

LOCAL 1000

North American
Traveling Musicians Union



NEW DEAL

FALL 2008

New Strategies and the Price of Gas: Local 1000 Members Share Their Ideas

Times are tough for traveling musicians and performers who work a touring circuit of church basements, house concerts and small clubs. Roots musicians, folkies, singer-songwriters have always lived their career lives precariously. Now, with economic uncertainty, the rise of gas prices and the gloom-and-doom warnings about our carbon footprints, our working lives are more precarious. Or are they? Occasionally the Local 1000 office gets a call from one of its members saying he or she is suspending touring or performing for a while. The word gets around and talk of hard times is upon us. That gas bill just got a little too high to make it worthwhile, or audiences are off because they would rather stay home and watch American Idol than to drive 20 miles to a folk concert.

On the other hand, the drive to continue onward with one's career, no matter how low-paying it might be, causes some to rethink how they are doing things. Is the price of gas really so important? Are audiences staying home? And if so, maybe that's a good thing. Instead of our audiences taking that trip to Europe, they've decided to stay home and go out for some local entertainment, the kind that costs less than the admission to that Mary J. Blige show at Madison Square Garden. Maybe it's time to explore the mythic club scene in Brooklyn that doesn't make the headlines but where new and edgy talent can be heard.

We were curious to find out if and how Local 1000 members were being affected by tougher times and the rising price of gas. Not all we interviewed complained about the gas, but instead shared with us the philosophy

that has kept them moving along with an attitude that fueled them better than diesel or ethanol.

Rani Arbo told us, for instance, that gas prices were a consideration in her band's decisions about which vehicles to take on tour. They could ditch the van and one car and take 2 Subarus. Or they could just crowd everyone into the van. But the price of their sanity was worth spending for the extra vehicle. A little independence and peace of mind for band members goes a long way toward a humane tour. But they are thinking twice about the long trips. Given an offer to play at Cal-Tech with the Pine Leaf Boys is hard to pass up. But even though the money was enough to get the band out to the west coast and pay everyone too, it's only one gig and hard for Rani not to think of the carbon cost. In addition, finding childcare and the emotional wear and tear that takes its toll when you're no longer in your twenties, caused her to say to herself, "yes, we can do it, but is it reasonable?"

Thanks to Joel Mabus for costing it all out for us. Well, he cost it out for himself and shared it with us. He starts out with driving a fuel efficient vehicle and then figures as follows:

"On my desk I have a post-it note with my car expenses per mile: Depreciation (figuring 110,000 miles before it is traded in) is 14 cents/mile. Insurance (a year's cost divided by a typical year's mileage) is 5 cents/mile. Maintenance (guesstimate on oil changes and this & that) is 2 cents/mile That stuff comes to 21 cents per mile. The variable is gasoline. I figure 30 miles per gallon. Take

the price of a gallon (in cents) and divide by the mpg, and you will get the cost per mile.

"When gas was a trifling \$2.70 last year, the cost of gas per mile was 9 cents. This Spring it was \$4.20 per gallon, or 14 cents per mile. Here and now it is about \$3.80 or 12.7 cents per mile. Adding those gas costs to the fixed 21 cents for everything else, this last year has gone from 30 cents per mile total cost to a high of 35 cents per mile.

"Putting things in perspective, while the cost per gallon of gasoline went up a whopping 56% (\$2.70 to \$4.20), the cost of my car operations went up only 17%. "When I am offered a gig, I google the mileage and do the math. It all goes in the hopper, and paying the car comes first.

"I think too many folksingers don't think about travel costs other than simple out-of-pocket, pay-at-the-pump costs. Instead, I think that every three miles I drive is roughly a buck, and that HAS to be part of my pay, just as if it were an airline ticket.

Then there is Jay Mankita, using folkie ingenuity, has "...been driving mostly on waste vegetable oil since 2003 (about 1 part diesel to 3 or 4 parts veggie), so the higher prices at the pump haven't hit me as hard as they might, but I have been affected by the rising demand for bio-fuels, so that many of the restaurants that used to be happy to give away their used oil are now asking for money."

For Pete and Maura Kennedy, saving on gas means playing local and playing local means living in a large metropolitan area like New York City. "We've relocated back to Manhattan from Northampton MA,

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**Membership Meeting - November 15.
Nominations for officers, see page 2.**

LOCAL 1000

IMPORTANT MEETINGS

The Fall Membership Meeting will be held at Hudson Valley Resort in Kerhonkson, NY on November 15 at 3:30PM. The resort is at 400 Granite Road, an hour and half drive from New York City. In addition, the Local 1000 Executive Board will hold meetings at the resort on November 14 & 15. Executive Board meetings are open to members to observe.

Nominations for the offices of President, Canadian Vice-President and Midwestern Executive Board are now open and must be made in writing by Nov. 14 or made in person at the membership meeting during the final nominations process.

Please note, only members in good standing (paid up) will be admitted to the meeting.

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On the Road...

