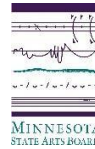


Steven J. Schmidt – PRESS RELEASE

Singer/Songwriter/Guitarist

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For Immediate Release

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Singer/Songwriter/Guitarist Steven J. Schmidt announced today that his album entitled ***The Driftless Sessions*** has been released. CDs of the album with inserted download cards are available for purchase on Schmidt's website <https://stevenjschmidt.net/> and streaming on all typical digital platforms.

Schmidt composed the music and lyrics for all eleven songs on the album. Schmidt found inspiration for many of the songs by The Driftless region where he makes his home. Schmidt lives with his wife, Elizabeth, in Rochester, MN and they spend many days at their "summer hideaway" above Lake Neshonoc near La Crosse, WI. Schmidt says, "The album's title track, *The Driftless*, was inspired by the life and times and writings of Dr. Charlie Mayo and an interaction I had with a nurse prior to a medical procedure at Mayo Clinic. There are also songs inspired by the coulees and bluffs along The Mississippi, Mayowood Historic Home, Golden Hill Elementary School, and the Olmsted County farm that my wife's family has been working for six generations they call "The Windmill 80".

Schmidt is the former Artistic Director and General Manager of the City of Rochester Civic Music Department where, for nearly 33 years, he conceived, initiated, and programmed such popular programs as the *Down by the Riverside*, *Riverside Live!*, *World & Global Music*, and *ForWard* concert series. He has been focusing on his own music-making since retiring from public service in 2021. Recognized for his lifetime achievement, contribution, and leadership to the arts in Minnesota with a *Sally Ordway Commitment Award*, Schmidt has been busy writing new songs and performing at various venues across the upper-Midwest.

Two-Time GRAMMY® Award Winners, [Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer](#) write, "Beautiful imagery and guitar playing!" about Steven's 2023 National Public Radio "Tiny Desk Concert" submission, *The Witch of the Reeds*. Ken Onstad, President of [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."

Schmidt is a highly skilled guitarist some refer to as "a folkie with chops" and is noted for his fingerpicking, novel chord voicings, use of alternate tunings, and playing up-the-neck. He plays several guitars on the album and says, "Each instrument brings its own voice and timbre to my music. I play a Martin MC3H on most of the tunes on ***The Driftless Sessions***. It is an incredibly special instrument that came to me through my relationship with Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer through whom I met my friend and folk music icon Pete Seeger. I worked with and swapped songs with Pete while serving on the [Sing Out!](#) board of directors. I also play a wonderful 12-string guitar that Charlie Hoffman built for me. Charlie was a wonderful Twin Cities luthier who, sadly, passed recently. I think he would have enjoyed the haunting sound I get out of his instrument on my song *The Witch of the Reeds*. I also use DADGAD tuning, a tuning that is favored by Celtic musicians, on two of my songs."

Schmidt recruited a virtual "Who's Who" of the region's most sought-after players to work on his album ***The Driftless Sessions***. Richard Kriehn plays mandolin and fiddle on the record. A gifted multi-instrumentalist, Kriehn played with the "Guys All-Star Shoe Band" and the "House Band" on *A Prairie Home Companion* from June of 2010 until the host, Garrison Keillor retired in July of 2016. He has performed in symphony orchestras, bluegrass bands, baroque ensembles, pit orchestras, cover bands, and country bands.

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Kriehn has toured with Travis Tritt, Aaron Tippin and Michael Peterson, the Nashville Mandolin Ensemble, and the bluegrass group 1946. He has appeared numerous times on the Grand Ole' Opry and made appearances on The Rosie O'Donnell Show, Prime Time Country as well as an episode of Walker, Texas Ranger.

Dan Neale, one of the Minnesota's most adored pickers who is known for his soulful guitar playing and undeniable stage presence, plays guitar and banjo on **The Driftless Sessions**. Neale was a regular contributor on [Garrison Keillor's](#) renowned radio show *A Prairie Home Companion*. In his role with the "All Star Shoe Band" he accompanied renowned artists including Emmylou Harris, Leo Kottke, Shawn Colvin, and Dr. John. Neale's impressive resume includes sharing the stage with legendary blues artist Bo Diddley and backing music icons Graham Nash and Wanda Jackson. During the *50th Anniversary Buddy Holly Tribute* at the Surf Ballroom Neale performed alongside such notable musicians as Chuck Leavell (keyboardist for The Rolling Stones), Hutch Hutchinson (bassist for Bonnie Raitt), and Kenny Arnoff (drummer for John Mellencamp). Neale often travels to Nashville, TN where he is in demand as a session player for various producers and artists.

John Wright, who co-produced the album with Schmidt and his wife, Elizabeth, plays acoustic and electric bass and DAGAD guitar on **The Driftless Sessions**. Wright's versatility on the instrument has led him to play alongside a range of artists, from Pop Fusion/New Age guitarist Billy McLaughlin to Blues and Soul legend Mick Sterling. He also spent four years performing with Minnesota pop star Tim Mahoney. In 1999, John co-founded the critically acclaimed Celtic/American Folk-Rock trio, [Lehto & Wright](#). John's musical journey has spanned multiple genres, including Prog Rock with his own band, US, whose debut recording even made the cover of [College Music Journal](#). Wright is a highly sought after recording engineer and producer with nearly one hundred full-length recordings and countless sessions under his belt. Wright founded The Villa Recording Studio, New Fold Records, and Loud Folk Records.

Both Neale and Wright are members of the [Galactic Cowboy Orchestra](#).

The Driftless Sessions was recorded at The Villa Studio in Savage, MN and was mastered by Minneapolis' Greg Reiersen at Rare Form Mastering. Reiersen has mastered more than 10,000 commercially released albums. Among the artists with whom he has worked are Prince, Yo Yo Ma, Soul Asylum, Cloud Cult, Jennifer Lopez, Johnny Cash, Trampled By Turtles, Phish, Kronos Quartet, Dessa, Conway Twitty & Loretta Lynn, Ralph Stanley, Richard Marx, Big Head Todd and The Monsters, Mötley Crüe, and Irma Thomas.

Schmidt has produced a series of YouTube videos entitled *A Songwriters Craft* with background information on and solo performances of material from **The Driftless Sessions** album that may be viewed at [@StevenJSchmidtSongwriter](#). Schmidt's music has been featured in a PBS-affiliate KSMQ-TV's [Off 90](#) segment, KBEM's "Twin Cities Weekend" broadcast entitled "[Steve Schmidt Creates Midwestern Songwriting Legacy](#)", several "[Open Mic America](#)" segments, and a "[Music of America](#)" podcast.

The Album was made possible in part by a Fiscal Year 2025 Creative Individuals grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board that Schmidt has earned. The grant is made possible by the voters of Minnesota thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

For more information on Steven J. Schmidt, please visit his website, <https://stevenjschmidt.net/>.

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