

Basics of Promoting Your Recordings to Folk Radio: A Guide for Artists

By Art Menius

February 2021 Expanded Edition

Now including whether you should use a promoter

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Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. As a DJ long before I became a radio promoter, I have seen seemingly every kind of mistake people make in servicing radio. As a promoter, I have gained insights into what even the most gifted artists, record companies, engineers, and producers often don't know about promoting to folk radio. Most gaffes come from self-released and promoted projects, but even labels and promoters not used to working the folk charts often don't get it right. Folk radio forms its own specialty with its own mores.

I attempt to distill what I have learned both sending and receiving CDs and files over the years. This is a guide to solid practices to avoid shooting yourself in the foot or wasting time and money. I base my suggestions and my practice on the simple philosophy of treating DJs exactly the way I like best as a DJ.

This second edition is reorganized, contains a good amount of new text including an entirely new section about whether to hire a radio promoter instead of doing it yourself. I intend this document to be a guide both for those already resolved to promote their recordings and folk trying to decide which option to choose. I created the first section for the latter group.

A **glossary** appears as the final two pages of this not exactly hefty tome. It contains not just definitions for radio and promotion terms but a good deal of information not appearing otherwise. I also included appendices about videos and timeline.

What you need to know whether working with a promoter or on your own.

In any aspect of human activity, **you can only control the process, not the results.** Lots of good recordings effectively promoted don't climb far up the charts. Any promoter can provide examples of projects we really liked that didn't catch fire. Radio promoters can assure that a recording gets listens from many programmers, but airplay comes down to personal taste and their formats.

DJs receive far more material than they can listen to, much less play on air.

No amount of promotion can "fix" a weak recording.

However early you think you should start promotion with or without a promoter, you'll do better starting earlier. If you do it yourself, start even earlier. The best practice is to contract with a promoter before you even start recording and certainly no later than the rough mixes. When involved, radio promoters provide essential input into album cover design, when to release, how many units to fabricate, and other matters.

Radio promoters and publicists are two very different professions involving and entirely different skills sets and relationships, too many for one person. Publicists are more expensive than radio promoters, since it is harder to get significant print or web exposure than on the radio. Unless contracted otherwise, we aren't your Spotify playlist promoter, recording label, retail salesperson, videographer, manager, or agent.

Charts define genre in the realm of radio promotion. Promoters work specific charts. Here we'll be talking about the FAI Folk Chart and the NACC Folk Chart, the two I work. Promoters sometimes bleed over into other genre. I occasionally promote recordings to the bluegrass charts. Others work a blend of folk and Americana. That said, volume makes it difficult to maintain enough relationships with programmers and different ways of promotion to work multiple genre effectively.

The world of folk radio is far larger than represented on the FAI Folk Chart and NACC Folk Chart. 150 report to FAI and 170 to NACC. I am one of ten that report to both charts, so that leaves 310 unduplicated reporters to the two major charts. Yet my database contains 1050 folk hosts, stations, and strips.

For radio promoters, this is our day job, and most of us have a good number of clients. We deserve evenings and weekends.

Mailing CDs to other countries for the USA is prohibitively expensive.

If you crowdfund your release, include funds for promotion.

Self-promotion compared to using a radio promoter

People can scrape together a passable folk radio list using publicly available information, including the FAI reporters and, if you subscribe, those for NACC. If you have been in the business awhile and attend FAI conferences and regionals, you have met a good deal of programmers already and assiduously protected their contact info. Nor are the mechanics difficult. I explain them in this booklet.

Radio promoters have many advantages over DIY the same as with any specialized profession. We spread the costs of services for hosting downloads, tracking info, and streaming across multiple releases during a year, and we are accustomed to using them. Most of have or can provide access to services that ship your CDs including postal rates less than you can get; sometimes for printing too. We have churned out one sheets and track cards for years. We are used to doing this work and have established proven processes that work.

Three most important reasons for using a radio promoter:

Radio promoters have long lasting relationships with dozens of DJs and programming outlets. We know whether they prefer downloads or CDs, interviews or not, how much communication they like to receive, and the history of their spins. DJs expect to hear from us by snail and email.

That brings us to intellectual property. Radio promoters have the best lists of program hosts, snail mail and email, often in formats that allow querying across variables. We have propriety databases of plays that allow for targeting host based on their playing history.

We are gatekeepers in the post recording industry era. Once upon a time, recording labels did the vetting, often marking the first hurdle that once cleared led to agents, managers, and gigs. The democratization of the recording process and collapse of retail sales has produced a wild, wild world where anyone can release music. That I believe in your release and that you are willing to invest in it convey a positive message.

Reasons to self-promote

Save money. This is the most common and worst reason. Successfully promoting your own record is a lot of work. More for you than I due to the reasons above. If you have a day job, you should seriously consider whether you might come out ahead hiring a promoter.

You have the time, money, and willingness to get it done. Kristin Grainger & True North ran a very successful album campaign last year, but they earned every spin with tons of hard work and then more work.

You plan a **limited campaign** to a targeted group as small as just DJs you know and no larger than the 150 FAI Folk Chart reporters.

You have **high name recognition** among folk programmers *and* access to a recent mailing list.

You have a **truly up to date mailing list** that is comprehensive for your target audience

Or, sadly, you don't succeed in hiring a radio promoter.

