



MATT WATROBA TO OPEN COFFEEHOUSE SEASON

Interview by Bill Cohen

SAVE THE DATE: September 23, 2017.

In addition to being a veteran performer and community song leader, Matt is a founding member of the National Folk Alliance and has penned dozens of articles and reviews for Sing Out! magazine. Matt sings and writes songs of compassion, inner strength, humor, and every day living. He was awarded "Best Overall Folk Performer" by the Detroit Music Awards for the year 2000. This is a reprint of an interview done with Matt in 2012. The last

interview question was done recently. We welcome Matt back to Columbus!



See Matt Watroba - page 2

SEPT 30 FESTIVAL BENEFIT TO FEATURE "CHRIS & ROSE" AND WHINESTOPPER!

by D. Boston

Plan on coming to El Vaquero's on Saturday, September 30, for a Central Ohio Folk Festival 2018 benefit concert featuring two great performing groups. The event runs from 5:30 until

9:30 p.m. The music starts at 6 p.m. beginning with "Chris & Rose." If you didn't see them at last year's festival, you're in for a treat! Formed in 2014, Chris & Rose is an acoustic duet from the



Central Ohio area. They perform an eclectic range of music genres from classics such as Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, and Nat King Cole, to modern tunes

See Sept 30 Benefit - page 5

WHAT'S INSIDE:

MATT WATROBA TO OPEN COFFEEHOUSE SEASON PG. 1

SEPT 30 FESTIVAL BENEFIT TO FEATURE "CHRIS & ROSE" AND WHINESTOPPER PG. 1

HISTORY OF A LONG RUNNING COLUMBUS BASED JAM PG. 4

VETERAN FOLKIE DONATES INSTRUMENTS TO CFMS PG. 5

ANNUAL DARBY DAYS PG. 5

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME PG. 6

EVENT CALENDAR PG. 7

Matt Watroba – from page 1

Bill Cohen: Tell us your earliest memories of music in your life. Did that quickly spark you into learning how to play guitar and sing, or did that come much later?

Matt Watroba: My mom tells me that by age three I was stacking up coloring books and then beating on them with spoons from the kitchen drawer. I seriously feel as though music has been a part of who I am as far back as it goes.

I tried out for the school play in 5th grade and got the part of Oliver. I sang in choirs and small ensembles all through middle and high school and then right into college. I sang in musicals, started a trio laden with three-part harmony and became passionate about collecting and learning about music all before turning 17. When I was in 9th grade, my English teacher played us a Tom Paxton record. Everything changed after that. I started devoting my life to learning about, performing and sharing folk music whenever and wherever I could. Decades have passed and I'm still at it.

Bill: How did you evolve from a folksinger into a song WRITER? What sparked that change?

Matt: I still consider myself to be both, but I didn't start writing my own songs until about [2012]. It really happened after I quit my job as a high school teacher and devoted myself full-time to music.

It turns out that to write songs you have to sit down and work on it. . . a lot! The other thing that proved inspirational was

rediscovering my love of classic country music. I started writing when I was putting together songs for my third recording, *Jukebox Folk*. I was looking for the folk music in old country and found a ton of it. This was the kind of music I grew up listening to through my dad. It turned out to be a real launching pad for me as a writer. My follow up CD, *Shine Right Through the Dark*, is all original music.

“I love to just trust my repertoire and my instincts, listen and feel every new audience, and then craft a set of songs that will entertain and move them emotionally.”

Bill: We know that you are part of a group of Michigan song-writers known as the *Yellow Room Gang*, who share their new writings with each other and offer positive critiques. How does that work and how helpful is it?

Matt: It made all the difference in the world to me as a new writer. All eight of us approach writing in different ways and have friendships that go way, way back. Those sessions have proven invaluable to me as a growing artist. We don't just praise each other. We get down to it – sometimes syllable by syllable – to uncover the best possible song. It's all done in the spirit of deep respect and friendship and I'm really glad we found each other!

Bill: We've seen you perform solo

and also with other members of the *Yellow Room Gang*. When you're on stage, what's the difference in how you feel and sing?

Matt: Sharing music with others on stage is always a blast. It's never the same twice. As much as I love doing that, I have to say that my favorite kind of performance is solo. After 25 years of doing this, I love to just trust my repertoire and my instincts, listen and feel every new audience, and then craft a set

of songs that will entertain and move them emotionally. It's gotten to the point where I don't even create a set list before the show. I go out there and respond to the moment. That is my absolute favorite thing to do.

