

Pandemics, Painting and Possibilities

Merging Music, Art & Songwriting

INTERVIEW & MEDIA contact: Loretta Sawyer
ph: 312-391-7605 email: WriteLor@aol.com

Lexington, KY - The stages for all art forms have been darkened during this pandemic, with the closures of live music venues, outdoor concerts and festivals. Folksinger Michael Johnathon has turned to oil painting during this time of isolation, inspiring a brand new song cycle and album.

His reputation as a renaissance artist is well established. As a 16 year old he had a comic strip published in 17 newspapers. Johnathon picked up the guitar and moved to the Appalachia mountains, becoming immersed in the music of America's front porch. He is a touring songwriter with 17 released albums, five published books, playwright of the *Walden Play* performed in 42 countries, composer of the traditional opera, *Woody: For the People*, organized the national association of front porch musicians called *SongFarmers*, the full symphony performances of *Songs of Rural America* and the creator and host of the live audience broadcast of the *WoodSongs Old Time Radio Hour* with a radio audience with over two million listeners each week on 500 public radio stations, public TV coast-to-coast, American Forces Radio Network in 173 nations and now on the RFD-TV Network nationwide. WoodSongs produced its historic 1000th live audience broadcast November 2019 (WoodSongs.com/WS1000)

Along the way Johnathon released his fully illustrated book introducing kids to bluegrass music called *Mousie HiWay: The Adventures of Banjo Mouse*. As a serious painter he studied the works of masters like Rembrandt, Michelangelo and Monet.

When it came time for Johnathon to put his own brush to canvas, he settled on the influence of Vincent van Gogh "Because his brilliance is in his simplicity," he explains, "Vincent was so simple that it was complicated." Johnathon was drawn in by the imperfection, movement of the work and the spirit of van Gogh's brush.

"Vincent is to the art world as Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan are to the music world," Johnathon explains. "As a folksinger I get what makes their music so revered. Besides the power of their lyrics, it's the accessibility of their songs. They're simple, everybody wants to play them. That is the simplicity that I loved. I wanted my paintings to feel just as accessible. That is why I used van Gogh as a mentor, not to copy him, but to use his inspiration."

To date, Johnathon has produced 29 paintings since the pandemic from his art studio in his Kentucky log cabin home. Several of his original works merge landscapes and sky with music themes as in his titles of "Banjo Galaxy", "Pete (Seeger) My Old Brown Earth", and "Starry, Starry Note" plus the cover of the new album, "The Painter." (see the full gallery at: MichaelJohnathon.com/bid)

"Art is born of isolation," he explains. "I really believe this pandemic will expose a tsunami of creative art as artists explore other mediums of expression."

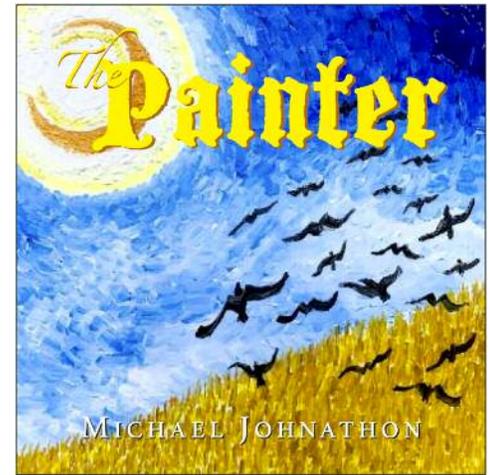
Painting has inspired Johnathon to record his next CD "The Painter," a song cycle about art, artists, love and life. The title cut is also for the theme song of the ongoing work for a motion picture script of the same name, about Vincent van Gogh coming back in 2021 to see his despised work now revered worldwide. The music was inspired by Johnathon's efforts creating oil paintings. Merging music, painting, and writing seemed natural, so the album will be packaged with his next book release, WoodSongs 5 in 2021.

As the pandemic subsides and the music world finds renewal, Michael Johnathon hopes to do a national concert tour of art galleries and museums to introduce his oil painting gallery and the songs from the new album.

"The world is a canvas of our imagination," said Henry David Thoreau.

Welcome to the creative canvas of Michael Johnathon.

Visit MichaelJohnathon.com, WoodSongs.com, SongFarmers.org, CaneyCreekMovie.com



Album release date Feb 2021
Book/CD release date: June 2021