Compiled from FOLKDJ-L playlists
Based on 13945 plays from 438 playlists from 115 Folk DJs

FAI FOLK CHART TOP ALBUMS OF THE MONTH

Rank	Album	Artist	Plays
1	The Longest Night of the Year Vol. 3	Various Artists	212
2	Winter Wanderings	Sara Thomsen and Paula Pedersen	73
3	Women in Color	Raye Zaragoza	55
4	Ghost Tattoos	Kristen Grainger and True North	41
4	Cabin Fever: Songs From the Quarantine	John McCutcheon	41
6	Old Friends	Gathering Time	39
7	Songs Doc Didn't Sing	Doc and Merle Watson	36
8	Hudson Harding Happy Holidays Volume 12	Various Artists	35
8	Play It Again Mr. Blue	Phyllis K. Farnsworth	35

Genre Charts | Top Artists | Station Contacts | Going For Artists | My Account | Logout

Top 30 Folk Charts WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 3

Download Individual Charts | Download Top 30 (MP3) | Download Top 30 (CSV)

TW	LW	Artist	Recording	Label
1	1	RAYE ZARAGOZA	Women in Color	Self Released
2	2	MOLLY TUTTLE	But I'd Rather Be With You	Compass
3	5	KURT VILE	Speed, Sorrow, Lonely, Joy (EP)	Melancholy
4	3	WORKING MENBORER	Half Heaven	Distalindia
5	23	STEWART CAMPBELL	Cabin Fever Vol. 1	High Top Mountain
6	11	RESISTANCE REVENAL CHORUS	The One	Highland Plate
7	7	AVETT BROTHERS, THE	The Third Clean	Loma Vista
8	6	WARR AND TREATY, THE	Health Team	Rounder
9	16	LEYLA MCCALLA	Voice-Centered Songs: A Tribute To Langston Hughes	Smithsonian Folkways
10	14	DIRK POWELL	When I Walk For You	Compass
11	10	DIRK-BY TRUCKERS	The New OK	ATO
12	N/A	MIPSO	Mipso	Rounder/Concord
13	9	CHRIS SMITHER	More From The Lanes	Signature Sounds

Three Common Blunders

That kill airplay

1. Poor CD design without track numbers or durations that are easy to read; no title or artist name on the spine. Those may be the most important features for radio hosts.
2. No one sheet or track card/sheet. Also one-sheets with nothing but hype and nothing about the songs.
3. Essential metadata, often including the artist and song names, missing rendering the file an orphan and missing Gracenote information for the CD.

Three Things to Improve Your Chances

1. Put digital versions of everything that comes with the CD in the DJ download plus more.
2. Don't require extra hoops for DJs to download your album such as passwords or asking for them to write you for the download link and make the CD packages easy to open without damaging contents.
3. Respect volunteer radio producers limited time. Would you rather get airplay or email that she has you CD? Time is finite.

Before You Begin

- Develop a budget for all aspects of the project
- Create a timeline
- Crowdfund or otherwise raise the needed funds
- Engage your team
- Know what you will need for promotion
- * WAVs and MP3-320s of the final masters encoded with metadata and available for download and streaming, including paying for platforms
- * CD graphics as image files and liner notes, booklet, and other assets as PDFs
- * Lyrics as a PDF or Word docx
- * Text and layout for one-sheet, then printing them
- * Mailing list and downloaders list
- * Mailing supplies

Timelines

Nothing defeats your purpose worse than starting too late in the radio promotion process (it is even worse for publicity to reviewers and feature writers). Use the handy rule of thumb: If you have the rough mixes, you have waited as long as is reasonable. If you are almost ready for the CDs to be manufactured, you have waited far too long and will have to either hustle or delay. If you start when you have the songs written and arranged, you are on top of things and are preparing for success.

Then you have to manage the project making sure everything is coordinated. A timeline is the most basic tool for organizing and tracking the progress of your promotion.

Even compressing the timeline and moving at the fastest speed, promotional work would start no later six weeks before the radio add date, when you want DJs to start playing the song. If you plan to use a promoter, you ought to engage them no less than a month before that and, if not, plan on more time getting ready.

Practical example of a tight timeline: You want your project on sale and streaming on Friday, July 10th. That means a radio add date of Tuesday, June 30, with radio promotion work starting at least by June 12. Mid-April would be the drop dead for contracting with a promoter or making your plan for doing it yourself.

An example of best practice timeline appears as Appendix 2.

How to Get More Plays by Making Things Easy for Programmers

First, you need airplay more than DJ's need more music to play. The supply exceeds the demand. That means radio programmers' needs come first. A successful artist or promoter keeps this in mind constantly.

Second, in reality, DJs receive a steady stream of CDs and downloads, 8 to 12 during a light week for me; three dozen in a heavy week. One time I had more than 120 waiting for me in two big bins at the post office.

Third, lots of those submissions are a waste of money because they don't fit the show. That factor is another thing radio promoters track across multiple projects and years. Of the CDs I receive as a DJ, only 25% clearly have at least one song for my show; 50% clearly don't fit just on content such as a love song for my political song show; and 25% are maybes usually due to lack of lyrics or track descriptions. That means I have to take extra time to screen them, which usually means they never get played. Think before you send.

Fourth, most folk and roots hosts are volunteers. On community and college radio all of them are volunteers trying to find time to put a show together.

Whoever makes it easiest for a host to program their recording, especially if the artist isn't a big name, the more likely they will give it a chance. Removing barriers seems obvious, but you wouldn't imagine what I've seen. Even large labels fumble some of these mostly common sense matters.