Fame is for Sissies

by Chris Chandler

This summer I have been celebrating my twentieth year on the road. I think it's pretty amazing that I've never had a 'day job,' considering that I'm not even a blip on the radar screen of pop music. Successful unemployment is more challenging than having a job. I've never been very good at selling my own show - heck, I still haven't found a good way to describe it. The secret to my longevity may well be summed up by the question: "Same time next year?"

I like developing a relationship with a particular venue. Early on I made the mistake of spending too much time trying to get into "the better" club. WHY? There was always a "cooler" scene. The thing that the "cool" clubs have in common is they don't stay the "cool" club for very long. The haute couture is so fickle. You have started a relationship with one venue. Your fan base is now familiar with it. Stay there - even if it's not the biggest or the best. They know where it is. After the gig, just say to the talent buyer, "Same time next year?" Your fans will get used to seeing you at a particular club. It is just plain easier. And one of these days your little favorite club may become the cool place to be. Your presenter will appreciate your loyalty, too.

Sure there was a time when I was aspiring to be the next big thing, but once I got over the fact I wasn't going to be "famous" it made life on the road richer. I say, "Fame is for sissies." It would be easy to be on the road for twenty years if you were famous. Hotel rooms, managers, something called meals. Trying doing it for twenty years when you're passing the hat for twelve people in a coffee house in North Dakota. (Of course, these days I ask for, and receive, union scale.)

Ever since God said, "Let there be light," and he hit the universal remote, and the first little white dot appeared on the giant surround sound television screen in the sky, and Adam and Eve sat down - in their little fig leaf bathrobes

on their little Fred Flintstone couches watching God's first mini-series called The Constellations - stories began to unfold. These stories danced in their dreams. They were passed on through generations until today we get Dancing with the Stars. The Constellations got cancelled by a new show called Smog. Today, people go to sleep watching shows like American Idol where the stories are about them becoming the stars that no longer exist. Didn't The Bible, The Torah and The Koran all warn us of worshipping at a False American Idol?

Our definition of star has become as distorted as our view of the night sky in downtown Los Angeles. Why do you think everyone in LA wants to be a star? Because there are no stars.

That is my point. There are ways to keep telling your stories, and make a living doing it, without the heart ache of ambition.

As I look in my rear view I see that objects are indeed closer than they appear and, that the little white reflectors that divide the freshly paved highway will be your necklace of stars if you love your audience, not the adulation. Develop a relationship with your presenter. I write down the names of the staff and/or volunteers on my set list and make sure I thank them by name from the stage. Make them be glad to see you when you roll through "same time next year." They will be excited to have you back. They will tell their friends, and you can be successful as the bard of olde roaming from the modern equivalent of campfire to encampment, singing the stories of the village just over there. And they will gather round you, not because you are famous but because you have something to say.

Chris Chandler has performed on thousands of tiny stages along the thin highways of fat America. You can read and subscribe to his monthly missives at www.chrischandler.org.



MEMBER NEWS

Do you want to announce New Releases, Projects, Events, Births, Deaths, Marriages etc.? Please send information to Joe Jencks via joejencks@hotmail.com. Please specify in the title that the message pertains to: Local 1000 Member News. Thanks.

New Releases...

Anne Feeney, CD—Dump The Bosses Off You Back. Featuring arrangements of three IWW tunes (the title track as a Poguesish polka, “Preacher and the Slave,” and a haunting version of “Hallelujah I’m a Bum” coupled with business news vignettes.) There are six new songs from Anne, as well as a beautiful song titled “Sago” by Local 1000 member Kiya Heartwood. Anne will be performing at the European Social Forum in Malmo, Sweden before leaving to conduct an activists’ musical guided tour of the west of Ireland. More at <http://annefeeney.com>.

Scott Ainslie, CD—Thunder’s Mouth. Scott Ainslie is now releasing his fifth compact disc: a powerful, rootsy slice of traditional blues, African-American songs, and originals. Here, Ainslie’s guitar, mandolin, and voice are masterfully complemented by Grammy Award-winning cellist Eugene Friesen; Lafayette, Louisiana guitarist Sam Broussard; and T-Bone Wolk, bassist and road warrior with Hall & Oates, who also contributes accordion, keyboard, guitar, and hand percussion to the project. The CD features African-inspired guitar riffs, complemented by Eugene Friesen’s remarkable cello playing and T-Bone Wolk’s bass, percussion, and rhythm guitar. For more info go to www.cattailmusic.com.

David Gans, CD—The Ones That Look The Weirdest Taste The Best. (Perfectible Recordings PERF-07) Produced by Tim Carbone of Railroad Earth, with musical support from Carbone and his band-mates John Skehan, Andy Goessling, and Johnny Grubb; bassist

Lindsey Horner of Jewels and Binoculars; pedal steel, lap steel, and electric guitar from Buck Dilly. All are original songs, including collaborations with Lorin Rowan, Jim Page, Rita Hurault and Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter. Mastered in HDCD by Joe Gastwirt. www.dgans.com.

