

Award-Winning Multifaceted Troubadour Michael Johnathon Heralds The Return Of America's Front Porch

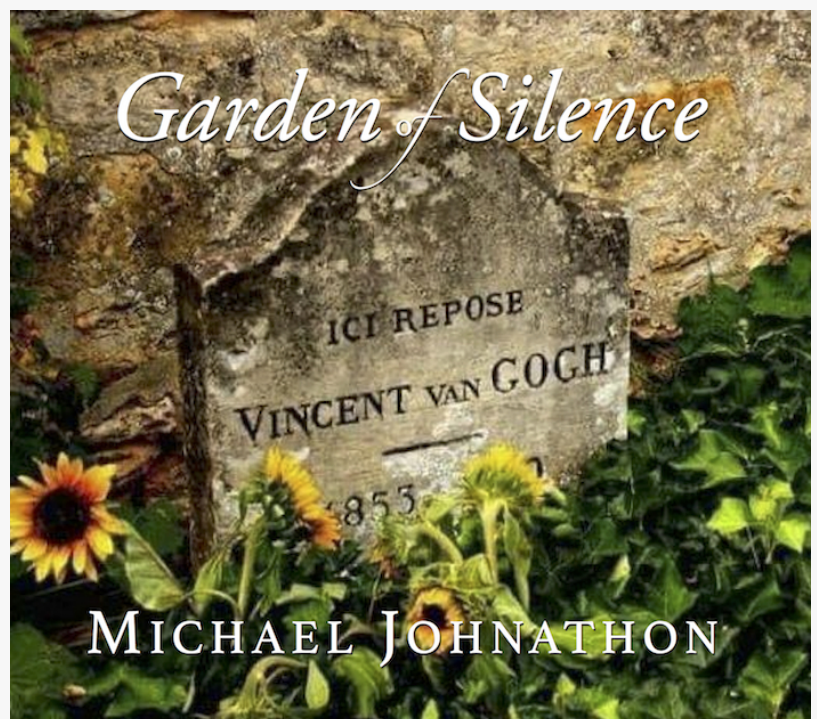
20th Album; Next WoodSongs Season; New WoodSongs Kids Radio & TV Series; National SongFarmers Gathering; & Public TV Broadcast Of Walden: The Ballad Of Thoreau

NASHVILLE, TN, US, September 14, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Michael Johnathon, the multi-talented banjo-playing folksinger, author, screenwriter and host of WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour is kicking off a busy year with the rollout of several music, community and film projects. In addition to being the creator and host of the national radio and TV series WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour, Michael performs concerts across the country and recently released his 20th full length album "Garden of Silence", published six books, composed an Opera and wrote a play performed in 42 countries. He conceived and organized the community of SongFarmers with over 97 active chapters across America and Ireland. His worldview is shaped from the front porch of his Log Cabin home outside of Lexington, Kentucky.

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Michael Johnathon of WoodSongs.



"Garden of Silence" album artwork.

been so needed," says Michael.

There is merit in that musical message. Generations ago there was a Slavic saying that went, "if everyone in the whole world simply took care of their own homes you would not have to worry about the world anymore." In the 1960s, that was rephrased into a bumper sticker, "Think globally. Act locally."

20th Studio Album "Garden Of Silence"

Michael Johnathon's 20th studio album, "Garden of Silence" starts with a song about the day Vincent van Gogh passed away and concludes with a tribute to folksingers everywhere. On the journey between those two musical bookends are songs about Henry David Thoreau ("Winter Song"), the spirit of the front porch ("Front Porch Symphony"), the devastating portrayal of Narcissism ("Narcissistic Blues), dancing with your lover ("September Eve"), a tribute to Johnathon's musical hero Pete Seeger ("Seeger Mashup"), and the banjo-driven instrumental about the fragrant scent of earth following a rain fall ("Petrichor").

New Season of WoodSongs heads to Public Television and Radio:

The WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour, with over 1000 fully produced shows, has an established audience of over two million listeners each week on 500 public radio stations, public television coast-to-coast, American Forces Radio Network in 177 nations and now on the RFD-TV Network nationwide. WoodSongs is a performance and conversation, live audience, multimedia "front porch" and has become the biggest music broadcast in America.

Recipient of the Stephen Foster Broadcasting Award, Telly Award, an extended residency at the



WoodSongs episode 1,078 with Rob Block of Alison Krauss and Union Station, award-winning Irish singer Aoife Scott, Michael Johnathon (middle), 15-year-old Ellie Hack and National Hammer Dulcimer champion Ted Yoder.



Michael Johnathon poses with WoodSongs Kids.

historic Lyric Theatre and a recently installed exhibit at the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame, WoodSongs continues to grow its radio affiliate base, enhance its online presence, and expand its large TV audience from the welcoming “front porch” of Kentucky, which is at the crossroads of America’s folk, country and bluegrass music communities.

The newest season of WoodSongs includes artists like the late piano legend George Winston, Rhonda Vincent and the Rage, Dan Tyminski, Michael Martin Murphey, INXS founding member Andrew Farris, Swiss bluegrass power trio The Kruger

Brothers, Dukes of Hazzard actor and songwriter Tom Wopat, Paul Overstreet, Hubby Jenkins, a Celebration of Louisiana Cajun music with the Savoy Family Band and more.

New WoodSongs Kids TV & Radio Series:

Michael Johnathon is launching a new public TV and Radio series called WoodSongs Kids, described by programmers as “Mr. Rogers meets the Grand Ole Opry.”