Here is a good way to do it:

Get your music to the DJs in multiple ways. It starts with setting up your download site with all assets.:

- Airplay Direct (APD) has some issues such as no WAVs, but it is where many DJs discover new music. Use its DPK feature for an additional direct email push to all the DJs on your list. Use it twice for each recording two or three weeks apart. This is a paid service that costs \$50 per year for an individual artist contracting directly with APD. Promoters often pay for a label account for their clients.
 - Subscribe to the FOLKDJ listserv (folkradio.org), post your notice and links there, and build your DIY mailing list for snail and email there.
 - Same for the FolkDJ Facebook group, except for download links.
 - Direct email to hosts, which is another place where professional promoters have a big logistical and data advantage, is essential.
 - Having a private, advance DJ stream on Soundcloud or the like is vital. Soundcloud streams can be kept private for just the media and offered in advance of the downloads and promo CDs.
 - The NACC charts, for subscribers paying \$600 with the FAI discount, offers two handy tools: NACC's own Going For Adds (GFA) listing for each Tuesday and, even more important, the Music Meeting Directory provides download links for what promoters submitted for that Tuesday and sends out weekly charts of responses thereto.
 - And, of course, mailing CDs. The costliest but still most effective means even though it seems like radio is the only reason to make them anymore. In 2020, John McCutcheon with Kari Estrin promoting achieved **the first digital-only album to reach #1** on the FAI Folk Chart.
- ◇ Expensive - with cost of CDs at even the lowest printing and postage rates you are looking at total investment \$2.50 to \$4 for each you send to media within the USA. \$8 and up outside the USA. Radio promoters or their associates often have access to discounted mailing rates and sometimes even understand the postal system better than the post office counter person. Some of the latter, for example, erroneously think you have to mail CDs at the nearly \$3 media mail rate, created to save money when mailing media packages weighing more than a pound. A single CD can mail 1st class at \$1.20 to 1.60.
 - ◇ Lists of radio require constant updates from multiple sources. Radio promoters do this for a living.
 - ◇ Most lists one can buy are woefully out of date. Only professional promoters have current lists. You can build your own list of radio programmers from posts on FolkDJ, Googling, downloads from APD, lists of chart reporters, but that is a lot of work. Sometimes you can engage a promoter to mail to their list on your behalf without promoting the recording leaving the promotional work to the artist in a hybrid approach.

For CDs:

Don't make the package difficult to open. Many folk DJs are older than 60. Professional mailers may waste a lot of plastic and paper, but they use at least half the packaging tape that civilians do.



You probably don't need a bubble mailer unless you have an obsolete jewel case or are sending multiple units. You can mail one CD not using a jewel case in a regular kraft envelope like this on the left.

Avoid the sort of non-paper mailer depicted to the right. They are wicked hard to open.

Don't have shrink wrap put on the DJ copies of CDs unless you are inexplicably using atavistic jewel cases. Shrink wrap is just an obstacle.



CD must be entered into GraceNote via iTunes. Free and easy, but essential. Why?

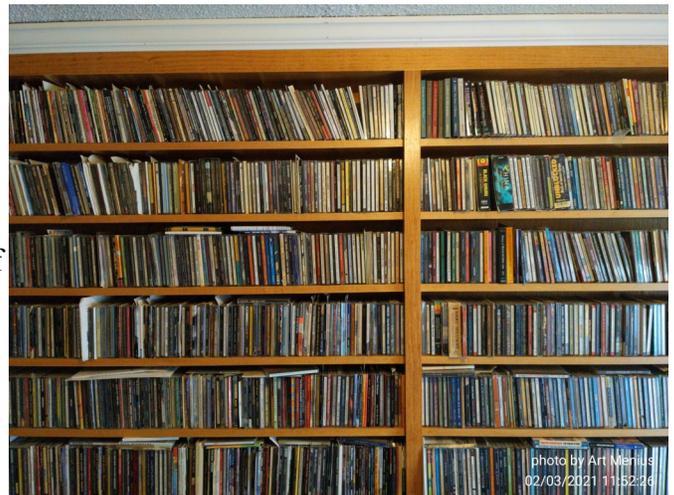
- Do you want a screen on a CD player or a dashboard display for radio or CD to read "Unknown Artist"?
- Some DJs will not play music that isn't in Gracenote since it can't be logged automatically

The CD packaging itself needs to be not just DJ-friendly but optimized for DJ use.

- Always have a spine with the name of the artist and release. Remember, DJs may be looking for your CD among thousands. Look at the adjacent photo of what a DJ faces often under severe time pressure.

The DJ, for example, has two minutes to find an old time or country blues song 2.5 minutes long from shelves much like in the illustration.

- Track listing on the CD must include ordinal number of track, name of track, and duration. DJs need that. Imagine someone needing a 3:25 long song in 60 seconds from a CD wall like that.
- CDs must be easy to shelve efficiently. Unusual packages may gain initial attention, but then get lost. I didn't play a Windborne release I really liked as often as I planned because I kept misplacing it.
- Make the text on the CD package easy to read, especially against colored backgrounds. Designers sometimes forget that practical function.



For Digital Delivery:

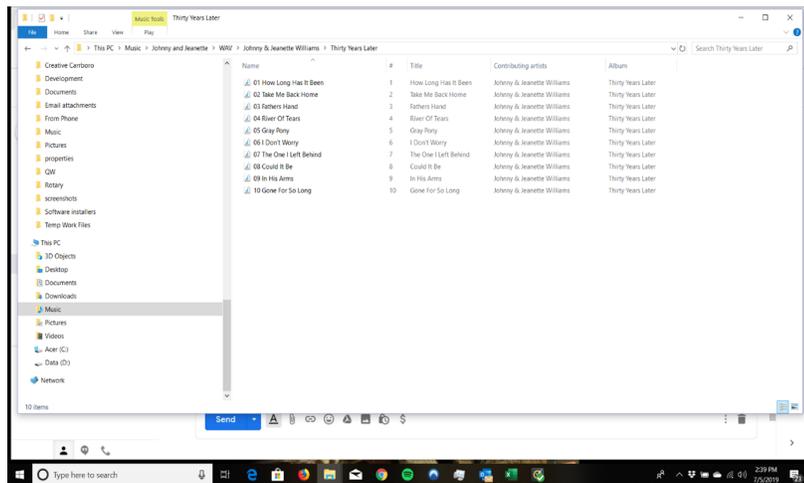
- Allow media downloads with the fewest clicks possible
- Don't secure with DJ copies with passwords. If you have a digital release, it is already on bootleg download sites all over the Net, harvested indiscriminately by lots of bots.
- Never ask the DJ to write for a download link. One more reason not to listen to your music. It makes no sense to email a DJ without including a link. Actually kind of insulting. Recorded music is no longer a commodity.
- Use Bitly to create easy to remember URLs (Bitly addresses are case sensitive, btw).
- Make digital downloads available simultaneously with DJs receiving promo CDs.

