

Plank Road Folk Music Society



Winter - January 2023 | www.plankroad.org

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Now Streaming!

If you haven't listened to the new streaming album, *Down the Old Plank Road - Volume 3*, check

it out at one of over 150 online sites. It's a collection of music performed by current Plank Road members, including established pros like **Mark Dvorak, George Mattson Trio, Ashley & Simpson**, and the **Plank Road String Band**, plus tunes by other members.

Available for anyone to listen to, free of charge on most streaming sites. Just look for *Down the Old Plank Road Volume 3*. (Be sure to enter the complete title.) Here are some of the more popular sites:

- * **Apple Music** * **iTunes** * **Spotify**
- * **Pandora** * **Amazon Music**
- * **YouTube Music** * **TikTok** * **Bandcamp**
- * *And many others!*

"Music is what feelings sound like"

President's Message

President's Message January 2023

I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday season. It is a good time for family and religion, if you are so inclined, and for reflection on the past and future. Things are good for me and my family, and hopefully you and yours.



It should be a good year for Plank Road, as we are getting more confident in our post-Covid activities and events, and we have had a lot of new people at our song sessions in the past year.

- We have resumed our barn dances, after a two year layoff.
- George has added some great new songs to our songbook.
- We released our "album" *Down the Old Plank Road Volume 3* mid-2022. For those who have not listened, it is a group of songs presented by current Plank Road members and I would encourage you to give it a try. Our website explains how to find it on many popular music sites.

Our board of directors have all agreed to continue in 2023; I will start year 14 as your President. It was an interesting transition for me from the corporate world to the easy going, welcoming world of folk music. I won't try to explain it in just a few words, although I will say that it's easier on the nerves (but it doesn't pay as well).

I have found a whole new set of friends and a deeper appreciation of music and musicians. Plank Road is a great organization to be a part of, and what a terrific hobby/activity to have as I get older.

Bob O'Hanlon
President

Old-Time Barn Dances are back!

“This is something we’ve been planning for and rehearsing for months . . . ”



After over two years without live, in-person barn dances, this popular community event returned on November 5. The lively sounds of the String Band resonated through Fellowship Hall, next to the Two Way Street Coffee House, as caller **Meg Dedolph** guided dancers around the room.



The dances are co-sponsored by Plank Road and Two Way Street, providing a fun-filled evening of music and dancing for the entire family. The dances are informal and no experience is necessary.

The barn dance string band included **George Mattson** (banjo), **Dottie Lee** (guitar), **Jim Gilroy** (mandolin), **Chuck Maltese** (fiddle), **Cathy Jones** (fiddle), **Betsy Anderson** (fiddle), **Kristen Fuller** (whistle), **Jen Shilt** (bass), and **Ron Leaneagh** (guitar). Ron also handled the sound system.



The band was excited to finally return to a live performance. “This is something we’ve been planning for and rehearsing for months,” said Jen Shilt. “We didn’t know how many people would show up, but we had a nice turnout.”

In addition, Jennifer Ashley, Joel Simpson and John Lebbling volunteered to help out with ticket sales, refreshments, and room setup before and after the



dance.

Three more barn dances are scheduled this year: **February 4, March 11 and April 15.** Doors open at 7:30 PM and dances begin at 8 PM. Admission is \$5. For more information check the [Plank Road](#) and [Two Way Street](#) websites.

Photos provided by Jen Shilt and Jennifer Ashley.

Our musical salute to the holidays returns!



Once again, Two Way Street Coffee House rang with seasonal singing and strumming as Plank Road hosted its annual Christmas party — after a two-year hiatus — on Saturday, December 17.

Things got rolling at 2 PM, as holiday song books were passed out and George Mattson led strummers, pickers and singers for two hours of Christmas carols and popular holiday tunes. While not quite the same as the pre-pandemic years, when folks brought lots of holiday treats, Bob O'Hanlon and Plank Road provided beverages and cookies.

Here are some photos of the festivities:



So long Christine . . .



Christine McVie:
July 12, 1943 - Nov. 30, 2022

By Andy Malkewicz

Christine McVie (born Christine Ann Perfect), the most prolific songwriter in Fleetwood Mac, died at age of 79, Wednesday, November 30.

In June, Ms. McVie told *Rolling Stone* that she was in “quite bad health” and that she had endured debilitating problems with her back. Her fellow bandmates, Lindsey Buckingham, Mick Fleetwood and Stevie Nicks, considered her a dear, dear friend, calling her a comrade, friend, soul mate, and friend, helping each other for over four decades, making music together.

