

# MUSIC, ART & AMERICA'S FRONT PORCH

Letter to editors, friends and musicians

Dear friends,

It's been a strange week in America, right? It makes you want to do something, but it's hard to figure out the right course to take.

Community action does not have to be political, sometimes it is done simply in the spirit of love.

Once upon a time, rural communities across America would gather with their neighbors on front porches. They were the grand pulpit of Hometowns, the gathering place of grandparents, moms, dads and children, neighbors and lemonade in the summertime, front row seats to the sunset and the rising moon.

As the modern age ascended our new culture with its air conditioning and television brought people inside behind closed doors ... and the elegance of the front porch gave way to the new "feng shui welcome" to homes across suburban landscapes:

## **the garage door.**

Compounded by the tsunami impact of the Internet, we have reduced our ability to communicate with each other from the elegance of hand written letters down to 140 character tweets.

To me, the front porch is the emotional symbol of communities bonding together. And I cannot think of another time in history when the bond of the front porch is more needed than right now.

The music of the front porch is traditionally banjos and fiddles, mandolins and guitars, old songs that everybody knows, grandma singing an ancient ballad to the baby grandchild in her arms on the front porch swing.

In many ways, **Kentucky is the fertile birthing ground of America's front porch.** It is the gentle rocking chair, it is the sturdy oakwood for the foundation of this much-needed front porch.

As we watch angry and frustrated neighbors storming capital buildings, venting frustrations, polarizing points of view, condemning each other for how others think, as we watch an entire generation drift farther and farther away from what the front porch represented, the words of Winston Churchill come to mind.

When asked by a reporter if he was going to remove the arts from the government budget to support the war effort, CHURCHILL reportedly looked at the news man and bellowed, **"then what on earth are we fighting for?"**

The stress and anxiety between polarized communities is further ignited by a global pandemic and economic turmoil. The uneasiness, insecurity and fear not just of what's going on around us but of what tomorrow is going to bring, is pushing many to the breaking point. Isolation and depression, narcissism and selfishness have become as epidemic as COVID-19.

Perhaps this is a time to consider reaching out to what the front porch once represented to all of us. With the music industry in complete disarray and careers of songwriters and performers in total collapse after a year of dormancy, perhaps the true purpose of music and art should be re-examined.

The greatest stage in the world is in fact your own front porch. The greatest audience in the world is your own family that you can sing too. The brightest spotlight in the world is the one that shines on your living room couch.

Kentucky is the grand fertile birthing ground of that art form. Perhaps we've drifted so far away from that truth that it is hard to imagine, it might be hard to even believe.

But never before has it become more important for Kentucky, even the communities across America, to embrace once again the gentle power of what has been represented all along by the vanishing front porch.

Once upon a time in Europe there was a Yugoslav saying that went, **“if everybody in the whole world simply took care of their own homes, you would not have to worry about the world anymore.”** In the 1960s this became a bumper sticker,

**“Think globally, act locally.”**

It is not just a Kumbaya cliché, but the front porch represents everything that we love about our homes, our communities, our families and our neighbors.

It's time to revisit what the front porch represents before the house the front porch belongs to burns down.

Thank you for reading,

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