Include

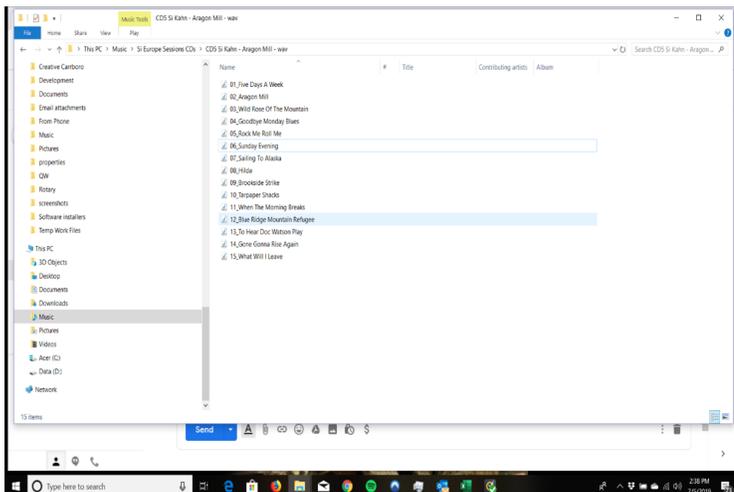
- The audio files at the very least as WAV and MP3 320. Adding FLAC doesn't hurt.

- All other “assets”:
 cover and all other album art as image files
 PDF of liner notes
 PDF of the one sheet,
 PDF of track card or sheet,
 PDF of any booklet or the like
 any press releases as Word or PDF.
 PDFs of lyrics
- Warnings and, when possible, radio edits for any track that a reasonable person could consider not “FCC-friendly.” Remember that “the 7 words you can’t say” was a comedy routine by George Carlin, not FCC regulations which are much fuzzier based on context and community. If a grey area, note that, too. For example, “He was pissed off,” is totally legal since it doesn’t directly refer to the bodily function. Nonetheless, many DJs would be uncomfortable playing it and pissed off at you for not warning them. If no issues, state prominently “All tracks FCC-friendly.”
- Send CDs to those who prefer them and digital downloads to those happy to use them, obviously. This, of course, requires that knowledge. Although this is changing rapidly due to COVID, 40% of DJs are download friendly, but just that reduces your costs by 40%!
- Digital files must be fully encoded with artist, song title, album title, record label. There are free apps to do this efficiently such as mp3tag. Without that, DJs have to take the time personally to enter the information that they need into each song. NB: Don’t use the long, arcane file names often assigned at the mastering studio. Make copies and replace with title of song.

In Windows Explorer, you music files should look like this:



And not like this:



If these files leave their home folder, you will have no way to identify them except the names of the files.

You could ask DJs to take the time to enter this information for you, but that is self-destructive.

Would a DJ want to enter all that info in order to have one more album to play among the 11,000 tracks she already has as digital files?

Preparing Track Cards or Sheets and One Sheets

These are your primary means for communicating with and enticing DJs to play a recording. They should help a producer select and talk intelligently about songs and albums.

- Include a one-sheet and either track card or track sheet along with the lyrics in physical and digital formats.
- Track cards are something DJs can keep with a CD, but they require work in layout and concise prose. The alternative, track sheets go on the back side of the one-sheet. They are easier to do and much better for digital hosts, but cards better for CD users.
- Both are to tell the DJ (or reviewer) in one of two sentences what the song is about, tempo, and style. The format is: Track number; Title, (duration), tempo and style, one or two sentences about the song
- Always have a recording label. If you are releasing the album yourself, invent a name for your recording company and use it.
- Always include a radio add date and info about FCC language compliance.
- The one sheet should include information about the album, especially the why and how recorded, maybe highlight a couple of tracks, some bio info, and a track listing.

Below of a traditional one-sheet on the left with a separate track card displayed on the left. In this example, the track cards (see below) carry the track numbers, titles, and times.

The above is a traditional track card. Small enough to fit into a CD sleeve.



Guy Forsyth & Jeska Bailey
CONSPIRATORS
Release Date - July 5, 2019
Small & Nimble Records 99311

Multi-time award winner and internationally recognized Austin based musician Guy Forsyth has finally met his match. He has conspired to pair his vocals and guitar work with the femininity and incredible vocal dexterity of Jeska Bailey. This duo debut conveys emotion laid bare with harmonies that were first clandestine in nature but Guy knew they were destined to be heard and incorporated into this album. The "Conspirators" showcases roots music in its simplest form with stirring emotion, while showcasing their guitar and voices predominately with the occasional foot stomp and fiddle. With this intriguing release Forsyth & Bailey incorporate originals alongside covers they have passionately adopted and made their own.