In 2017 Christine and Buckingham made an album together charting at #17 in the US & #5 in the UK.

Ms. McVie’s commercial potency, which hit a high point in the 1970s and ’80s, was on full display on *Fleetwood Mac’s Greatest Hits* anthology, released in 1988, which sold more than eight million copies: She either wrote or co-wrote half of its 16 tracks. Her tally doubled that of the next most prolific member of the band’s trio of singer-songwriters, Stevie Nicks.



Her most popular songs that she wrote favored bouncing beats and lively

melodies, numbers like “Say You Love Me” (which grazed Billboard’s Top 10), “You Make Loving Fun” (which just broke it), “Hold Me” (No. 4) and “Don’t Stop” (her top smash, which crested at

elegant ballads, like “Over My Head” and “Little Lies.” Her songs had cleanly defined, easily sung melodies, with hints of soul and blues at the core. Her compositions had a simplicity. “I don’t struggle over my songs,” Ms. McVie told *Rolling Stone* in 1977. “I write them quickly.”

Her lyrics often captured the aspects of romance. “I’m definitely not a pessimist,” she told Bob Bruning, the author of the 2004 book *The Fleetwood Mac Story: Rumours and Lies*. “I’m basically a love song writer.”



In her early career, Christine Anne Perfect was born in the Lake District of England to Cyril Perfect, a classical violinist and college music professor and Beatrice (Reece) Perfect, a psychic. She took classical piano lessons when she was 11, and changed her focus 4 years later when she saw sheet music for Fats Domino songs. She started playing the boogie bass and got hooked on the blues. Her busy, bluesy keyboard style, was influenced by piano lessons, Fats Domino, Otis Spann and Freddie King.



While studying sculpture in college she briefly played in a duo with Spencer Davis, who, along with a teenage Steve Winwood, would

later find fame in the Spencer Davis Group. She helped form a band named Shades of Blue with several future members of Chicken Shack. She joined Chicken Shack in 1967 as a keyboardist, and sometime singer, and had a #14 British hit with “I’d Rather Go Blind.” She was already honing her songwriting skills, writing two songs on their first album. She was a session player on Fleetwood Mac’s early recording. In 1968 she recorded a solo album, *The Legendary Christine Perfect Album*, which she later described to *Rolling Stone* as “so wimpy,” and she agreed, “I just hate to listen to it.”

So long Christine. Loved your songs.

Live events are back!

Plank Road's regular sing-around events

Please join us for our in-person get togethers -- co-sponsored with Two Way Street Coffee House.

Sing-Around

1st & 3rd Sat. | 2-4 pm

Vocal instrumental jam and sing-along with songbooks and leader.

Country and Western

Sing-Around

4th Sat. | 2-4 pm

Sing along with your favorite C&W songs. Songbooks provided.

2nd Tuesday Song Circle -- BYOS!

2nd Tues. | 7-9 pm

Bring Your Own Song! A monthly opportunity for musicians to perform original or cover songs for each other, within a song circle.

Plank Road String Band Practice

First Church of Lombard
630-620-0688

2nd Sat. | 2:00-4:00 pm

An old-time string band practice for intermediate/advanced players. from September to April.

Be sure to check the Plank Road and Two Way Street websites and Facebook pages for details about each event.

Local venues now open for live, in-person concerts

Two Way Street Coffee House Friday Night Concert Series.

Currently masks are not required during concerts, but of course patrons are free to wear them. For those who prefer to watch online, virtual options continue.

Doors open at 7:30pm and concerts starts at 8pm. Check out each concert's details for more information on how to gain online access. [Two Way Street Coffee House](#)

Maple Street Concerts.

Live concerts have returned to Maple Street Chapel in downtown Lombard. Concerts are subject to CDC guidelines. Please check the Maple Street website for concert listings.

Other venues . . .

- Acoustic Renaissance Concerts
- Old Town School Of Folk Music
- Acorn Coffeehouse
- Tobias Music Concerts
- Friends of Lisle Library Concerts
- The Brashler Barn

Some of these venues have live concerts — check their websites to confirm.

Music Trivia

Andy's Music Trivia Quiz

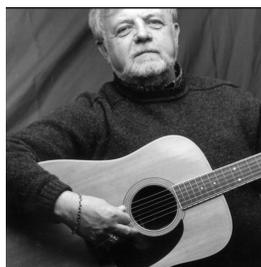
Thanks for your responses. Nice answers Bill Mathews — I give you a 4.75 out of 6. These were tougher than usual. IF you have any trivia to contribute, please do!

