

WoodSongs Secures Global Partnership with the Kentucky Department of Tourism

ITEM (Lexington, KY)

It is the “Rich Strike” of live audience radio programs.

An unknown radio show started in a tiny studio with 12 people in the audience and one small college station willing to air it. No one thought much of it when it began. No one gave it much of a chance to succeed. But now the “little radio show that could” is broadcasting from the historic Lyric Theatre on over 500 radio stations from Australia, across America and Europe. It is a weekly TV series airing in millions of homes nationwide on both public television and the RFD-TV Network. It is broadcast twice each weekend on two separate radio channels in 177 nations and every military base in the world on the American Forces Radio Network.

That was over 1,000 broadcast shows ago.

Probably the most fantastic part of the WoodSongs legacy is that it began, and remains, the only fully syndicated, multi-format, all volunteer run broadcast in America. The WoodSongs crew, the artists, the affiliates, local hotels and restaurants, and the Lyric Theatre all pitch in for free to make the production possible. The result is the little radio show that seemed so unlikely now has a bigger weekly combined audience than the legendary Grand Ole Opry.

“It’s because I trusted the audience,” says Michael Johnathon, the WoodSongs creator and host from his log cabin home near Lexington. *“I believe love is the greatest transaction of the Arts, I wanted WoodSongs to prove it.”*

Indeed it has. Now enshrined at the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame in Renfro Valley, the history and outreach of WoodSongs has become legendary, not in a small part because of Johnathon’s embrace of Kentucky. Indeed, Johnathon invites fans from around the world the Commonwealth on every broadcast.

“WoodSongs celebrates the music of America’s front porch,” says Johnathon. *“It is the gentlee and rural sound of homes, neighbors and friends. To me, Kentucky is the comfortable rocking chair of America’s front porch. So much music, art, so many great artists have become iconic parts of our image. Kentucky is the crossroads of America’s folk and bluegrass legacy, and we celebrate that.”*

That “front porch” theme, the celebration of Kentucky’s arts and heritage and huge media platform worldwide has given WoodSongs a powerful global partner, the Kentucky Department of Tourism.

Putting action to those words, Johnathon brought 16 national level concerts to Cardome in Georgetown to help open up the world on music and live concerts. He recently completed a hugely successful effort to restore music to the ravaged communities decimated by powerful tornadoes in Western Kentucky, collecting over 1,000 banjos, guitars, fiddles and more from across America and distributing them free of charge to hundreds of musicians and families in Mayfield and Dawson Springs (**see woodsongs.com/tornado**)

*presented
Worldwide by the*



*Kentucky Department
of Tourism*



PICTURED: Grand Ole Opry members RIDERS IN THE SKY with Michael Johnathon and 10-year old Phoebe White after WoodSongs 1000th broadcast taping at the Lyric Theatre

The recipient of the prestigious *Milner Award for The Arts* by Governor Andy Beshear, even Kentucky Humanities tapped Johnathon for a major event with Sam Bush at the Bluegrass Museum and Hall of Fame in Owensboro to celebrate their 50th anniversary of telling Kentucky's story.

WoodSongs has been long supported by the Martin Guitar Company, Deering Banjos, the BHS (Bluegrass Hospitality Association and area hotels,) regional restaurants, the Lyric Theatre and an all-volunteer production crew, it has one of the most unique models in the broadcasting world.

For the Department of Kentucky Tourism, the partnership was easily embraced. Already supported by VisitLEX, the Lexington Tourism office, for years, the Kentucky Department of Tourism found a very compatible, cost effective and global partner in the family friendly WoodSongs broadcast.

"VisitLEX is proud to have supported Woodsongs from the very beginning, when the studio space for weekly tapings capped out at 12 people." says Mary Quinn Ramer, president of VisitLEX. "From those humble beginnings, Woodsongs has grown into a staple in the Lexington community, regularly selling out the Lyric Theatre in downtown and broadcasting globally to friends near and far. We applaud Michael Johnathon and his dedicated team for the work they do to highlight Lexington and the commonwealth of Kentucky each week on Woodsongs."

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Another indication of WoodSongs influence are the stature of musicians that line up to appear on the one hour, live audience broadcast in Lexington, KY. From Roger McGuinn to Bela Fleck, Blind Boys of Alabama to Judy Collins, Riders in the Sky to Preservation Hall Jazz Band, EmmyLou Harris and Kenny Loggins have all stood on the WoodSongs stage, filling the show archive with over 1,000 completed, broadcast programs.



PICTURED: Former Commerce Secretary JIM HOST, Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Art & Heritage MIKE BERRY with folksinger Michael Johnathon on the WoodSongs stage at the Lyric Theatre

WoodSongs looks to grow its radio affiliate base, enhance its online presense and triple its already large TV audience, inviting people around the world to visit the welcoming front porch of Kentucky at the crossroads of America's folk and bluegrass music.

WoodSongs is produced Monday evenings at the Lyric Theatre in downtown Lexington. You can find the schedule and history of WoodSongs on their website, WoodSongs.com

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