Album highlights:

- **The Things That Matter:** The opening track, is a very powerful musical offering with Forsyth playing his signature National Resophonic Tri-Cone and lyrics that grabs the listener's attention expertly joined by Bailey during the chorus where she gently joins in on harmonies
- **Nobody Gonna Bail Me Out:** Is another original which highlights Guy's mastery of the country blues DNA
- **Daddy's Listening:** A Bailey/Forsyth original gives voice to a divorced single mother coping with an ex-husband's surveillance
- **Mercy Now:** Connects families failing struggles to an entire nation enduring the same originally written by the talented Mary Gauthier.
- **Pockets:** Deals with the death of a partner
- **Barefoot Waltz:** This bitter sweet waltz features Austin's own Warren Hood on Fiddle

Throughout this musical journey the listener is continuously challenged with obstacles people face in every day life but the engaging duo offer hope and insight. Driven by the sounds of our past and the beauty of simple roots music. "Conspirators" is an album that will please generations to come bridging the gap between young and old, traditional folk to the new indie-folk world.

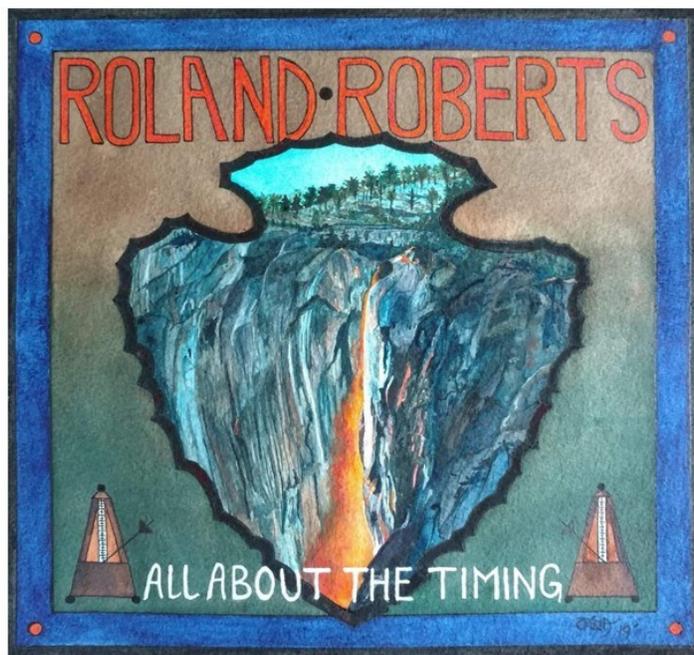
The duo found themselves in the recording studio touching up and perfecting tracks that had been laid down over a year earlier while doing promotional work. "Conspirators" quickly found legs of its own as people heard the captivating songs and harmonies. The decision to preserve the simple form of the album and keep it mainly guitar and vocals was made to perpetuate the raw folk feeling one gets when listening to it. It lent itself to the album title – "Conspirators", those that conspire. Guy Forsyth is no newcomer to the stage and is currently holding the Austin Music Awards titles for 2019/2020 Best Harmonica and Best Blues title. The remarkable voice of Jeska Bailey, who married Guy early in 2018, enthusiastically looks forward to this debut album as she is introduced into the Folk world.

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www.guyforsyth.com

Guy Forsyth & Jeska Bailey **CONSPIRATORS** www.guyforsyth.com

1. **The Things That Matter** (4:07) *Solo guitar with voices and foot stomps. Played on a National Tri-cone resonator guitar with slide. Written with Brian David Keane at his home in Nashville after receiving bad news about Stephen Bruton in 15 minutes. Wammo, band member of Asylum Street Spankers, helped craft the third verse. It's a minimalist form, no bridge, just simple prayers.*
2. **Pockets** (3:26) *Solo guitar with voices and foot stomps. Played on a Collings guitar. Written for Earl and Cathy Farmer, as part of Soulwriter University. Letting go is hard. We live for a moment in between the pull of gravity and spirit, taut as a bowstring till both succeed.*
3. **Daddy's Listening** (4:49) *Solo guitar with vocals and foot stomp. Played on a National Tri-cone resonator guitar with slide. Blues roots and cyberbullying. Written with Jeska Bailey after finding out her conversations with her daughter had been being recorded. Written as therapy, art as revenge, truth to power.*
4. **Mercy Now** (5:24) *Solo guitar with voices. Mary Gauthier penned this masterpiece for her 2005 album. It was named one of the 40 saddest county songs by Rolling Stone. Jeska sends this out to her Father Ron Sheppard. We could all use some mercy now.*
5. **Barefoot Waltz** (4:41) *Guitar, Fiddle and voices. Guy had this song in his pocket for a long time, since just after he moved to Austin. Written for a crush who never slowed down long enough to hear it, he never wanted to record it til he met Jeska. Love means more the second time around. Blind love is the province of youth, now we must love bravely. Warren Hood is true Austin music and his fiddle playing here is all the proof you will ever need.*
6. **Nobody Gonna Bail Me Out** (3:31) *Solo guitar with voices and foot stomps. Played on a National Reso-rocket resonator guitar. George Rarey (Best Guitar Player in Texas) came up with the riff and I made up the words. Everyone in the world at some point comes to the realization that they are alone, what happens then is character.*

This example combines, on the front and back of one 8.5 x 11 sheet, one-sheet, track sheet (rather than card), and bio.



On a cold, snowy January day in the north country, singer/songwriter Roland Roberts walked into Old Crow Recording in Whitehorse, Yukon to begin recording his debut album with producer Bob Hamilton. Bringing with him only a bag of new songs and an acoustic guitar, the Palmer, Alaska resident knew little about what the outcome would be. What happened next was pure gold. Every so often, an album will come along that is almost impossible to put a genre label on. Roland Roberts' debut album *All About the Timing* definitely falls into this category. Rooted in a classic country sound, yet bearing heavy tones of American folk, Delta blues, and even a touch of bluegrass paired with thought provoking lyrics and commanding vocals.