Answers to previous Quiz:

Q1. What inspired the lyrics to Elton John song "Rocket Man?"

A1. The song's full title "Rocket Man (I Think It's Gonna Be A Long, Long Time)" was released on March 3, 1972, peaked at #2 a few weeks later, and later appeared on the *Honky Château* album. Some people thought the line "I'm gonna be high as a

"Two ounces of bluegrass can outweigh a ton of jazz . . ."



Bluegrass aficionado and radio host Larry Robinson.

Lawrence "Larry" Robinson, passed away November 30, 2022, at age 86. He was born in Chicago in 1936, served with the U.S. Army, later becoming a helicopter pilot for Chicago Helicopter Services. From there he worked at Argonne, Fermi Labs, and Amoco Research until his retirement in 1994. Until recently he ran an ad in this newsletter.

kite by then" was an evil drug reference. The song was much more literal, as explained in 2016 by lyricist Bernie Taupin. "People identify it, unfortunately, with David Bowie's 'Space Oddity.' It actually wasn't inspired by that at all; it was actually inspired by a story by Ray Bradbury, from his book of science fiction short stories called *The Illustrated Man*. In that book, there was a story called "The Rocket Man," which was about how astronauts in the future would become sort of an everyday job. So I kind of took that idea and ran with that." The *Illustrated Man* was turned into a film in 1969, (man's first walk on the moon was July 1969) but "The Rocket Man" wasn't one of the tales in the film.

Q2. What girls' name became much more popular due to a 1971-72 song?

A2. The song "Brandy" by Looking Glass was a #1 hit for one week in 1972. The name came into some popularity in the 1960's. In 1971 it was 353rd; in 1972 it was 140th; by 1973 it was 82nd, and it peaked in 1978 at #37. The name Brandy remained in the top 100 for 15 years (1973-1987).

Q3. What does Chicago's "25 or 6 to 4" mean?

A3. The Chicago Transit Authority's (CTA, and later, Chicago) reached #4 on the Billboard Hot100, and became their most popular live song. It's about trying to write a song at 25, or 26 to 4:00am. Lyrics as follows: "*Waiting for the break of day; Searching for something to say; Flashing lights against the sky; Giving up, I close my eyes; Sitting cross-legged on the floor; 25 or 6 to 4.*" Lyricist Robert Lamm relates that he was looking at an antique clock, and could not tell the exact time. He expected to change the line later, but it stuck!

Q4. What 1971 rock song describes events of a fire?

A4. Deep Purple's "Smoke On The Water" reached #4 on Billboard's pop singles. The opening riff has been copied many, many times by other bands, teen-agers, etc. The band was staying in Montreux, Switzerland and were forced out of their rooms by billowing smoke, and a fire. Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention were playing at the casino when a fan in the crowd fired a flare gun, causing the wooden roof to catch fire and burn the place down.

Q5. Who wrote the 'Army Song'?

A5. The original version, written in 1908 by Edmund Gruber, was titled "The Caissons Go Rolling Along." The song was transformed into a march by John Philip Sousa in 1917 and renamed the "U.S. Field Artillery March." Since the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard had official songs, the Army was eager to find one of its own. A contest in 1948 resulted in no popular entries. In 1956 Harold Arberg submitted new lyrics to Sousa's "U.S. Field Artillery March" and it was officially dedicated by the Secretary of the Army, Wilber Marion Brucker, on Veterans Day, November 11, 1956.

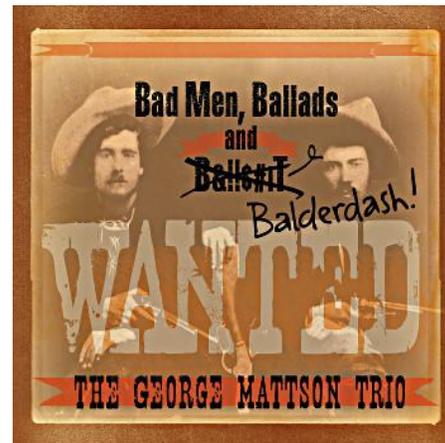
Q6. What famous western star rode a donkey 500 miles as a child?

But his favorite pastime was as the lead member of the Running Fox Bluegrass Band, playing the Dobro guitar among other instruments. He also hosted "Strictly Bluegrass" on WDCB Public Radio at College of DuPage and WRRG Triton College Radio. "His radio fans loved him," recalled a friend.

