

RJ COWDERY – LOCAL ARTIST WITH NATIONAL ACCLAIM FEATURED JAN 26

RJ COWDERY has solidified her place in the world of performing singer-songwriters, garnering accolades at Mountain Stage NewSong, Kerrville, Falcon Ridge, Rocky Mountain Folk Festival, and Sisters Folk Festival. She plays a clean guitar, flat picking or strumming, stringing chords together to develop melodies built like a proverbial brick house and pours over it all with a voice like butter. Her lyrics are sincere and plainspoken, inviting you to lean in hard and come out the other side changed. RJ Cowdery is the featured act at Jan 26 coffeehouse.

Interview by Bill Cohen

Bill Cohen: *You are from small-town Ohio Appalachia, right? Tell us about that and tell us if that has influenced your music.*

R.J. Cowdery: Yes, I am from Belpre, a small town along the Ohio river, across the river from Parkersburg, WV. There was certainly a lot of Bluegrass influence, but most of the early

See RJ Cowdery – page 2

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- RJ COWDERY - LOCAL ARTIST WITH NATIONAL ACCLAIM - JAN 26 CONCERT PG. 1
- DEC 15 BENEFIT FEATURES DON NEWTON & FRIENDS WITH PAISHA THOMAS PG. 1
- CFMS MEMBER HIGHLIGHT - MICHAEL HALE PG. 4
- JAN 20 SHOW AT BYRNE'S PUB - WHINESTOPPER PG. 5
- YEAR END MATCHING FUND CHALLENGE ! PG. 6
- ANNOUNCING NEW CFMS NEWSLETTER EDITOR BEGINNING IN FEB PG. 6
- CALENDAR OF EVENTS PG. 7

DEC 15 BENEFIT FEATURES DON NEWTON & FRIENDS WITH SPECIAL GUEST PAISHA THOMAS

Enjoy some good Americana/folk music with some seasonal tunes thrown in the mix on Dec 15 – 5:30-7:30pm at La Chatelaine in Worthington. Food & bar service available.

Don Newton and Friends will be performing. Who are the friends? Two of them are talented sideman Brian Szuch (who plays about

See Dec 15 Benefit – page 5



RJ Cowdery – from page 1

influence was from my family. We would gather for holidays and special occasions and there was always singing. Hymns and old songs from Hank Williams, The Carter Family, and The Everly Brothers, to name a few. I spent a lot of time in the summer with my grandparents, we would spend many an evening in the porch swing - singing Roy Accuff and old country songs. As I got older, I was definitely influenced by the 70's singer songwriters - John Denver, Carole King...

Bill: *What are your earliest memories of music, and how did you wind up becoming a performer and songwriter?*

R.J.: Most of the memories are from the collection of records we had. It varied from 50's, 60's and 70's pop and country to Broadway musicals. I can remember playing the records and singing the songs for hours - usually by myself in our basement.

I started having some interest in the guitar as a result of singing and learned to play a little. My guitar interest peaked as a result of injuring the middle finger in my left hand. I cut the tip of my finger off and was told that I would never be able to play guitar.... I learned to play by making up my own

"finger tip" with medical tape and various trial and error methods. I became an over achiever and started my path to making songs



"I'm fortunate to have made many friends with so many singer-songwriter peers that inspire and influence me every day. Being a part of the folk community is something that I hold very dear."

– R.J. Cowdery

up and playing them to friends. I still need my homemade "finger tip" to play guitar.

I continued playing the guitar and learning other people's songs and eventually started writing my

own. Early on I played covers in a pub/restaurant in Marietta, OH. I'd sprinkle in an original here and there and no one complained so it kinda grew from there. Music has always been a calming force for me so I think it was only natural for me to continue to grow as a player and writer. I went to the Kerrville Folk Festival in 2008 and it was there where I really made a connection and I thought that really I had something to offer that was my own. I continue to work really hard to be a better listener and writer.