The program features talented kid musicians ages 6-16, from all around the United States. In partnership with the Department of Kentucky Tourism, Martin Guitars and VistLEX the first full season has been completed, all produced on the stage of Lexington’s historic Lyric Theater. The programs are on the air and available for PBS affiliates nationwide through NETA, the radio series is available via PRX.

“We have featured young kids on every WoodSongs broadcast for years, making it a highlight of the show every week,” Johnathon said. “WoodSongs Kids will be devoted exclusively to the kids of America’s front porch.”

Recent tapings featured young artists like 12-year-old yodeler Phoebe White, 13-year-old mandolin whiz Wyatt Ellis, who picks with Sam Bush and Billy Strings, 13-year-old yodeler Phoebe White and 10-year-old banjo sensation Owen Brockman.

“WoodSongs has been a staple of our weekend programming for over a decade. Our audience has always given us positive feedback regarding the show and specifically the WoodSongs Kids segment,” says Anthony Craven of WMSV FM-NPR at Mississippi State University. “When I learned a full “WoodSongs Kids” show was being developed, it was an easy decision to make it part of



SongFarmers of Tellico Plains, TN.

our weekend schedule."

The program, available as a TV series to PBS stations nationwide, is co-hosted by 8-year-old Makayla Rayne. The radio series has already been picked up by stations from New Zealand to Oregon, Arkansas to Florida and began airing on Public Television in May 2023. Plans for future seasons include taking WoodSongs Kids on the road to theaters across America.

For official show information, artist lineups and production updates on the new WoodSongs Kid series visit www.woodsongs.com/kidstv.

8th Annual National Gathering of SongFarmers:

On May 18 and 19, 2024, the 8th annual National Gathering of SongFarmers will take place at the historic Kentucky Music Hall of Fame & Museum located in Renfro Valley, KY. Michael Johnathon created a worldwide community of passionate artists and musicians the "music industry" left behind. SongFarmers is an international network of "front porch" minded musicians, songwriters and fans who love simple, rural music. This community is about everybody who loves to pick, play and sing.

"A SongFarmer is any artist who wants their music to make families, their hometowns, and their careers better," says Johnathon. "I started the SongFarmer movement to help musicians find a new, defined direction for their music, to gather the global community of front porch minded folks and help them do good work and enhance communities by redirecting the tremendous energies of local musicians."

There are over 97 active chapters across America and Ireland and growing. SongFarmers start a hometown chapter and invite their friends, family and neighbors into a big song circle once a month, called a SongFarmers Gathering, all free. They become musical leaders and mentors in their communities.

"The truth about music and art is not being told to the world of struggling songwriters," says Michael. "There is an illusion that the age of million selling records and world tours are still there, but it is not. The real truth is 99% of musicians will not get a record deal, will not get a booking agent, will not become stars. Being a SongFarmer gives purpose, meaning and viable use to their passion and skills."

Visit www.songfarmers.org.

"Walden: The Ballad Of Thoreau" heading to Public TV, Radio and Schools:

"Walden: The Ballad of Thoreau" is Michael Johnathon's original film and theatrical play, set during the final two days Henry David Thoreau spent in his cabin before leaving Walden Pond. The documentary that bookends the film is a look at the life of Thoreau filmed at Walden Pond

at the actual cabin site in the woods. Over 9,600 schools, colleges, community theaters, and home schools have performed the play in 42 countries.

Winner of the John Muir Gold Award for Film and produced with the support of the Earth Day Network, American Forests and Kentucky Tourism, the TV broadcast is available for PBS-TV programmers from NETA and PRX for public radio. The four character, two act play script is available free (including lesson plans) to colleges, schools, community theaters and home schools. Many schools perform Walden for Earth Day. You can view the entire film online at www.waldenplay.com.

About Michael Johnathon:

Michael Johnathon is a banjo playing folksinger. He was Pete Seeger's neighbor growing up along the Hudson River in his hometown of Beacon, NY. These days, his worldview is shaped from the front porch of his log cabin home outside of Lexington, Kentucky. Among the throngs of artists in the music world, few have elevated "dreaming" to such a high art form.

"Never before in the history of the world has the need to revisit the meaning and spirit of the front porch been so needed," Johnathon says. "Indeed, war, pandemic and economic uncertainty, civil unrest and gun violence, the shattering of accepted norms and the incessant social media noise have caused many to look back to re-examine where we are heading."

He has tapped into a global need for friends, community and the genuine comfort that organic art can give in a world of incessant stress.

"We are living among the first generation in human history that gets its music and art as a flatscreen, cell phone, digital tsunami of ones and zeros," he says. "The real, front porch, organic world of music and art is fading away."

It is an unlikely career trajectory that hasn't been seen since folksinger Pete Seeger decided to build the Clearwater sloop to help clean up the Hudson River. While musicians and songwriters reach out for a golden ring that no longer exists in a record industry that has essentially collapsed, Michael Johnathon reaches instead to a global fan base made up of neighbors, families and fellow musicians. He believes in the passion and energy of those artists, the greatest stage in the world is the emotional front porch, the brightest spotlight shines on the figurative living room couch. His belief in the front porch spirit has resulted in powerful partnerships. In fact, the WoodSongs broadcast is described on-air as a multimedia front porch.

The Governor of Kentucky presented him the highest award the Commonwealth can give any artist, the prestigious Milner Award of the Arts, reserved for the likes of Wendell Berry, James Still, Jean Ritchie and others.

Visit his website www.michaeljohnathon.com.

Becky Parsons
PLA Media
+1 615-327-0100
becky.parsons@plamedia.com

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