Roland takes the listener through vivid landscapes that include stories of personal growth through love, loss, and heartbreak with songs like "Beautiful Soul" and "Don't Tell Me Goodbye." He also explores the self-realization that these experiences bring and expertly weaves them into song, such as the title track, "All About the Timing" and "Being Me." Roland offsets these songs with a mix of upbeat stories that seem like simple strokes of paint on a canvas but are masterpieces that you can't help but listen to again. "Picture on the Wall" is a fun number about growing up and all that comes with it, while "Sittin' in Nebraska" is a catchy ditty about getting stranded by Mother Nature. To listen to *All About the Timing* is to take a journey through the mind of a man that has the innate ability to see the human condition for what it is and transfer it seamlessly into folk, Americana, and country music.

Memphis-born, Alabama-raised, Colorado-grown, and now a staple in the flourishing Alaskan music scene, Roland Roberts blends an array of genres into a captivating yet delicate musical experience. His storytelling and stage presence have entertained audiences across North America. After recording his debut album in Whitehorse, Yukon, and rooting down in Hatcher Pass, Alaska, Roberts soon made acquaintances with bassist Alvin Fernandez and drummer Matthew Wallace. They formed The Roland Roberts Trio, then added multi-instrumentalist Matt Faubion to form The Roland Roberts Band.

US Radio Add Date: January 12, 2021

All About the Timing

by

Roland Roberts

Happy Life Records

Produced by Bob Hamilton at Old Crow Recording,
Whitehorse, YK

www.rolandrobertsband.com



7 86032 63821 2

"Rarely served up songs of this worldly nature on a debut record, Roland is a poet with depth & sincerity unmeasured" says Gordie Tentrees

All songs by Roland Roberts,
© 2020 Roland Roberts Music (ASCAP).
All songs FCC compliant.

- | | |
|--------------------------|------|
| 1. Beautiful Soul | 2:56 |
| 2. Picture on the Wall | 3:18 |
| 3. Wake Up | 2:53 |
| 4. Sittin' in Nebraska | 2:28 |
| 5. Don't Tell Me Goodbye | 5:22 |
| 6. Rambling Joe | 2:14 |
| 7. All About the Timing | 2:53 |
| 8. Being Me | 3:05 |
| 9. Lonely Blues | 4:11 |
| 10. Keep Moving On | 2:38 |

Roland Roberts (guitar, keyboards, vocals); Rob Bergman (bass); Lonnie Powell & Patrick Hamilton (drums); Sarah Hamilton (fiddle, harmonies); George McConkey (Harmonica); Bob Hamilton (electric and archtop guitar, mandolin, Weissenborn, dobro, steel guitar)

Radio Promotion: Art Menius Radio

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919-675-2787

<https://artmeniusradio.com>

All About the Timing: The Songs

All songs by Roland Roberts, © 2020 Roland Roberts Music (ASCAP).

All songs FCC compliant.

- 1) “Beautiful Soul” (2:56) is about a lovely young lady I met on the road a few summers ago and the time we got to spend together. I put it on the album because it’s one of my favorite stories to tell.
- 2) “Picture On The Wall” (3:18) concerns growing up, getting busy, and losing touch with friends, but also pokes fun at how it’s not really anyone’s fault. I began writing this one after seeing a picture of my grandfather, Roland Sr., in his mid-thirties and realizing how much we looked alike. I put it on the album to remind all the wonderful friends I’ve made over the years that they’re all still important to me.
- 3) “Wake Up” (2:53) is about the opiate epidemic. I wrote this one after losing a very dear friend to an overdose in 2014. I felt the need to write this song as a call to action after taking a closer look at what was going on and how many people were dying from opiate abuse every day.
- 4) “Sittin’ In Nebraska” (2:28) recounts the time I got stranded in a blizzard on I-80 outside of Lincoln, Nebraska while trying to make it back to Denver in time for a Tyler Childers concert. He had just released his second album, and I knew he was about to blow up and may not play in a smaller venue like this ever again. So I was in quite a hurry. I wrote it over the course of the two days I was stuck there. I missed the show and still haven’t seen him play. I did meet some great people and get a good song out of it though.
- 5) “Don’t Tell Me Goodbye” (5:22) relates another tale of “what might have been,” a song I wrote for a girl I met on NYE in New York and the times we spent together as we crossed paths several times over the years. I wrote it on a napkin in a bar in the Portland Airport after being dropped off by my friends after a weekend at The Gorge.
- 6) “Rambling Joe” (2:14) was a guy I knew as a young man who one day out of nowhere decided to buy an early 90’s VW van, sell everything that wouldn’t fit in it, and hit the road. A true vanlifer before van life was cool.
- 7) “All About the Timing” (2:53) offers a funny nod to how we all spend so much time making plans and trying to ensure things go accordingly that we sometimes lose sight of the of the journey we’re on and the little encounters that make this life great. My own little way of telling folks to slow down and enjoy the ride!
- 8) “Being Me” (3:05) addresses being yourself and how difficult that can be. I wrote this one after someone told me I was too old to be running around playing music in bars and roadhouses. Even though I wrote it years ago, I put it on the album because I felt that truly being yourself is probably difficult for a lot of people.
- 9) “Lonely Blues” (4:11) pretty much sums up this one, it’s a blues song about being lonely. I wrote this one in my living room on my old Wurlitzer acoustic piano over a glass of bourbon when I was feeling, well... lonely.
- 10) “Keep Movin’ On” (2:38) is a breakup song I wrote on the road in northern Alberta a few summers ago. She called to remind me that she was still mad at me but also wanted to make sure my trip was going well. Just my way and saying thanks and goodbye.

Following Up on a Release

1) How to track airplay:

- FolkDJ playlists or archives where you can search by name.
- Spinitron.com/search - a system for logging airplay to comply with needs of SoundExchange under the DMCA - always free searching of all airplay registered with it over the most recent 24 hours. You can also go back months in the individual show pages.
- NACC Folk Chart - those who subscribe with the \$50/month deal via FAI can get weekly spreadsheet downloads of all folk airplay reported over one-week periods. This reportsd, however, only the top ten from each reporter.
- Individual station and host playlists online.
- Google searches
- Direct communications with DJs.

