

# Steven J. Schmidt

Singer/Songwriter/Guitarist

[www.stevenjschmidt.net](http://www.stevenjschmidt.net)



There could be no better title for this CD ("Heartland"). With these songs, Steven has courageously opened up his heart and invited the listeners to experience an amazing reflection on some of the highest and lowest moments in his life. His guitar work is extraordinary; embracing the sad whimsy of a Nick Drake and the creative fury of a Leo Kottke. It is a perfect CD for anyone who enjoys great guitar and great stories."

- Ken Onstad, President - New Folk Records

"Steven J. Schmidt... a talented guitarist and gentle, introspective lyricist."

- Jeff Pieters, Rochester Post-Bulletin

"Steven J. Schmidt's song lyrics are a vivid mix of deep honesty and vulnerability that seamlessly meld with haunting and engaging melodies."

- Sean Dowse, The Sheldon Theatre  
Red Wing, Minnesota

Steven J. Schmidt, recipient of a Sally Irvine Ordway award for Commitment, recognizing lifetime achievement, contribution and leadership in the arts and/or culture, has written over 200 songs and each one is like a bottle of fine, bourbon barrel-aged stout. He performs his rich, full-flavored original tunes, crafted over the last forty years, at house concerts, coffee houses, brew pubs, wineries, performing arts centers and theatres, and festivals.

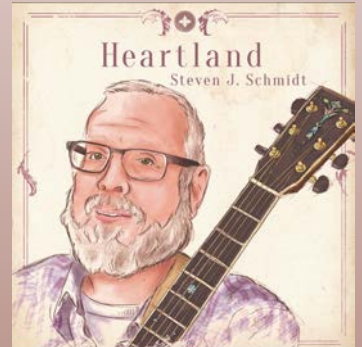
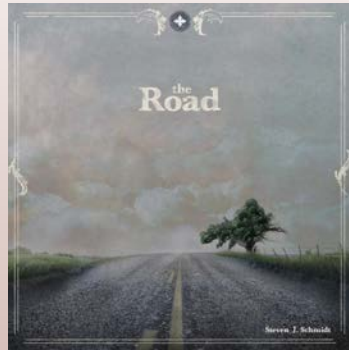
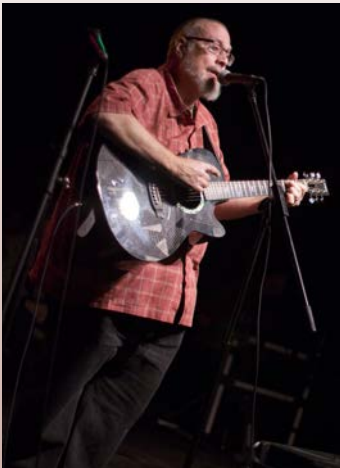
A highly skilled guitarist some refer to as "a folkie with chops," Steven is noted for his fingerpicking, novel chord voicings, use of alternate tunings, and playing up-the-neck.

Schmidt has composed and performed musical soundtracks for public television, film and theatrical performances. He has shared the stage with many folk music greats. His music has been featured on PBS-affiliate KSMQ-TV's "Off 90" program and KQAL-FM's "The Live Feed Presents: Steven J. Schmidt."

Performance configurations include solo, duo, trio and, for festivals and blocks of five or more dates, full band.

west  
channel  
records

**For Booking Information Contact... Elizabeth Schmidt**  
**booking@stevenjschmidt.net**



Watch the PBS (KSMQ-TV) Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEJzK7J28SU>

Listen to the Public Radio Exchange (KQAL-FM) Audio :

<https://beta.prx.org/stories/169060>

"(Schmidt's) audience engagement was amazing, not like another show I have been to... (his) songwriting was inspirational and diverse. The show had a great feel and it was cool to be involved with such an intimate event with a singer/songwriter that has the portfolio Schmidt brings."

-Annie Henderson, *The CA "Creative Salon"*

"*The Road* is more than just a well-recorded album. It speaks because it offers a glimpse into those gritty places in life most of us know well, offered through storytelling that is heartfelt and, in many cases, vulnerable in a raw and plaintive way. "

-Guy Mendilow, *Composer/Performer/Educator*

"Steve Schmidt closed the show... his beautiful fingerstyle acoustic guitar was the perfect finale for the evening. "