Bill: *Who are the musician heroes and heroines that have influenced your music?*

R.J.: Early on – definitely, all of the music from my family. As a teenager – John Denver, Carole King, James Taylor, Cat Stevens, Karen Carpenter, and many others. As a young adult, Nanci Griffith, Indigo Girls, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and John Gorka, These are just some of the folks that have made a huge impact on me as an adult. Today, I'm fortunate to have made many friends with so many singer-songwriter peers

that inspire and influence me every day. Being a part of the folk community is something that I hold very dear.

Bill: *You have won numerous*

R.J. Cowdery – page 3

RJ Cowdery – from page 2

song-writing awards. Tell us a little about the process you use to create your own songs.

R.J.: For me, my writing process is usually driven from living life and being an observer. Whatever the subject matter – whether I lived it or someone else has, I try to incorporate a little piece of me in the song. I have to be able to tell you this story that you believe is true no matter what. Getting there takes various forms. I am always noodling on the guitar, though, so that can sometimes be the starting point and set the mood for the song.

Bill: *For years, you've toured across the country with your music. Do any performances come to mind as being particularly great . . . or awful ?*

R.J.: I really try not to dwell on the highs and lows of playing music for folks who most of the time don't know me or what I do. Sometimes, the expectations might not be the same for me as the audience, there's a heckler, or the sound isn't right, or I am not feeling well, I would call these lows. The most fun is when I am playing and the listeners are connecting with what I am doing. Those highs are usually a blur.

Bill: *Is there a particular*

"takeaway" or mood or message you want audiences

to leave with, after they've heard you perform?

"RJ Cowdery is one of the most compelling writers I've run across so far this century...though her songs bear her unmistakable stamp, they are so well conceived that you could swear you've heard them before, sung by a folk legend in Kerrville or at a writer's circle at The Bluebird..." - Don Dixon

SOME AWARDS . . .

Sisters Folk Festival/
Dave Carter Memorial
Songwriter Contest
Winner

*Kerrville Folk Festival
New Folk Winner*

Wildflower! Music
and Arts Performing
Songwriter Winner

*Mountain Stage
NewSong Winner*

Rocky Mountain Folks
Festival Songwriter
Showcase Finalist
(runner up)

*Falcon Ridge Folk
Festival Emerging
Artist Showcase*

Tucson Folk Festival
Finalist

Solar Fest Finalist

Telluride Troubadour
Finalist

R.J.: The absolute best part of being a performing singer-songwriter is sharing songs with people who have never heard me before who, undoubtedly, at every show, come up to me and say to me that I am telling their story and somehow peeked inside their life for 4 minutes. It's an awesome realization that we are all so much more alike than we are different. Sometimes, people cry... It's awesome to know that I've made an emotional connection with someone and I then feel like I have done my job.

Listen to some of R.J. Cowdery here: <https://www.rjcowdery.com/listen>



HOPE TO SEE YOU JANUARY 26!

Held at: **Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Ave.**
Open Jam (all welcome) 6-7pm; Open Mic (free sign up) 7-7:45pm; Community sing 7:45pm;
R.J. Cowdery 8pm.

CFMS MEMBER HIGHLIGHT – MICHAEL HALE

Interview by Bill Cohen

Bill Cohen: *Tell us about your journey that brought you to the Columbus Folk Music Society. You weren't always a folk singer, so how did you get introduced to our group and become so active?*

Michael Hale: When I first heard of CFMS (2006), our band (Halfway Home) was playing regularly at *Three Cups Coffeehouse* in Reynoldsburg and *Cheshire Pizza* in Galena. I think the Mittenburg's, Nancy Bailey, you [Bill] and Randi were some of our audience during those early performances. Nancy Bailey pulled me into attending some board meetings along the way.

She was very supportive of Halfway Home so we started playing the Festival almost annually, along with COFF Benefits the same. Nancy's enthusiasm for the organization was contagious. I hope she and Fred are looking down upon us with smiles that her child (the festival) is growing up and thriving.

