceiling, a tech balcony, brand new backstage facilities and - most important to me- it was wired to the internet.

In the late spring of 2000, our show moved to the Kentucky Theatre for two special event shows. The first broadcast featured Ronnie McCoury of the Del McCoury Band. He is the most honoured mandolin player by the IBMA and one of the young guns of the new bluegrass movement. The second broadcast featured the unworlly skills of my friend and dobro master Rob Ickes. Don't underestimate the power of a man and his instrument because Rob performed on that show alone with just his dobro and frankly blew the walls off the theatre.

The two shows in the Kentucky were a tremendous success. The theatre was packed solid both weeks. The roar of the audience . . . you folks are *amazing* . . . sounded incredible as I walked out onto the stage. WoodSongs had, by now, become a personality all its own. No one was there for who was on the show, most people didn't have a clue. They just knew that WoodSongs was mining for musical gold and they wanted a piece for themselves.

The management of the Kentucky, headed up by Fred Mills, welcomed us with open arms and have been energetic supporters of the show. It was a good thing for them. After all, how many people see a movie on a Monday evening? Not too many. It would be great for the theater to have several hundred popcorn and soda-pop buying visitors come to the Kentucky each Monday.

The deal was made, hands were shook and an announcement went out: the new home of the worldwide broadcast of the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour* would be the historic Kentucky Theatre in downtown Lexington.



Jeff Barnett (left) and Fred Mills manage the Kentucky Theater

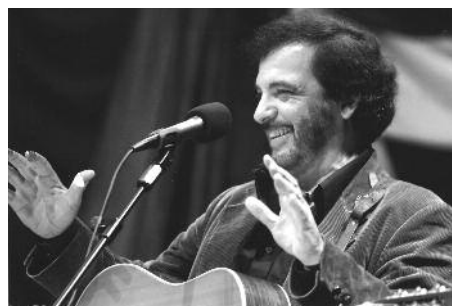
Within four months, WUKY, one of America's oldest NPR stations and part of the University of Kentucky, cleared a spot on their schedule and added us to their program lineup. They gave us a beautiful time slot, Saturday evenings at 8pm immediately following Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*. They were more than twice the power of our old station, reaching twice the number of people in the region.



And so, the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour* marches on. As of this writing our show airs on nearly 500 radio stations in 32 countries worldwide. We've taken the show on the road to the Belcourt Theatre in Nashville, an early home of *The Grand Ole Opry*, for shows with Chris Thile of Nickel Creek and the legendary Ralph Stanley. We took the broadcast to Jonesboro, Arkansas at Arkansas State University. WoodSongs airs nationwide on XM Satellite Radio. Our affiliate KCLC FM, welcomed WoodSongs to St. Louis by airing a four-hour Sunday afternoon WoodSongs marathon. What a wonderful welcome in a very important city.

By 2001, the show also became the world's first multi-camera weekly series to broadcast on the internet. Insight Communications donates this ability and an all-volunteer TV crew run the video and webcast production of the show. They also work to maintain a wonderful audio and video archive of past shows that anybody around the world can view.

About 2004, Judge Ray Corns volunteered to leave his gavel and judicial bench to warm up the audience before the show. He calls me every Monday evening after the broadcast with advice and support.



*"You don't have to be famous ...  
you just have to be good!"*

In 2008 WoodSongs upgraded it's look and production levels, and the webcast became a full-blown TV series designed for public television stations across the country. Now, with help from KET and NETA, WoodSongs is broadcast into millions of TV homes across America, giving our hometown much to be proud of and the artists who come to our stage a massive audience to perform for.

And still, each Monday our crew arrives at the theatre to run cable, set lights, mount cameras, assemble the sound system, run sound check, go through rehearsal with the artists and welcome our beloved audience. Kevin continues to make us the best sounding show on radio. Local hotels and the Belladonna Bed & Breakfast put up the visiting artists for free, local restaurants bring sandwiches and treats for the crew. And we continue to mail the show to our radio affiliates on compact disc each week without fail.

Free.

And every Sunday, 44 weeks a year no matter where I am in North America, I make my way back home to Lexington to produce the weekly broadcast of our show.

Thanks for listening ...

... and for tuning in the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour*!