2) Thanking hosts for airplay is a best follow up and way to start building relationships and get feedback. She who thanks best gets the most airplay. The thanks reinforce and build upon themselves over time.

- As you track send thank you messages to DJs who play your music. Keep them brief until you get to know them. Some DJs want to be emailed; some to get phone calls; and some want to be left alone. Knowing this is another advantage that promoters and artists experienced in promoting their own come to learn over time.
- Offer liners (station IDs) and interviews as an additional way to both interact and promote.
- Remember that this process is all about building durable relationships with hosts for the future. You'll learn who likes to chat and who doesn't.

3) Follow up with important programmers who haven't played your music using quiet, patient persistence.

- Prioritize hosts with whom you have an existing relationships whom you can speak freely.
- Keep pushing your message without appearing pushy by getting personal or impatient. You'll get much better results simply resending your announcement message as if he had not seen it than asking the DJ whether they have received it.
- Don't put DJs on the spot by pushing for a clear yes - no answer. Effective promoters just put the thought out there that a certain song might fit the DJ's show, but doesn't ask for a response.
- Programmers know what fits their show a lot better than you do. You can convince a DJ to listen, but playing your song on air is their choice.
- DJs may not get to your music for weeks, especially during the pandemic. Accept that as fact about which you can do nothing. Asking if the programmer has heard the record yet does not expedite listening; it just makes you sound impatient.

That's my overview of the practice and whether you should hire a promoter. I have greatly expanded this version from the 2020 edition. I trust you found it helpful.

The information continues with appendices concerning the timeline for your release and using videos followed by an extensive glossary.

Thanks for reading,

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Appendix 1: Using Videos

The video has the most potential reach of any part of the project. I consider one nearly essential to, if not synonymous with, a single release. It can even increase radio play while taking your music to larger audiences than radio can. The video will get more views than CDs and downloads combined get listens. Consider that YouTube is the most important place for music discovery more than radio by long shot and more than even Spotify, Pandora, or Soundcloud. That is how the video should be prioritized especially for time, effort, and creativity. In addition, the video premier gets you coverage on a major website that reaches far beyond your own resources.

The better the video the bigger the outlet. It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive, just a creative piece of art that complements or augments the music version. The internet is stuffed with videos of full band performing. The more it is just a video of a band playing, the less its marketability to outlets that reach new fans. It can even be as little as a creative approach to presenting the musicians playing, however. Bruce Molsky and David Holt made an amazing one by using drone shots of them playing high up on a mountain. While not a concert video, the artist should be featured in it, most usually playing and singing.

Use the natural and manmade assets of your location. You can find interesting locations wherever you live. Your local theatre community contains skilled actors, often at the same career level as you. Somebody you know has a drone that can carry a camera.

Once you have the video completed and on YouTube - unlisted until going public for the debut - your team begins pitching it to the major roots music websites that still do video or song premiers. Create a priority list and work down it until you reach the best outlet that will debut your video. That is easy to say, but much easier for professionals with established relationships to do.

Examples of simple, creative, relatively inexpensive videos:

<https://youtu.be/FaqZdpqDWbw> which features the band playing but in an unusual location with creative camera work

<https://youtu.be/AYJA42hcPpY> again the duo playing but with elements of the song happening behind and around them

<https://youtu.be/czMNCRouEBM> mixes a little new footage, stills, and "found footage."

During 2020 Jesse Palidofsky released a produced video to accompany his updating of "America the Beautiful" with Claire Lynch and Lea Gillmore. As I write this the video nears 64,000 views. The song reached #2 on the FAI Folk Chart.

Si Kahn recorded himself sitting in front of his PC camera singing "Yo! Semite!," organically it has earned 31,000 views with the lightly promoted song landing at #15 on the same chart.



Appendix 2: Example timeline

A Good Practices Timeline

Six months before intended radio add date

Material chosen, demos cut to recruit team
If desired, engage a radio promoter as well as other team members
If not hiring professionals, make plan for promotion

Four months Out

Rough mixes ready
Review CD package graphics for optimal radio friendliness.

Three months before add date

Final masters completed
Design completed
CD manufacturing begins
First video finished and placed on YouTube unlisted

8 weeks before

Drop advance single if desired
Video shopped for a premier with artist supplying a quote about both song and video

Six weeks before

CDs arrive from wince they will be shipped out
All graphic and PDF files ready to use in downloads and one sheets.
Rough text for one sheet and 2 to 3 sentences about each song for track card or sheet composed

Four weeks before

One sheets and track cards or sheets printed
All assets and audio files ready for download and streaming
CD distribution list finished

Three weeks before

CDs in the mail to radio
Private stream shared with radio
Put in NACC's Going for Adds listings

Two weeks before

Album available for download and streaming by radio on Tuesday promoted by direct email and folkDJ listserv.

1 week before

Downloads put in Music Meeting Directory Going for Adds system before Thursday if NACC subscriber.
Album available on AirPlay Direct (APD). APD release by sending the DPK it generates to all your DJ emails
Direct email to programmers with download, streaming, and APD links.

Radio Add Date (aka radio release date) Always a Tuesday

Direct email to DJs
FolkDJ post

FolkDJ Facebook page post

Video or album premier on popular website

Included in Music Meeting Directory Going For Adds download service sent to all NACC reporters

Next week after radio add date

Tracking and thanking for airplay begins and continues until end of promotion

Album pushed each week on direct email until end of campaign

Engagement with DJs on going

Positive quotes and reviews used liberally on going

Three weeks after

Second APD DPK blast

Folk DJ listserv post

Second video release if desired

Six to ten weeks after

Active tracking and promotion winds down

Glossary

Album: A collection of seven or more tracks regardless of release format

Assets or Media Assets: In short, the digital version of everything you would get with the physical product, including those only sent to media: all album artwork as hi-res image files, PDFs of liner notes, lyrics, and booklet, bios, one sheets, track cards (or sheets).