Bill: *You have worn so many "hats" for the Columbus Folk Music Society. Many people have seen you in the role of audio engineer, setting up amps, speakers, and microphones at our coffeehouses, concerts, and festivals. Why do you enjoy that so much?*

Mike: I love supporting the performer. Trying to make the room, or tent sound the best I can. It was not a comfort level that came easy. My experience was mostly running sound from the stage, while playing.

I remember my first festival at the [sound] board. Those 50 minute sets with 10 minutes to get last off, and the next up and running with a sound-check, usually on the fly. I stressed for 50 minutes about that coming 10.



Mike Hale at Central Ohio Folk Festival sound board.

Bill: *As a singer and instrumentalist for Halfway Home, you specialize in the song style that's now called Americana. How do you describe that genre, and what draws you to it?*

Mike: A little bit of folk, country,

blues, bluegrass, rock but not strictly true to any of the genre. So you can go anywhere with it. I like story songs, ballads, probably too much.

Bill: *When we first saw you perform in a duo more than 15 years ago, you were fairly stage-shy and didn't have a whole lot of confidence. Now, you're a seasoned professional. How did that change take place?*

Mike: You [Bill] and Randi were the first people from the society to see me perform and I was way south of shy, more fearful, anxiety ridden but I wanted to do it anyway. Those day at *Scottie's Coffee House* in Worthington with Larry Ramey and Mary Miller were nerve-wracking. I memorized every knick-knack on every shelf, anything to avoid eye contact. I

really don't know when exactly my confidence level changed. It certainly helps to be on stage with good people that you sometimes fall back on. Now I just love doing it!

Bill: *Who are your musical heroes and heroines, the people who have influenced you over the years?*

Mike: When I started jamming with friends in the late 70's, there was Doc Watson, Dan Fogelberg, Jimmy Buffett, Billie Joe Shaver, Jonathan Edwards,

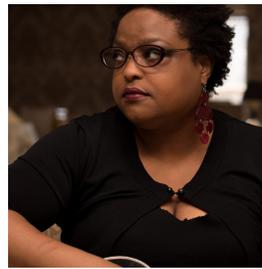
Rodney Crowell, John Prine, Emmylou Harris, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Eagles, okay I am stopping now. You asked.

In those days we only played for people that were drinking at parties, so we sounded pretty good to them. In the late 90's I was given a ticket to see Cry

Dec 15 Benefit – from page 2

everything) and Jerry Miller, whose speciality is the dobro and pedal steel guitar. There may be a few others as well. There will be special guest, Columbus based, singer-songwriter, Paisha Thomas, whose musical genre range has been coined as big enough “to staff an entire office.” (Zak Kolesar, *This Week Booster*, Sept 20, 2018).

Don Newton says of the show, “I have long been in awe of four Americana artists that write and perform with intrigue. With



respect and appreciation, it is my endeavor to share many favorite songs of Cheryl Wheeler, John Gorka, Gillian Welch and RJ. Cowdery from their renowned collections. They are an inspiration to all who will listen, as I’m sure all of CFMS is very much aware.”

The show runs from 5:30-7:30pm and occurs at *La Chatelaine* located at 627 N. High St, Worthington, OH. *La Chatelaine* offers a buffet line with sandwiches, full dinners and a cabinet display full of delicious pastries. They also serve alcohol and offer a Saturday night special – Mimosas for \$3. Come eat early, then sit back and enjoy the show OR eat while you listen. Suggested donation of \$10 (there will be a jar by the entrance to the room). We hope to see you there!

BYRNE’S PUB SHOW SUN, JAN 20

You’ll be in for another musical treat on **Sunday, Jan 20, from 2-4p.m.** That’s when **Whinestopper** will be the featured act at **Byrne’s Pub**, 1248 W. Third Ave in Grandview Heights for another concert. All donations go to support the 2019 Central Ohio Folk Festival. Whinestopper is a Columbus based band noted for its unique mix of genres including folk, ballads, songs of the swing era, and sing-along favorites. The band name aptly reflects the sentiments of the band and those who listen. Members are: Pat Casey (accordion), Renilda Marshall (bass), Charlie Flowers & Teresa Schleifer (guitars). All band members sing (often at the same time too).