# FOLK

is the Mother  
of Music

WOODSONGS

She gave birth to a son called Rock'n'Roll  
and bore a beautiful daughter named Country  
FOLK conceived the sad children of the Blues  
and the swinging babes of Jazz

Rap was born from the musings of Dylan  
who learned the Talking Blues from Woody  
who gleaned the idea from those who sang before him

FOLK  
is Big and Small  
Simple and Symphonic  
Soft and Loud but always Poetic

Folk can be Living Room  
but deserves to be Arena level.

*FolkPoem ©1996/2008 Michael Johnathon/BMI  
photo by Dr. Bob DeMattina*





Get your tickets early ... most shows sell out!



The incredible WoodSongs audience in the Kentucky Theatre



The Folkboy Orchestra with Ben Sollee on cello, Don Cornwell on bass and Hotlicks Harsha Sen on mandolin



Michael and Jean Ritchie during her first WoodSongs broadcast



Since 2007, the Hippie Chick Quartet now joins Michael onstage, led by concert cellist Lisa Svejkovski



Judge Ray Corns warms up the audience before the broadcast



Bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley on the WoodSongs stage

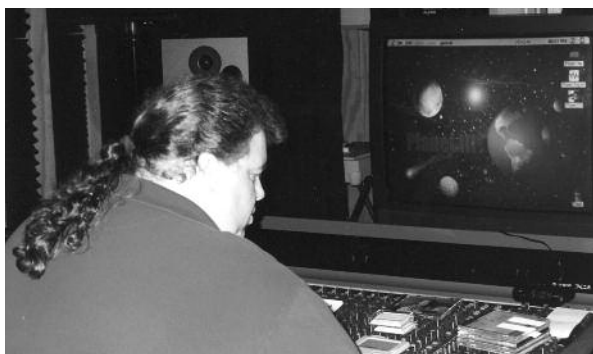


Bela Fleck and the Flecktones



Riders In The Sky tape a WoodSongs Special Event





Kevin behind the mixing console at the old Planet III Studios during the first WoodSongs broadcast



Michael chatting with the small group on WoodSongs first show taping, hoping more folks will show up



Kentucky's own Moron Brothers appear on show #20 on September 28, 1998 before WoodSongs began syndicating



From WoodSongs small beginnings, our tiny audience has grown into a huge community



Six year old Rachel advising Dad on WoodSongs first day in the Kentucky Theatre



The view of the audience that filled the Kentucky Theatre from Michael's stage position on the show's first taping at the Kentucky.



Kids are a big part of the audience and they are invited onstage after most shows



WoodSongs celebrates bluegrass music with then Gov. Fletcher, JD Crowe, the Cherryholmes and Ronnie Reno.

# KentuckyHistoricalSociety

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At Keeneland, giving back is a year-round mission. From education to the arts, we're proud to support organizations that enrich our community.

*Congratulations, Woodsongs, on your 500th show.*



*Investing in the community since 1936*







Michael and cellist Ben Sollee



Show #10 was our first program dedicated to Kids



Stage manager Bryan Klausing



The on-air crew in 2004



Kip Stevens ques the small audience at our first show



Young banjo master interviewed



The Fairfield Four on WoodSongs shortly after the movie "Oh, Brother, Where Art Thou" was released



Show #39 in the old studio



Marie and Corday in the lobby



Audience member and

# Kentucky Theater Facts:

**We are very proud to make the beautiful, historic Kentucky Theater the home of WoodSongs. Here are some facts about the grand living room of Lexington!**

**October 4, 1922:** The venue opened with music on the Wurlitzer Organ, followed by an audience rendition of "My Old Kentucky Home" The movie had was Valentino The Sheik, plus a newsreel, and a romance entitled The Eternal Flame. The Kentucky sported a 4,000 bulb marquis and 1,276 seats.

**April 24, 1927:** In a major marketing coup, the Kentucky was the first to introduce Warner Brothers Vitaphone sound (the talkies) films to Lexington

**April 20, 1929:** A second room, The State Theatre, was opened next door.

**1940:** The local premier of the classic film "Gone With the Wind" played for two sold out weeks

**1950's:** The Kentucky was one of the first air-conditioned buildings in town.

**1965:** Fred Mills begins his career at the Kentucky.

**1965:** Thousands see The Sound of Music

**1979:** The Kentucky was one of a handful of theaters across the country to have a format showing many different films each week on a rotating basis. Classics, foreign hits and art films.