Bill: These days, we know you often perform in front of hundreds of appreciative people. In fact, we've seen you perform that way at the Central Ohio Folk Festival. But what was it like in the “early days”? How far “down” the ladder of success did you have to start?

Matt: Oh, I played bars for about ten years. That's basically how I put myself through college. Next to teaching high school English, playing solo in bars was the hardest job I ever had. It is where I learned to play in front of people though. I also learned not to take myself too seriously – now there's a lesson that keeps paying off!! I made a conscious choice to stop playing in bars right around the time I started hosting the open stage nights at *The Ark* in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I did that almost

See Matt Watroba – page 3

Matt Watroba – from page 2

every Wednesday for about four years. That's where I learned to interact with and perform for a listening audience. It was around that time (1986) that I started my folk music public radio show in Detroit which lasted almost 25 years. Radio, for me, is just another kind of performance. Only with radio, I have everybody's repertoire to play with.

Bill: Obviously, you generally don't perform "traditional folk music," but is there any connection between the modern songs you write and sing. . . and folk songs from decades or centuries ago ?

Matt: That is the goal. I really hope that my love for and knowledge of traditional music comes through in my writing. I know that the songs I am drawn to in performance all are either directly from tradition or can be easily traced there.

A wise person once reminded me that traditional music isn't good because it's traditional; it's traditional because it's good. We've been editing these songs in the folk tradition for several hundred years! They have been polished into gems.

Bill: Here's a question we often ask in interviews: Who in the musical world has been your inspiration? Are they all in the folk music genre? Has the list changed over the years?

Matt: For me it's first Woody Guthrie and then Pete Seeger. Woody, for the way he used

poetry to give voice to real people in love and in struggle and Pete, for demonstrating the power of music to change – first the hearts and then the minds – of the people open enough to hear it. Pete continues to inspire into his 90's. Others who have inspired



me include Utah Phillips, Tom Paxton and dozens of others who dared to tell the truth through

FolkSide Coffeehouse Saturday, Sept 23rd Matt Watroba at 8 p.m.

Held at: the Columbus
Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland
Park Ave, Columbus. Details on
page 7.

their art – from comedians like George Carlin and Lenny Bruce, to writers too numerous to mention.

Bill: Which song do you consider your very best, and why ?

Matt: That's always a tough one because, as a writer, you hope the answer is always 'the last one I wrote.' I love the reaction I get to my song "They Used To Play Baseball Here." I love when I can get the crowd singing on my agnostic gospel number, "How Will I Leave," and I love remembering heroes like Townes Van Zandt and Martin Luther King with my songs "Wild Morning Glory" and "Shine

Right Through the Dark."

Bill: As a singer-songwriter, you often spend many hours driving hundreds of miles to gigs and getting paid NOT "big bucks." Why do you do it, year after year ?

Matt: I don't need big bucks. I need to make a living. I've been able to do that by sharing music with people. Utah Phillips used to say that in folk music you will never make a killing – but you CAN make a living. I've always been in it for the long haul. Luckily, I love being out on the road. I've also managed to figure out ways to get paid for making music close to home. Schools, libraries, senior centers, churches, community gatherings – folk music has a place in all of them!

Bill: Can you give us an update on what you've been doing the last five years?

Matt: My work in the last 5 years has really focused on community singing. I'm sure I talked about it in 2012, but that aspect of my performance has really taken off. People seem hungrier than ever for the feeling they get when they gather together for the simple act of singing. I have always included this in my performances, but in the last few years I have been concentrating on inspiring and leading informal sings everywhere I go. It started when I was living in Kent, OH. The sing at the Unitarian church there is still going strong. Since then I lead several monthly sings in the Detroit area as well as

See Matt Watroba – page 5

HISTORY OF A LONG RUNNING COLUMBUS BASED JAM

by Al Belasco

What follows is the first part of a three part series on the history of a very long running jam in Central Ohio. The article is meant not only to bring back memories for many folks, but also to help remember and pay tribute to some of the members who have passed on.

Wikipedia says that a jam session is a relatively informal musical activity where musicians play improvised solos and vamp on tunes, songs and chord progressions.

Part of the fun of jamming is to improvise music without extensive preparation or predefined arrangements. Part of the fun is just being with others of like mind and the pure enjoyment of making music together. And part of the draw is the opportunity to engage with others musically to hone talents. The CFMS has many jam groups it facilitates (see page 5), but there are also other quality jam groups in Central Ohio.