Mike Hale (left) with band, *Halfway Home*.

Cry Cry (Richard Shindell, Lucy Kaplansky and Dar Williams). Their album was mostly covers written by some of their music heroes. Those led me to Cliff Eberhardt, James Keelaghan, Robert Earle Keen. The opener for that concert was Julie Miller, an incredible song-writer, and her husband,

Buddy Miller, which created another long list of artists they were involved with. I must back up to the mid-80’s to include SKO & SKB, plus 4 guys writing in Nashville for a solid 20 years: Thom Schuyler,

Fred Knobloch, Paul Overstreet and Craig Bickhardt. They are my story songs!

Bill: *As a member of the CFMS board, a former CFMS president (two terms?), sound engineer, and performer, you have*

donated thousands of volunteer hours to our group. Why? What do you get out of it?

Mike: Board member since 2008, sorry Bill, 5 terms [president], sound at festivals, benefits and fundraisers since 2008, Coffeehouse mostly the last 5 years. I’d like to say it keeps me young, nah! It does make me smile though!



A 100% MATCH FOR YOUR CFMS DONATION BY DEC 31 !

by Bill Cohen

Editor's Note: A generous benefactor has once again offered to match all donations given to CFMS before Dec 31, up to \$500. Meaning. . .

Give \$25 now to the Columbus Folk Music Society, and somebody else is going to donate ANOTHER \$25. That's the gist of a 100% match that, for the third year in a row, an anonymous CFMS supporter is offering.

You give \$10, and he or she will give \$10. You give \$50, and he or she will give \$50. Get it? The matching money will continue until the grand total of individual donations hits \$500. We're talking

about contributions above and beyond our usual membership charges. The deadline for this offer is the end of the year, late night on December 31st.

You can simply send in a check and make a notation that it's a donation for the 100% match. Snail mail it to: CFMS 2018 Challenge, P.O. Box 20735, Columbus Ohio 43220.

If its easier, **the CFMS now has a donation option on its website where you can make donations via PayPal. The link is: <https://www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/contact-donate.html>. Just**

click the **DONATE** button.

Last year's challenge prompted members to

contribute \$640, so the CFMS took in a total of more than \$1,140.

Remember that CFMS is officially a 501-C-3 charitable organization. That means that donations to it may be tax-deductible, if you itemize. Of course, you should consult a knowledgeable tax preparation expert or become one yourself to understand how a charitable contribution to CFMS might save you money on your bottom-line tax bill.

As the 2019 Central Ohio Folk Festival is in full swing, your donations now will really help.



Photos from recent concert at Run the Race center in the Hilltop. The concert featured The Ark Band and a pre-concert drumming event.



A quick note to let you know, due to the holiday season, we will not be putting together a newsletter for January. Look for our February issue in late January.

The Staff of "A Different Strummer" wish you and yours the best during the upcoming holidays!

NEW CFMS NEWSLETTER EDITOR TAKES OVER WITH FEBRUARY 2019 ISSUE

Starting in February, Pete Insabella will be taking over the monthly production and layout of the CFMS newsletter. He welcomes articles, suggestions, or bits of information! Please e-mail Pete at: editor@columbusfolkmusicsociety.org or pinsabel@cscc.edu. Outgoing newsletter editor, Diane Boston, wishes to thank those who have so faithfully supported the newsletter over the years, including reading its contents! Please offer a thank you to Pete next time you see him for taking on this new responsibility.

SAVE THE DATE . . .

The Saturday Music Jam at Worthington Farmer's Market 9:30-11:30am – at the Shops at Worthington Mall (location of the market & jam during winter). The jam is back in location next to children's area. All are welcome. Consider bringing a chair.

1st & 3rd Thursdays, Dec 6 & 20, 1:30-2:30pm: Jam at Wesley Glen (Special Care Unit) – 5155 N High St, Columbus. Contact Mike at: mikezajano@aol.com for more info or to be put on the e-list.