-Dan Lambert, *Living Blues Magazine*

## Highlights...

- "Heartland" CD released in December 2015
- "The Road" CD released in September 2014
- Uncommon Ground - Lakeview/Wrigleyville (Chicago, IL)
- Elmaro Vineyard (Trempealeau, WI)
- Great River Folk Festival (La Crosse, WI; Singer-Songwriter Competition Finalist)
- Rochesterfest (Rochester, MN)
- Wenonah Brewing Company (Goodview, MN)
- Four Daughters Vineyard & Winery (Spring Valley, MN)
- Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis, MN
- Fisher King Winery, Mount Horeb, WI
- Underground Music Café, St. Paul, MN
- Lakeside Street Coffeehouse, Madison, WI
- Acoustic Café - Winona, Winona, MN
- The Tonic Room, Chicago, IL
- Fitger's Brewhouse, Duluth, MN
- Elk River Farmers Market, Elk River, MN
- "Over the Back Fence," St. Mane Theatre, Lanesboro, MN
- Café Steam, Rochester, MN
- Acoustic Café - Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI
- Sheldon Theatre/Mayo Clinic, Red Wing, MN
- He has shared the stage with Pete Seeger, Dewey Balfa, Elizabeth Cotton, Mike Seeger, David Holt, Doc Watson, Bryan Bowers, Cathy Fink, Marcy Marxer, John McCutcheon, Tom Paxton, and Peter Yarrow

**For More Information Please Visit...[www.stevenjschmidt.net](http://www.stevenjschmidt.net)  
For Booking Information Contact... Elizabeth Schmidt  
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## Steven J. Schmidt -- Long Bio

Steven J. Schmidt, Sally Ordway Commitment Award winner recognizing his lifetime achievement, contribution, and leadership in the arts (<https://youtu.be/uEYSBOPsbsk>), is a Midwestern singer/songwriter who has written over 200 songs, and each one is like a bottle of fine, bourbon barrel-aged stout. He performs his rich, full-flavored original tunes, crafted over the last forty years, at house concerts, coffee houses, brew pubs, wineries, performing arts centers and theatres, and festivals. A highly skilled guitarist some refer to as "a folkie with chops," Steve is noted for his fingerpicking, novel chord voicings, use of alternate tunings, and playing up-the-neck.

Steven has been touring in support of his soon to be released "French Slough Sessions" project and his "Heartland" and "The Road" CD's. Both albums are available on his web site ([www.stevenjschmidt.net](http://www.stevenjschmidt.net)) and through CD Baby, Amazon, and I-Tunes. His music has been featured in a PBS-affiliate KSMQ-TV's "Off 90" segment (<https://youtu.be/EEJzK7J28SU>) and KQAL's "The Live Feed Presents: Steven J. Schmidt," which can be accessed on the Public Radio Exchange's web site (<https://beta.prx.org/stories/169060>). Recent gigs have taken Steve from Duluth, MN (Fitzer's Brewhouse) to Chicago, IL (Uncommon Ground and The Tonic Room), and Winona, MN (The Acoustic Café) to Madison, WI (The Lakeside Street Coffee House), and Trempealeau, WI (Elmaro Vineyard & Winery) to Dubuque, IA (Tri-State Booking Conference)

Ken Onstad, President of New Folk Records (<https://www.discogs.com/label/240546-New-Folk-Records>), says about Steve's "Heartland" album, "There could be no better title for this CD. With these songs, Steven has courageously opened up his heart and invited the listeners to experience an amazing reflection on some of the highest and lowest moments in his life. His guitar work is extraordinary; embracing the sad whimsy of a Nick Drake and the creative fury of a Leo Kottke. It is a perfect CD for anyone who enjoys great guitar and great stories." Jeff Pieters of the Rochester Post-Bulletin ("5 Things to Do This Weekend," February 27, 2015) referred to Steve as "...a talented guitarist and gentle, introspective lyricist." Sean Dowse, the recently retired Executive Director of the Sheldon Theatre in Red Wing, MN wrote, "Steven J. Schmidt's song lyrics are a vivid mix of deep honesty and vulnerability that seamlessly meld with haunting and engaging melodies. In the midst of an audience unfamiliar with Steve's artistry, I observed immersed attention and enthusiastic response to deft musicianship and a new and penetrating vision... I highly recommend his show, his songs, and his appealing brightness."

Steve has direct links to and has worked with many folk music icons during his career. As a board member of Sing Out, Inc., (<https://singout.org/>) publisher of Sing Out! Magazine, folk music books and recordings, Steve worked with and swapped songs with Pete Seeger. While on a business trip to Washington, D.C., folk music great Cathy Fink asked Steve to perform on the "I Have Seen Freedom" album she and Marcy Marxer were producing for Si Kahn. He developed friendships with and learned songs from such artists as The Boys of the Lough and Lydia Mendoza as a performer, stage manager and host at the National Park Service's "Border Folk Festival." While working for a concert series during graduate school, Steve sat in with Dewey Balfa when Dewey's guitarist was unable to make a trip and helped present a workshop with Elizabeth Cotton and Mike Seeger. Steve has played in various settings ranging from workshops to song circles and conferences to festivals, with such performers as Doc Watson, David Holt, Bryan Bowers, John McCutcheon, Tom Paxton, and Peter Yarrow.