The article is written by Al Belasco, the founder of one particular jam group. The article incorporates his recollections of the group over its many years of existence. The jam group presently meets every Thursday evening from 7-10pm at the Whetstone Assisted Living facility on Olentangy River Road. E-mail Al at alanbelasco@att.net for more information.

The Very Beginnings

Back in 1994 or 1995, the real start of the group was with Greg

Hankins. He was the owner of the music shop Sweetwater Music, later called Twin Rivers Music. The shop was located at Henderson and Kenny Road. Greg is and was a fine musician/luthier and was a founding member of the Irish band, *Irish Brigade*, consisting of himself, Pat Mogan, Dennis Smith, Doug Rudy, Phil Franck, and Dave Murphy (who passed away in 1998). Some members of this group re-formed into another very well known group in Columbus called the *Yankee Celtic Consort*.



Photo center, then clockwise: Greg Hankins, Al Belasco, Ray Pauken, Larry Staats, Cuz, Pat Casey, Homer Echard, Bob Dunham.

Greg had an idea to put together a little “hootenanny” on Thursday mornings at his music store. And so it started – with Greg on guitar, Ray Pauken on banjo, Homer Echard on harmonica, Carl Yaffey on banjo, myself on guitar and another very talented musician on guitar (whose name I can’t recall), who ran a bookstore in German Village. He was the one who called it *Donuts and Music in*

the Morning. It started at 9 a.m., we played for about an hour, and it lasted for a couple of months. It was a real good idea, but it kind of slowed down and fizzled away.

But not for very long, because Greg resurrected the idea and a Friday morning session was established at the Drexel Radio Café next to the Drexel Theatre on Main Street in Bexley. This is when it really started to attract attention (and with the police station next door, luckily we were able to hide out in plain sight).

Some of the early players were Ray Pauken, Greg Hankins, myself, Jackie LaMuth, Charles Goldian (whom we dubbed “Cuz”), Homer Echard, Bob Dunham and Mike Stanley. Cuz was awesome on guitar, played terrific bluegrass licks, and had a terrific bluegrass voice. We called him Cuz, because he called everybody else Cuz. He was bad with names, and asked that we just make life easy

for him. He played *Folsom Prison Blues* and was oh so humble in the way he presented his playing.

And so, on Friday mornings, we would gather for an hour and a half and sit outside, or inside, as the case may be, and started the jam session. Others would show up in the morning and sit and listen. One of them was our first and most attentive fan, Frieda.

(Stay tuned for Part 2, in Oct. issue).

Sept 30 Benefit – from page 1

from Sia, Stromae, and Hindi Zahara. Rose's truly gifted vocals, combined with Chris' guitar abilities and harmonies, create a unique sound that reflects their talents and passion for music.

They will be followed by Whinestopper, a Columbus, OH based band that is noted for its unique mix of music genres including folk, ballads, songs of the swing era, as well as sing-along favorites. The band was aptly named as it reflects the sentiments of the band and those that listen!

We hope to see you on Sept. 30th. *El Vaquero's* is located at 3230 Olentangy River Rd, Cols. We are in the banquet room. Wait staff will be present for ordering food & drink. \$10 donation at door.

VETERAN FOLKIE DONATES INSTRUMENTS TO HELP CFMS

Over the past decade, Marty Hertzendorff has gotten a lot of pleasure from the Columbus Folk Music Society, so now, at the age of 80, he's showing his gratitude by donating 5 musical instruments to the Society. Once the autoharp, 12-string acoustic guitar, electric guitar, 6-string banjo, and 6-string acoustic guitar are sold to members or other buyers, the CFMS is expected to be around six-hundred dollars richer. *[Ed. Note: all the instruments have since been sold].*

Marty moved to Columbus in 2002, growing up in Queens and spending many later years in suburban New York City. Once he heard about the CFMS, he joined "as soon as I could."

"I really get turned on by legitimate folk music," Marty says. "It's in my background."

"I started playing guitar out of the

Matt Watroba – from page 3

teach the concept to others – especially as a staff member at the the Swannanoa Gathering near Asheville, NC every July during Traditional Song Week. The concept is pretty simple. Make a big circle and sing for 90 minutes. I encourage people to try leading, but when it comes around to you, you can lead a song, suggest a song, or pass. Everybody leaves feeling better than they did when they got there.