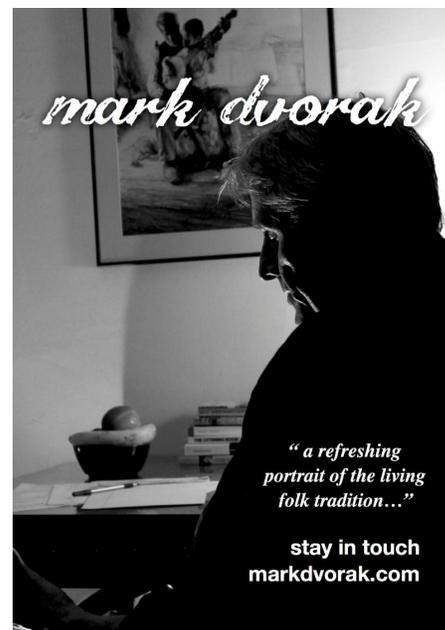
Fred Spanuello remembers a visit from Larry. "Carol, Tommy Re and Larry had a gig at a corn festival years ago and had a rehearsal at our house."

In a Chicago Tribune article, Larry said, "Bluegrass is a very pure American art form. Its country music with a message to it ... with the tempo sped up a bit." At the end of one of his broadcasts, he said, "so remember, two ounces of bluegrass can outweigh a ton of jazz."

With a little help from
our friends . . .



George Mattson Trio
gmtrio.com



A6. Bob Wills was born March 6, 1905 near Kosse, Texas. In 1913 the family relocated to Memphis, Texas with Bob riding the 500 miles on his donkey behind the family wagon. Bob and his father John would play at dances along the way to raise money for food

NEW Trivia Quiz:

Q1. What Beatles record was a two-sided hit featuring essentially solos on both sides?

Q2. What singing stars were killed in a 1960 plane crash near Kansas City.

Q3. What was Glen Campbell's first charting song?

Q4. Who was Motown's first solo artist charting star?

Q5. Since we are in the Chicago area, WHO are the DJ's pictured on the album *WLS Treasure Tunes from the Vault*? What label was it on?

Hope you had a pleasant holiday. Keep those responses coming in:

pictq@yahoo.com



Mark Dvorak
markdvorak.com

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Remembering . . .

Ian Tyson

Ian Tyson, a towering figure in Canadian

Jerry Lee Lewis

Jerry Lee Lewis, the piano-pounding, foot-



music, and half of the '60s folk-singing duo Ian and Sylvia, died December 29 at age 89.

Tyson composed Ian

and Sylvia's most famous song, "Four Strong Winds," in 1963. It became a folk standard — and is a favorite in Plank Road's sing-around songbooks. It's been covered by dozens of artists over the last six decades, including Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, John Denver, Judy Collins, the Carter Family, Marianne Faithful, Waylon Jennings, Bobby Bare, Gillian Welch and others. The couple even mentored aspiring Canadian singer Gordon Lightfoot.

Tyson began singing with his future wife, Sylvia Fricker, as Ian and Sylvia in the early 1960s, and they became a critical part of the New York folk scene alongside emerging figures like Dylan, whose manager, Albert Grossman, signed them to the Vanguard label. The two singers married in 1965 and divorced a decade later after releasing 13 albums together, including hits like Tyson's "Someday Soon," and Sylvia's "You Were on My Mind."

In the very early '60s, original material was not considered essential on the New York folk scene, with even Dylan's debut album consisting mostly of covers. Tyson remembered how that suddenly changed in a big way in 1962, recalling how Dylan "sang me 'Blowin' in the Wind' — and I thought, I can do that." He added. "Dylan wrote 'Blowin' in the Wind' and the next day I wrote 'Four Strong Winds'."

Ian and Sylvia moved their base to Nashville for a period in the late '60s and formed the group Great Speckled Bird in 1969, considered a pioneering force in the burgeoning country-rock movement.

Following their marital and professional split in the '70s, Tyson reinvented himself back in Canada as a small-town rancher near Alberta, and as a solo artist focusing more on western and cowboy-themed music.

"I always wanted to be a cowboy," recalled Tyson. "Not a songwriter or a singer — a cowboy. I just got lucky in the music business."

In 1989, Tyson was inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame, and was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame alongside Sylvia in 1992. In 2005, CBC listeners voted "Four Strong Winds" the most essential Canadian piece of music.



stomping singer who electrified early rock 'n' roll with hits like "Great Balls of Fire" and "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," died October 28. He was 87.

Along with Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley and others, Lewis was one of the leading figures of the 1950s rock era and a master showman — nicknamed "The Killer" — with his raw, uninhibited performances.