\*\*\* MORE \*\*\*

While working in Topeka, Kansas, Steve competed at the National Flatpicking Championship and National Fingerpicking Championship at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas and placed third in the Folk Guitar Division and fifth in the Folk Singing Division of the Kansas State Fiddling and Picking Championship. Steve's music was twice featured on in-studio performances on the "Flint Hills Special" radio show aired on KANU-FM (University of Kansas). While working as Director of Arts Resources for the City of El Paso, Texas, he was a frequent performer on Dan Lambert's "Blues Train" program on KTEP-FM (University of Texas at El Paso) and he performed during the 10th Anniversary Celebration for "A Prairie Home Companion," broadcast from the Chamizal National Memorial Theater.

Steve makes his home in Rochester, Minnesota where he is General Manager of City of Rochester Music Department/Riverside Concerts where he books and supports more than one hundred distinct services each year. Steve and his wife, Elizabeth, are the principals at West Channel Records and West Channel Music publishing.

**Steve's Website:**

[www.stevenjschmidt.net](http://www.stevenjschmidt.net)

**Steve's Facebook Artist Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/stevenjschmidt.music>

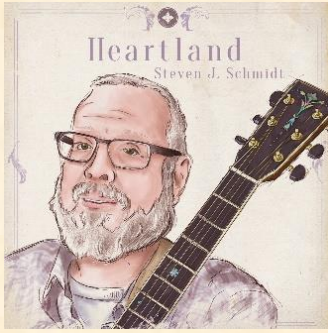
**Steve's Twitter Feed:**

<https://twitter.com/GuitarSjschmidt>

**Steve's YouTube Channel:**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVmAZzBCcQ0vk5oHPG5IzoQ>

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**Ken Onstad, President - New Folk Records/Loud Folk Records**

<https://www.discogs.com/label/240546-New-Folk-Records>

<https://myspace.com/loudfolkrecords>

Steven J. Schmidt... a talented guitarist and gentle, introspective lyricist.

**Jeff Pieters, Rochester Post-Bulletin**

**Rochester, Minnesota**

The audience engagement was amazing, not like another show I have been to in Rochester. Schmidt's songwriting was inspirational and diverse. The show had a great feel and it was cool to be involved with such an intimate event with a singer/ songwriter that has the portfolio Schmidt brings.

**Annie Henderson, C4 Board Member**

Schmidt's thoughtfully crafted lyrics weaved a series of stories for the audience to enjoy. The talented trio are truly masters at guitar playing and impressed the audience by performing on a variety of guitars and stringed instruments. The musicians' finger picking was clean and soulful. The performance delighted the audience with Americana music featuring stylings from folk, blues, and rock rhythms. We look forward to the Steven J. Schmidt Trio returning to perform at the festival again next year!

**Judy Hickey, Rochesterfest Midday Entertainment Coordinator**

[www.rochesterfest.com](http://www.rochesterfest.com)

"The Road" is more than just a well-recorded album. It speaks because it offers a glimpse into those gritty places in life most of us know well, offered through storytelling that is heartfelt and, in many cases, vulnerable in a raw and plaintive way.

**Guy Mendilow, Composer/Performer/Educator**

<http://www.guymendilow.com/home.html>

Steve Schmidt is a great singer, guitarist, and songwriter. We are very fortunate to have him in southern Minnesota.

**Kick Kimmel, Minnesota's "Ambassador of Bluegrass"**

<http://www.dickkimmel.com/index.html>

Steven J. Schmidt's song lyrics are a vivid mix of deep honesty and vulnerability that seamlessly meld with haunting and engaging melodies. In the midst of an audience unfamiliar with Steve's artistry, I observed immersed attention and enthusiastic response to deft musicianship and a new and penetrating vision. I... highly recommend his show, his songs, and his appealing brightness.

**Sean Dowse, The Sheldon Theatre (Retired)**

**Red Wing, Minnesota**

My Newcomer Classroom was fortunate enough to enjoy a concert by Steve Schmidt. He is a master at engaging students with his lively songs and skillful guitar playing. Steve allowed students to participate through singing, movement, call-and-response, and thoughtful questions. Since our classroom is filled with new English learners from around the world, I was especially pleased that students could learn about American Folk Music. Steve's concert provided students with a fun, cultural experience. We have continued to sing and hum the songs Steve taught us!