Trout Fishing in America, CD—Big Round World. Three time Grammy nominees, Ezra Idlet and Keith Grimwood, move further upstream this fall with an all-new collection of 14 original songs for families. The CD features a range of musical styles and several songs derived from songwriting workshops with children. The students’ ideas never fail to amaze Ezra and Keith. “Having 4th graders come up with the idea of writing a song about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, two icons from our childhood was surprising, inspiring and encouraging,” Ezra said. www.troutmusic.com.

Larry Long, Theater—Wellstone. A new musical about the deceased Senator Paul Wellstone. Long wrote the lyrics and songs



Tao Rodriguez and Larry Long at the Peace Island picnic, St Paul, MN, Sept. 6.

for the play and is regularly involved in the production. The production is currently running at The Robert and Janet Sabes Center for Jewish Arts and Humanities in Minneapolis, MN. The play was written by Mark Rosenwinkel, and is directed by Matt Sciple. www.sabesjcc.org.

Spook Handy, CD—Whatcha Gonna Do? Spook’s 4th CD, aims to set the record straight by sharing songs, originals and covers, that open people’s hearts and minds, that encourage and empower, all the while being fun, educational and a reminder of our unlimited human and spiritual potential. With this election year in mind the songs were crafted to deliver hard messages in a simple palatable form. www.spookhandy.com.

Awards...

Steve Eulberg, 2007-2008 Opus Award for Sound Design, for Arabian Nights! Eulberg composed and performed Persian-style Santyr music and themes, along with two other artists, Mary Zimmerman, who wrote and sang original songs; and Peter Anthony, who created foundational drones and composed critical themes. www.steveeulberg.com.

Births...

Lui Collins announces the birth of her first grandchild, Ezra, born at home in Troy, NY on April 7 to her daughter and son-in-law, Sylva and Mark Menard. Lui was helping out at the birth, which she reports, “was quite awesome in the literal sense, to witness my own daughter giving birth. Ezra adores music, just lights up when we sing to him.” Congratulations to Lui and her family. www.luicollins.com.

New Strategies and the Price of Gas

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where we lived for the past 2 1/2 years,” says Maura. “When we moved there, gas cost half as much as it does now. Because Northampton is a minimum of an hour and a half drive from most of our gigs, you can imagine how our gas expenses have gone up. Other things like meals and hotels are more expensive now too, and yes, we do see that people have less money to spend on concerts and travel. By moving back

to New York, we will be traveling less because of the concentration of venues and other music opportunities here.”

Itinerant political folkie, Dave Rovics told us, “the rise in gas prices have coincided with me having a small child to take care of (my daughter, Leila), which has affected my touring drastically. Now I mainly play gigs on weekends and hope to get gigs that pay well enough to fly around

on a regular basis. This might have worked OK a few years ago, but along with the rising gas prices ... has been the rise in jet fuel prices and thus in the price of plane tickets. The price of rental cars has generally skyrocketed as well, and this has also profoundly affected me...”

“It’s hard to say how much the rise in gas prices has affected the size of my audiences,” Dave continued, “since there are too many

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LOCAL¹⁰⁰⁰

welcomes these
NEW MEMBERS
Fall – 2008

Dan “Crow” Allshouse
John Bunge
Kat Burns
Jennifer Hankins
Billy Kemp
Michael-Owen Liston
Cathy Miller

REINSTATED
Nicholas Williams
Mary Coogan
Dave Clarke
Peter Siegel



New Strategies and the Price of Gas

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other factors that affect the regular rise and fall in audience sizes, at least for me.

Sue Trainor said, “Interestingly, I have the impression that folks are doing more to entertain themselves locally instead of making bigger expenditures to go further or to see higher priced shows - so building the audience where we have a core group is working pretty well.”

“One strategy that I helped initiate this summer for a festival was an online [tool] for folks who wanted to carpool...” Rani Arbo believes that audiences in hard times need to be uplifted and that factor may negate the hesitancy of music fans to stay home to save gas.

“I’ve definitely stepped up my pursuit of closer gigs, and have noticed a downturn in attendance at certain types of shows,” Jay Mankito observed. “I’ve tended to attribute that more to TV and the internet though...It’s also one of the reasons I like performing at schools - the audience size and payment are guaranteed.”

Many musicians are finding the internet opening new doors in building audiences, that may have otherwise diminished. “Our

favorite new discovery is ReverbNation.com,” Maura Kennedy told us. “This is a great way to not only promote your music, but also to get fans who want to help spread the music of their favorite bands to participate as “street team members” and “promoters”. She says the site “...gives long-time, die-hard fans and enthusiastic new fans alike a real opportunity to help the bands they love.”

But James Durst summed up what might keep us all in the game, something that will ring familiar with most traveling musicians out of the mainstream. “I’m really not doing a whole lot that much differently,” he admitted. “In fact, I’m presently preparing to depart on an estimated 10,000-mile coast-to-coast (and back) sojourn. If anything, I’m seeking more weekday/weeknight performance opportunities to kind of pick up the slack between weekends and cover the in-between costs of being out there. Fortunately, forty years of friends and fans across the country [are eager] to host and house me. Yes, the increase in the cost of gas is a bit of a shock to one’s longtime expectations, but it’s still a whole lot cheaper than in most European countries. We adapt.”



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