



The SongFarmer Album

An iPhone, an Album ...

... and a new way of viewing the world of music.

Yes it's true ... the *SongFarmer* album was completely recorded on an iPhone.

An iPhone 6-plus, actually. As far as we know, this is the first national album release to be recorded this way. It's an acoustic album recorded with the new Martin 0000-28s guitar and long neck Deering VEGA Banjo.

"I wanted to re-create the feel of an early folk recording using 21st century technology," says folksinger Michael Johnathon from his log cabin home in Kentucky.

Why an iPhone?

Years ago it was the norm for an artist to spend \$20,000 or more in a studio with great musicians, carefully laboring over each song, making each note and inflection perfect, making each song mix the best possible. Then taking the finished work to a mastering studio, refining every audio wave and EQ so the album will stand the test of time ... only to have most of your fans listen to the thing on a \$9 set of earbuds while on a treadmill in a gym. It is part of the demise of the record industry.



"We are living among the first generation in human history that hear music as a flat screen, digital two-dimensional experience." says Johnathon. *"They don't even get to hold an album jacket anymore."*

HERE'S A PAINFUL FACT: few people listen to albums on stereo systems anymore (*this is not a reference to LPs but to the entire recorded project, whatever format*). There are exceptions, but the truth is most folks listen to music as crushed low res MP3 files on smartphones in crappy ear buds with little or no sonic quality to them. The general public has learned to listen to music on less-than-quality playback systems in noisy environments.

HERE'S A SECOND FACT: the public is being conditioned to hear only singles from an album. The MP3s are loaded into their phone and are played on shuffle ... one song at a time. Kind of a personal Pandora playback. It leaves visionary artists in a quandary ... the presentation of a concept album - full musical cycles like Pink Floyd's *The Wall* or the Beatles *Sergeant Pepper* - has become extinct.

HERE'S A THIRD FACT: music is as much visual as it is audible. As the idea of physical records die, so dies the majesty of the album cover. Holding the album jacket in your hand, reading the lyrics as the album played drew fans deep into the magical world being presented to them. The current two-dimensional music world is shallow by comparison. The problem is folks only know it if they knew it from before. Fans today don't have a clue of this because there is an entire generation of humanity who have grown up experiencing only the flat digital experience of music.

"Think of what is really happening," Johnathon explains, "fans are emailed an MP3 of a band from a friend, Google the band, YouTube the band, iTunes the band then download the band. They've never even seen the band live. Who could have predicted just five short years ago that record store chains would collapse nationwide and Cracker Barrel would become one of the biggest retailers of CDs in America? And to make matters worse, fans have gotten used to getting music as free MP3s. It's gotten so wacky that new cars don't even have CD players in them anymore, just a USB port."

The *SongFarmer* album is actually a protest album in support of the recording artform. Like most artists, Michael Johnathon laments the loss of budgets and the ability to actually create art in a recording studio.

"Some of the most talented audio sculptors in the world, we call them engineers but they are actually artists, are losing their careers as the music industry changes and budgets decline," says Johnathon. So, the *SongFarmer* album was recorded in the same format the public is being trained to listen on: a cell phone. *"If that's what you're going to listen to it on, then that's what I'll record it on."*

Which, oddly enough, isn't all that bad. The iPhone as a recording platform far surpasses what the Beatles recorded *Abbey Road* on. Using Ear Trumpet mics, the Apogee Quartet with a multi-track recording app for iPhones and his artist cabin as the studio, which has very beautiful acoustics and a natural reverb, Johnathon set about the task of creating the album.

"Heck ... since most folks will end up hearing the ding-dang thing for free I might as well record the ding-dang thing for free. It is a folk album, performed in single takes with just my Martin 0000-28s guitar and long neck Vega banjo. There is little-to-no editing involved."



The technology is such that Johnathon could have recorded upwards of 32 tracks but because of the concept behind this particular project, the recording was kept very simple and acoustic. The album has a more important use as it will introduce the efforts of the *WoodSongs Front Porch Association* to media and radio stations around the world. The WFPA calls its members "Song Farmers," thus the album title.

Song samples and project information available now at SongFarmers.org.

For artist bio and hi-res pics please visit MichaelJohnathon.com or WoodSongs.com

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