**Carolyn Franzone, 1-2 Newcomer Center**

**Riverside Elementary School (A Turnaround Arts School)**

**Rochester, Minnesota**

\*\*\* More \*\*\*

A thoughtful blend of folk-rock anthems and earnest ballads. A CD ("The Road") made with care and love.

Ken Waldman, Alaska's Fiddling Poet

<http://www.kenwaldman.com/>

Fabulous songs and musicianship!

Mister Mojo, MOJO & the Bayou Gypsies

<http://www.redhotmojo.com/>

Steve Schmidt closed the show... his beautiful fingerstyle acoustic guitar was the perfect finale for the evening.

Dan Lambert, Living Blues Magazine

Schmidt plays some of the sweetest traditional country finger-picked guitar around.

Paso Del Norte Magazine

Steven Schmidt... a talented picker-composer.

Bobby Booth, *American Federation of Musicians Quarter Note*

Steven Schmidt really got the audience going with his fancy picking on both guitar and banjo.

Bob Burns, Upper Valley Weekly

## Workshop/Master Class/Outreach Service Descriptions

### The Singer/Songwriter/Guitarist's Craft

A hands-on workshop/master class for up to ten participants. (Day-long and two-day retreat options available.) The workshop begins with a "song circle" where each singer/songwriter performs one or two recent compositions. Following the song circle, Steve will outline his creative process. He will highlight how his guitar playing and the various fingerpicking and strumming styles he employs support lyrical content. When and where to insert bridges and instrumental breaks will also be explored. Steve will then share tools and resources he employs when crafting his music. Various props will be used to provide participants with inspiration and songwriting assignments will be given. Steve will be available to provide encouragement and one-on-one coaching as workshop participants compose a new song. The workshop ends with a second song circle where each participant performs their new work for the others. If time permits and if there is interest, the importance of making quality, professional, mastered recordings will be discussed. Protecting/copyrighting and how to distribute one's work may also be examined.

### Making Cover Songs Your Own

Pete Seeger, Cathy Fink, Peter Yarrow, Doc Watson, John McCutcheon, Dewey Balfa, Marcy Marxer, Gordon Lightfoot, Tom Paxton, Jerry Jeff Walker, Elizabeth Cotton, The Boys of the Lough, Lydia Mendoza... these are just a few of the Folk Music greats Steve has known, worked with, performed with, and presented. In this hour-long outreach service, Steve will perform extracts of songs composed by some of these artists as he learned them. He will then share the process he employed to make these tunes his own. Steve will then perform selected songs in their entirety, demonstrating how he gives each new life.

**\*\*\* Over Please \*\*\***

## **In The Tradition: Wooden Music**

During this hour-long outreach service, Steve will perform traditional tunes and songs he has learned from some of the Folk Music Masters whom he has known and/or from recordings he has studied. He will discuss how such traditional music has influenced his songwriting. He will perform selected song pairs where he will play a traditional tune highlighting musical figures, chord structures, alternative tunings, picking patterns, etc., that he has borrowed or adopted or transformed, and then perform one of his tunes in that respective tradition. Material to be performed may cover a broad spectrum of styles ranging from Bluegrass to Celtic, Appalachian to Cajun, Acadian to Country Blues, and Tex-Mex to Gospel.

## **The Road**

Being a professional touring musician is more than creating great art. In this hour-long workshop, Steve will offer advice to help singer/songwriters prepare for gigging and touring. As a presenter that books and supports some 100 distinct musical events a year as part of his “day job”, Steve will share with participants what he is looking for from artists seeking gigs. As a 40-year veteran of “The Road”, he will discuss how the music business has evolved since he first started playing out and how he has changed both his life and business plans in order to deal with the realities of being a gigging singer/songwriter today. He will share the tools and materials he has developed for prospective presenters and promoters, and strategies that workshop participants might emulate. The importance of producing quality, professional, mastered recordings and developing presenter-friendly websites will be discussed. The copyrighting original works, how to collect ASCAP, BMI or SESAC royalties, and how to ensure that the creators of covers performed are properly compensated will be examined.

## **On Valuing Music and Respecting Musicians: How Streaming Culture Has Changed the Creative Landscape**

In this hour-long workshop Steve will examine how streaming culture has changed the nature of the music business. The harsh reality is that most artists find it difficult to make a living and that many immensely talented musicians have stopped creating new work. This workshop will explore the various ethical dilemmas artists and the music industry has faced both historical and current including how the “old record” business worked for the record companies and never really worked for musicians, how the internet and the modern streaming culture has forever changed the money paradigm, and how payola has evolved but still exists.