CD: Compact disc. A form of physical media that can include one to roughly two dozen songs. The audio data is stamped into freshly made discs.

CD-R: A limited run, limited packaging CD produced primarily for servicing radio as a single, an advance release, or for a project with no commercial CD version. CD-R data is recorded a blank disc manufactured for that purpose.

College Radio: Since these stations usually receive institutional support, they offer the most experimental and diverse locally produced radio at any power from internet only to 25KW. While some have stable professional management or long-established adult hosts, maintaining steady relationships or even current information proves a formidable challenge with student run stations where hosts can change with the semesters.

Community Radio: The broadest form of non-commercial (NCE), community radio can resemble college in the breadth of its radio produced by local hosts or public radio with syndicated programming from Public Radio Exchange and Pacifica Audioport (Pacifica's "Democracy Now" is the bedrock of many community stations' fundraising). Community radio ranges from powerhouse stations like KBCS in Seattle that resemble NPR stations in staffing and public affairs to 5KW full power community stations with the minimum 5 full-time employees required for CPB (Corporation for Public Broadcasting) funding to low power stations limited to 100 watts. The latter can

range from fifty or more unpaid hosts and occasionally a paid employee, to just one-person operating an automated station in a rural community.

EP: A recording project consisting usually of three to six tracks regardless of format.

Gracenote: Apple's database for identifying music on a compact disc in a CD player, Gracenote provides the information about artist, song, and album on your audio display. One can enter information into Gracenote easily just using iTunes.

Internet Radio: Consists of both the streams from over-the-air (OTA) terrestrial stations (those that broadcast over the airwaves) and of internet-only stations. Those span the gamut from commercial operations that mimic satellite radio with multiple channels and genre, to those that operate one stream just as if it were a conventional station, to one-person, one-show-a-week outlets that may be part of an aggregator. All stations playing recorded music on the Internet are subject to regulations and fees from the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), which created Sound Exchange as the 4th PRO to collect and distribute these royalties to people who perform on recordings.

Metadata: For properly encoded music files, the metadata provides the essential information identifying it: Artist, Track #, Title, Album, Album Artist, Recording Label, IRSC, even Songwriting & Publishing, if you want to. The first five fields are the essential ones used by Spintron at more than 200 stations to autogenerate playlists and reports required by the DMCA.

One-Sheets: Originally conceived to convince wholesalers and retailers to order LPs, one-sheets now mostly provide background information to programmers to decide whether to give the recording a chance. They also help DJs to sound knowledgeable and to select songs. They include on the obverse release and add dates, basic information and

credits, back story about the album, and some bio information. If you use a track sheet, for convenience, rather than a track card, it would appear on the reverse of the one-sheet.

Public Radio in the USA: Not synonymous with all or even most non-commercial or listener supported radio, “public radio” specifically refers to the largest and best funded non-commercial radio stations which are affiliates of National Public Radio (NPR). Before public radio standardization began 30 years ago, these were bulwark stations for presenting folk music to large, affluent audiences. While some locally produced shows remain on public radio, folk programming there has become dominated by a handful of nationally and regionally distributed programs such as “American Routes,” “Mountain Stage,” “Blues Caravan,” and “Folk Alley.”

Publicist: Someone whose business is promoting artists to media including reviews, articles in print and web outlets, and TV appearances. A different (and more expensive) specialty and set of relationships than radio promotion, although these efforts should support and reinforce each other. Since they work with publications, the publicist’s work starts several weeks earlier than radio.

Radio Add Date: This is the Tuesday when you want radio to start playing your new music. Radio should have the downloads and CDs before this date. Sometimes this is the same as the public release date, but normally it’s ten days to three weeks before. Often the two dates are conflated.

Radio Promoter: Someone in the business of pushing recordings to radio programmers. Skills include maintaining relationships and communication with

hundreds of hosts; keeping data about radio stations as up to date as possible; making music available to radio by streaming and download; preparing assets; selecting to whom to send CDs; and tracking airplay and thanking hosts. Radio promoters usually have resources, volume discounts, and relationships beyond those of an individual artist.

Release Date: The release date, now always a Friday, is a holdover from the days of actual retail music sales. It was the day when recordings went on sale. Nowadays, it is supposed to be the day the album goes on sale and streaming to the public.

Satellite Radio in the USA: Is for all intents and purposes, SiriusXM. Because of the national reach of its folk and bluegrass programming, they carry a great impact on weighted charts and national exposure.

Single: The release of an individual song by video, streaming, download, CD, or a mixture thereof.

Track Card or Sheet: Documents formatted as the names suggest, with track number, time, tempo or style, FCC compliance information, and one or two sentences about each selection. Track sheets most often go on the reverse of one-sheets, while cards are inserted into the CD sleeve.

Weighted charts: Grant greater impact to the outlets with the greatest reach - satellite and syndicated programming and the least to low power and Internet stations. The FAI Folk Chart is not weighted, meaning that each play counts the same whether 100 watts or 100,000. The NACC charts are weighted on five tiers from 1 for community and internet only radio up to 5 for such as Bob McWilliams on Kansas Public Radio or Mary Sue Twohy on SiriusXM.

**Folk Music Radio
Promotion**

**Artist Management &
Career Advice**

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**Every campaign & mailing list customized for you from database
of more than 1000 programmers - 48 releases on FAI charts 2020
One stop shop - promotion to folk radio, printing & mailing**