2nd & 4th Wednesdays, Dec 12 & 26, 2-3pm: Jam at Laurels of Worthington (Memory Care Unit) – 1030 N. High St., Worthington. Contact Mike at: mikezajano@aol.com for more info or to be put on the e-mail list.



Saturday, Dec 15, 5:30-7:30pm: Don Newton & Friends with special guest Paisha Thomas (festival benefit) at: *La Chatelaine*, 627 N. High St, Worthington, OH. *Suggested donation \$10*. Hear songs of John Gorka, Cheryl Wheeler, Gillian Welch and more and some seasonal tunes as well.

Sunday, Jan 20, 2-4pm: Whinestopper at: *Byrne's Pub*, 1248 W. Third Ave, Columbus (Grandview Hts). Central Ohio Folk Festival benefit; *free will donation*. Hear folk, ballads, and songs from the swing era.

Saturday, Jan 26, 8pm: RJ Cowdery (Part of Americana/ Folk Concert Series) at FolkSide Coffeehouse:
6pm – Open Jam (all welcome);
7-7:45pm – Open Mic (free sign up);
7:45-8pm – Community Sing
8pm – **RJ Cowdery**. Held at: *the Columbus Mennonite Church*, 35 Oakland Park Avenue, Cols. Suggested donation: \$10; students & CFMS members \$7; under 12 free. Handicap accessible. Bring a can of food for our local pantry.

FOLLOWING OUR OWN

Saturday, Dec 8: 7-10pm, Avalon Nine Acoustic Band, Java Central Coffee House, 20 S. State St, Westerville, OH. No cover, tips appreciated.

Saturday, Dec 15: 10:00am. Joanie Calem, Seeds of Caring, Intergenerational Sing Along, *Wesley Glen*, Columbus, OH

Friday, Dec 21: 7-9pm, Grassahol: Byrnes Pub, 1248 West 3rd Ave, Grandview Hts. No cover.

Friday, Dec 28: 8-11pm, Halfway Home: Tara Hall, 274 E Innis Ave, Cols, OH. No cover, tips appreciated.

Saturday, Jan 19: 7pm.



Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

Michael Barrie
 Lynn & Gordon Belcher (NEW)
 James & Martha Bowling
 Mary Finney (NEW)
 Karen Fries
 Gayla Foote
 Robin Frees
 Maxine Gilgoff (NEW)
 Steve & Doris Ing
 Suzanne Koebel
 Bob Lipetz
 Cheryl Lubow
 Pat Marida
 Renilda Marshall / Pat Casey (Sponsor level)
 Thom & Jan McCain (Sponsor level)
 Art & Sharon Mittenbergs
 Don and Jennie Newton
 Pam Temple & Michele Murphy
 Bobbie Pruiksmas
 Shelbi Ann Rhein
 Betsy Salt
 Beth Scherer
 Denny & Karen Stephens
 Margaret Swisher
 Lowell Webb & Pam Montgomery
 Barbara Westerviller (NEW)
 Anita Wolverton

Bohemian Highway and Free Beer and Chicken Coalition.

Co-bill at *First UU Church*, 93 W Weisheimer Rd, Columbus, OH. Free will donation at door.

Friday, Jan 25: 7pm. Bohemian Highway at *Rambling House*, 310 E Hudson St, Columbus, OH. \$5 cover.

**The Columbus Folk
Music Society**

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Columbus, OH 43220



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Next Issue in February

We're on the web!

www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org

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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 / band membership): _____, _____,
_____, _____

Membership renewals are due annually on September 30th. Check one of the membership levels listed below.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes! Please contact me regarding
volunteer opportunities within the
organization. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$200 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Band Membership \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver \$250 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good Friend \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Gold (Life Member) \$500 | |
| | | |

For credit card transactions, visit CFMS website at: <https://www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/member-application.html>
Membership amounts may be 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)