In March of 2016, I had the



article by Bill Cohen

Burl Ives songbook when I was 15 years old," Marty recalls. Then, over the years, he tried his hand at banjo, 12-string guitar, electric guitar, bass, and autoharp.

He fondly recalls folk music sing-alongs in NYC and says sing-alongs and jams that the CFMS sponsors here are his favorite aspect of the Society events. "It's not just listening to somebody else. It's participation," he notes.

Among his musical treasures, Marty says, are dozens of books with lyrics and chords to his favorite folk songs, plus dozens of CD's of folk music. Asked to name his favorite performers, Marty lists Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Peter Paul & Mary.

Marty sums up the reason he's drawn to events the Columbus Folk Music Society sponsors this way: "it's the camaraderie. It's a place to be. It's home." **Thank you Marty!**

pleasure of leading a bus full of people in songs of the Civil Rights Movement as they made their way through a pilgrimage of Civil Rights sights throughout Mississippi and Alabama. This was through an organization called the Living Legacy Project. It was a life-changing trip that reminded me of the important role songs and singing played through history. Basically I've replaced my radio work with the stuff I love to do best-- performing and getting folks to sing!

ANNUAL DARBY DAYS – MUSIC INCLUDED!



**Annual Darby Days
Sunday, Oct 8: 1-4pm
2705 Darby Creek Dr,
Galloway: Indian Ridge area**

An event along the banks of the Big Darby Creek to enhance the public's appreciation for nature. The Battelle Darby Creek event organizers always love to include music as part of the mix. Shade tent provided.

Consider coming out and sharing your music with the attendees!

Contact for event: Hugh Farthing at: hugh8787@yahoo.com.

CFMS ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTIONS

Elections of the new officers and trustees of the Columbus Folk Music Society for 2017-2018 took place on July 30, 2017 at the annual general meeting held right before the July picnic. The newly elected officers and trustees are as follows:

Officers - *President*, Hugh Farthing; *Vice President*, Mike Hale; *Treasurer*, Charlie Flowers; *Secretary*, Diane Boston; *Honorary Vice President*, Chris Bolles;

Trustees - Linda Bolles, Dan Clarke, Bill Cohen, Greg Denby, Dave Fultz, Steven Hopkins, Pete Insabella, Jackie LaMuth, Jim Luckhaupt, Linda McDonald, Tom Nagel, Cathy Sheets, and Carl Yaffey.

A hearty "welcome and thank you" to all!

RENEWAL TIME FOR CFMS MEMBERSHIP !

Folks join the Columbus Folk Music Society for a multitude of reasons.

Around two-thirds of our members enjoy playing the music, representing an entire spectrum of musicians: from the beginner to the professional. Approximately one-third of our members are not musicians, but are music fans and love the opportunities we provide for listening to and appreciating the music we all know and love.

We are an active group, providing all kinds of opportunities for everyone and we are a true community of like minded folks. Please renew your membership or consider signing up as a new member !

Why I Will Rejoin CFMS

I wonder if my story is unique: a guy who picked up his instrument in middle school, learned half a dozen chords in high school, carried it with me to college but seldom played it, then put it away until retirement.

With my new found freedom I pulled the instrument from its case, blew the dust off and replaced some very old strings. It took a year or two but I finally mastered all the majors minors and began adding flats and sevenths to my bag of tricks. Soon making music by myself was not enough; I yearned to become part of a group. But not any group; it had to play music I knew and enjoyed, be welcoming (and forgiving) of newcomers, yet professional enough to make me want to keep learning and growing.

Happily, CFMS fulfilled every criteria. There's probably another group somewhere that offers as much but I'm not shopping.

So put me down for another year, Carl. As someone probably said, my check's in the mail.

– Ken Keller

It's THYME . . .



To renew your Columbus Folk Music Society membership. Dues for 2018 are due by September.

If there are no changes to your information, you can simply send a check to P.O. box 20735, Columbus 43220.

You can also bring a check to the September Folkside Coffeehouse.

If there are changes to your info, please use the attached form.

We look forward to your continuing membership!

Carl Yaffey, membership chair.
614-268-6353, cyaffey@gmail.com

Seriously folks, post this on your frig!

SAVE THE DATE . . .

The Saturday Music Jam at Worthington Farmer's Market 9:30-11:30am – Outside on the S.E. quad of Worthington Square (until end of October). All welcome to play. Consider bringing a chair.