But offstage, the singer's personal life was turbulent. Lewis was near the peak of his popularity in 1958 when the public learned that he had married his first cousin, who was 13 at the time; Lewis was 22.

News of the marriage leaked in London, where Lewis was set to perform. It caused an uproar, and the tour was canceled after three shows. He continued to record and tour over the next decade, but his rockabilly music didn't sell in the Beatles era and he couldn't regain the popularity of his early years.

After years of dwindling sales, he reinvented himself in the late 1960s as a country artist and revived his career, scoring a series of Top 10 country hits well into the 1970s.

Lewis was born in 1935 into a poor farming family in Louisiana. One of his cousins, Jimmy Swaggart, would go on to become a popular (and controversial) TV evangelist. Lewis claimed he began playing the piano at age 9, imitating the styles of preachers and Black musicians who passed through the region.

Lewis dropped out of school and traveled to Sun Studios in Memphis in 1956, where he quickly gained work as a session player for such budding stars as Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash. He also recorded with Elvis Presley. A December 1956 recording session with Lewis, Presley, Perkins and Cash — nicknamed the "Million Dollar Quartet" — became a seminal moment in rock history.

By the following year Lewis was internationally famous, even though his incendiary style and suggestive lyrics led some radio stations to boycott his songs. Then came the marriage scandal, and Lewis' aura was never quite the same.

His personal life remained messy. He was married *seven* times (!!) and filed for bankruptcy in 1988. He also battled alcoholism, drug addiction and other health problems for years.

In one infamous 1976 episode, he was arrested at Graceland in the wee hours of the morning after drunkenly crashing his car into the mansion's gates — with a loaded gun — while trying to visit Presley.

"I ain't no goody goody, and I ain't no phony,"

Anita Pointer

Anita Pointer, one of four sibling singers who earned pop success and critical acclaim as



The Pointer Sisters, died on New Year's Eve at the age of 74.

Anita, Ruth, Bonnie and June Pointer grew up singing in their father's church in Oakland, CA.

The group's 1973 debut album included the breakout hit, "Yes We Can Can." Other hit songs included "I'm So Excited," "Slow Hand," "Neutron Dance" and "Jump (For My Love)," with Anita the lead singer on most of their hits.

The group won three Grammys and had 13 U.S. top 20 hit songs between 1973 and 1985. Their hit version of Bruce Springsteen's "Fire" reached No. 2 on the pop chart in 1978. The 1983 album *Break Out* went triple platinum and collected two American Music Awards.

The sisters also loved country music which came naturally to them because they spent summers with relatives in Arkansas — where "that was all they heard." In fact, the Pointers were the first African American group to perform on the Grand Ole Opry in 1974.

Lewis said. "I've lived my life to the fullest and I had a good time doin' it."

In 1986, he joined a constellation of seminal figures as the first group of artists inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Last October, Lewis was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame but was unable to attend the ceremony because he was ill.

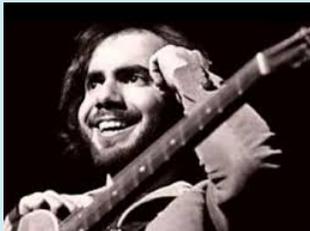
But his most enduring legacy may have been his unhinged piano-playing style, which influenced Elton John and many other musicians. During concerts Lewis banged the keys with his fists and elbows, kicked over his piano stool, climbed atop his piano and once even set it on fire.

He showed that rock 'n' roll wasn't just about the guitar.



Did you know . . . ?

NOTE: This is the second in a series of brief stories about popular songs and artists that you may find fascinating. (OK, maybe not that fascinating, but hopefully you'll find them interesting.) Watch for more in future issues.



"City of New Orleans"

In 1971, Steve Goodman and his wife Nancy took a rail ride south to visit her grandmother on the real-life Illinois Central train called *City of New Orleans*. (A train many Chicago-area college students rode to the U of I and SIU, back in the day.)

While Nancy slept, Steve looked out the window and jotted down nearly everything he saw in a sketchbook. All the events mentioned in the song actually happened — right down to the card game in the club car with two old men.

Goodman recorded his tune early the next year, but it went nowhere. A few months later Arlo Guthrie's cover version became a Top 20 hit. Years later, in 1984, Willie Nelson's version became a No. 1 country hit — just six weeks after Goodman's death from leukemia.



"City of New Orleans" remains a favorite at our Saturday Sing-Arounds.

A Special Thanks to our Membership Contributors!!

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- Carol & Fred Spanuello

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lemos.bill@comcast.net

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