**1980's:** The popular midnight shows begin.

**October 2, 1987:** The theater was damaged by smoke from a fire set by a disgruntled waiter in a neighboring building

**April 11, 1992:** The gala reopening of the Kentucky

**April 14, 1992:** The all-volunteer, community run Troubadour Concert Series presents its first concert with Lucinda Williams for "ten lousy bucks"

**April 24, 2000:** WoodSongs comes to the Kentucky, the first broadcast features 7 time IBMA Mandolin Player of the Year, Ronnie McCoury

**Sept 15, 2008:** WoodSongs calibrates its 500th broadcast with special guest Richie Havens



The Kentucky Theater graces Lexington's Main Street



The Kentucky second hall, the State Theater, in 1929

# WoodSongs Facts:

- May 18, 1998 - Our first artist on the first show was Rob McNurlin from Ashland, KY
- The second show featured Homer Ledford and the Cabin Creek Band
- Homer Ledford appeared five times in the first 41 shows.
- Show #17 featured Homer Ledford and the McLain Family Band.
- WoodSongs third show featured JD Crowe by himself on the banjo.
- The first “major” artist to appear on WoodSongs was songwriter Jonatha Brooke, show #26
- The show moved to the studio in Versailles March 15, 1999, show #43
- May 23, 1999 our first radio affiliate WJJC in Commerce, Ga signed on with show #53
- WoodSongs moved into the Lexington Public Library theater on May 31, 1999, show #54
- Show #55 was the first time we featured The Kruger Brothers.
- Rick Danko from THE BAND appeared on show #79
- Tommy Emmanuel’s first appearance on WoodSongs was show #80
- Tommy has appeared on seven WoodSongs broadcasts
- The final broadcast from the Library Theater was #109 with Tim O’Brien
- WoodSongs moved into the Kentucky (State) Theater on July 10, 2000
- The first artist featured on the show from the Kentucky Theater was Ronnie McCoury
- The first show in the main hall was on Sept 18, 2000 featuring Bill Miller and Guy Davis
- The second show in the main hall was Oct. 16, 2000 with Nickle Creek and The Kruger Brothers
- Ben Sollee comes on WoodSongs Kids pilot taping, show #141 Feb 26, 2001
- The first single artist special event broadcast was July 2, 2001 with Jean Ritchie
- The first “road” show was July 20, 2001 to Nashville with Eric Weissberg and Minton Sparks
- The WoodSongs theme song is called “Colista’s Jam” named after Homer Ledford’s wife, Colista, who gave Michael a jar of home made blackberry jam. The song was written on the Ledford’s couch in their Winchester, KY home. Homer plays on the mandolin and J.D. Crowe plays the banjo on the recording. The full song with lyrics is found on the WoodSongs album release.
- WoodSongs begins internet broadcasting in 2001 and becomes the first live, multi-camera weekly series on the world wide web - the “I Love Lucy” of the cyber world. About 2 million users now watch shows from our website every six months. For free!
- In 2002, WoodSongs reaches 100 affiliates.
- On Sunday afternoon October 13, 2004 Michael was hit from behind in a major car crash in Fayette county that almost ended WoodSongs ... and his performing career. For the next two years, he was limited to about a dozen songs that he could play without moving his right elbow. Glenn Wilson would remove and apply the cast before and after each show.
- In 2006 WoodSongs begins broadcasting on XM Satellite Radio (XM-15)
- In 2007, the Deering Banjo Company in California released the WoodSongs Long Neck Banjo to music stores nationwide. You can buy one online: [www.deeringbanjos.com](http://www.deeringbanjos.com)
- February 18 2007 WoodSongs begins broadcasting to Public Television stations nationwide via the NETA Satellite system. This is a partnership between WoodSongs, Insight Communications and KET. Season two was eventually broadcast into 51 million USA TV homes from LA to Atlanta to Orlando.
- September 15, 2008 WoodSongs tapes the 500th show with special guest Richie Havens.



Michael and Homer Ledford kicking off one of the first WoodSongs broadcasts coming from the Kentucky Theatre



# WoodSongs



Autographs  Notations

Sam Bush on  
WoodSongs

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