Wednesday, September 6, last Franklin Conservatory Jam for the season, 3:30pm-6:30pm
Contact Dan Clarke at: dan41n@att.net to be put on an e-mail list.

Wednesdays, September 13 & 27, 2-3pm: Jam at Laurels of Worthington (for Memory Care Unit) – 1030 N. High St., Worthington. Contact Dan Clarke at: dan41n@att.net to be put on an e-mail list.

Every Thursday (thru end of September), South Side

Market (Merion Village), 5-7pm: next to Tatoheads Public House, 1297 Parsons Ave, Cols. Contact Dan Clarke at: dan41n@att.net to be put on an e-mail list.

Saturday, September 23: FolkSide Coffeehouse 6 pm - Open Jam; 7 pm - Open Mic; 8-10 pm - Featured Performer – Matt Watroba. Held at: *the Columbus Mennonite Church*, 35 Oakland Park Avenue, Cols. Suggested donation at door: \$7; students \$5; CFMS members \$5; under 12 free. Handicap accessible.

Saturday, September 30, 4 - 6 p.m.: CFMS members invited to jam at Octoberfest in Clintonville, 228 West Dominion, Cols.

Saturday, September 30, 5:30 - 9:30 pm: Benefit Concert for Central Ohio Folk Festival featuring "Chris and Rose" and Whinestopper. Held at: *El Vaquero's*, 3230 Olentangy River Rd, Cols. Food & drink (including alcoholic beverages) can be ordered; wait staff will be present. Music begins at 6 pm. \$10 suggested donation at door.

Sunday, October 8: 1 - 4 p.m. Darby Days, held at *Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park*, 1775 Darby Creek Drive, Galloway, OH - Indian Ridge area. Music tent provided for jamming. Come out and share your songs! For more info contact: Hugh Farthing at: hugh8787@yahoo.com.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS:



Wayne Jones
Patti and Tom Liskay
Cheryl Lubow (NEW)
Tom Nagel

Alan Palo
Stephen Seiple
Frank and Rhonda White

Another great big thank you goes out to all who donated items for our garage sale (a benefit for the festival) and helping to make the sale a great success!

Also a big thank you to Kathryn Allan for taking on the duties of managing the refreshments during our 2017-18 coffeehouse season.

FOLLOWING OUR OWN . . .

Sunday, September 2, Noon - 2 p.m. – Avalon Nine (full band): *Great Westerville Food Truck Fest*, at Cleveland & County Line Roads.

Friday, September 8, 7:30 p.m. – Joanie Calem: *Campfire Singalong* at Sharon Woods

Metro Park, Westerville OH.

Saturday, Sept 9, 3-4 p.m. – Halfway Home: *Hartford Village Day*, On the Square at Croton, OH. No cover.

Friday, September 15, 7-9 p.m. – Grasshol: at *Byrnes' Pub*,

1248 West 3rd Ave, Columbus. No cover.

Friday, Sept 29, 8-11 p.m.: Halfway Home: at *Tara Hall*, 274 East Innis Ave, Cols, 43207

The Columbus Folk Music Society

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Next Issue in October

We're on the web!

www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COLUMBUS FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY

Date: _____ I'm new to this I'm back for more

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone (Day): _____ (Eve.): _____ (Cell): _____

E-mail address(es) (if a household membership): _____

Membership renewals are due annually on September 30th. For new members, please check one of the membership levels listed below & pro-rate the amount of your check as indicated. If joining during the month of:

Feb-April: Your membership level amount x .5

May-July: Your membership level amount x .25

Aug-Oct: Your membership level amount as listed

Nov-Jan: Your membership level amount x .75

Individual \$20

Sponsor \$100

Gold (Life Member) \$500

Household \$25

Patron \$200

Yes! Please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities within the organization.

Good Friend \$50

Silver \$250

For credit card transactions: contact treasurer@columbusfolkmusicsociety.org. Membership amounts are tax-deductible.

Please send completed form and payment to:
The Columbus Folk Music Society
P.O. Box 20735, Columbus, OH 43220

In an effort to be both fiscally and environmentally responsible, we will send a full-color, interactive newsletter via e-mail unless you request a hard copy be mailed to you.

I prefer a hard copy via regular U.S. mail

I enjoy the annual Central Ohio Folk Festival (early May): Lots 5 4 3 2 1 Not (please circle one)