



Expatriate American living in Norway – Songwriter/Multi-instrumentalist/Artist

The Formative Years – Folk Music, Woodstock & War

Jeff (Jeffrey) Wasserman grew up in the hamlet of East Norwich, New York approximately 2 km from the village of Oyster Bay on the north shore of Long Island. He 'stole' his older sister's guitar at the age of 11 and never gave it back.

The North Shore of Long Island was also home to 'The Guitar Workshop', where at the age of 15 Jeff began as a guitar student. Two years later he was teaching there. It was here that he first met Jeff Davis and Jeff Warner (and Paul Brady who had a brief teaching stint at the school). Wednesday evenings was tune session night and Wasserman soon developed his driving fiddle tune back-up guitar skills while at the same time brainwashing him with hundreds of fiddle tunes.

Jean Ritchie, known as "The Mother of Folk" and folk music collector Frank Warner (Jeff Warner's father), who discovered songs like "Tom Dooley," "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," "Whiskey in the Jar" and "The Days of 49 " also lived in the vicinity and were sources of inspiration in those early days.

In 1969, 15 years old, Jeff went to The Newport Folk Festival, where he first heard the "New" folk artists like Joni Mitchell and James Taylor. There he also heard talk of the upcoming Woodstock Music Festival in Bethel, N.Y. For Jeff, the Woodstock Festival was a horizon-expanding experience on many levels and laid the foundation for his musical philosophy, "there is no box" - good music can not be locked inside the frames of genres.

The Vietnam War was raging and it was a turbulent social and political time with anti-war demonstrations and arrests. Jeff chose to dodge the draft and left the United States just 1 month shy of his 18th birthday. For eighteen months he hitchhiked around Europe earning his living as a street musician. He didn't return to the United States until 1973 when the draft was finally ended.

After returning, Jeff won a local radio station songwriting contest and at 19 years old debuted as a songwriter and artist. His first solo concert was to open for Pink Andersen (whom Pink Floyd took 1/2 of its name from - the other being Floyd Council). The

success was followed by more concerts opening for among others Ry Cooder, Patrick Sky and Sam Chatman (of The Mississippi Sheiks), and The Balfa Brothers.

Later, he would tour with Jeff Davis and Jeff Warner under the name "The 3 Jeffs". They had a repertoire from a wide variety of American folk traditions performing at folk clubs, universities, coffeehouses, house concerts, and contra / square dances throughout the Eastern USA.

The traditional folk music environment was quite conservative at the time and a bit too cramped for Wasserman, who would further develop his music by mixing multiple genres. "Chicken-Am Good" was established by a group of like-minded musicians. They played Old-Timey, Jugband, Bluegrass, Blues, Celtic, Sea Shanties, fiddle tunes, original songs as well as space opera!

It was in 1974 - 75 with "Chicken-Am Good" that Jeff first came to Norway on tour. They held court at a farm outside Haugesund on Norway's west coast for an entire year, where they had countless "all-night" jam sessions and influenced several (now famous) Haugesund musicians with their eclectic folk music mix.

Jeff and the band returned to the US, where they changed their name to "Easy on the Tuba". In 1978 they won N.Y. Old Timey Music Contest" and played support for Lester Flatt.

It didn't take long before Jeff traveled back to his musician friends in Haugesund and the newgrass band "Gone At Last" was formed. It was not without reason that Tore Olsen, the legendary editor of the Norwegian music magazine "Puls" wrote; "Gone at Last is the spearhead of acoustic country music in Scandinavia". This was long before the Scandinavian press expressed equal enthusiasm for Old Timey & Bluegrass as they do today.



"Gone At Last" kept on for 20 years and had up to 200 travel days a year throughout Scandinavia and the US where they also did two extensive Tours with Cindy Cashdollar as a band member, playing concerts with the likes of Emmy Lou Harris, Bill Monroe, The Seldom Scene, Ralph Stanley and The New Grass Revival.

Jeff m/ Bill Monroe - Gone At Last USA Tour 1986



Gone At Last - opening 2 nights for Emmy Lou Harris - Lone Star Cafe, NYC - 1986

In 1985, the band was nominated for a Spellemann (Norwegian Grammy) for their first album "Gone At Last". They recorded their second album in 1987, but due to the bankruptcy of the record company to which they were signed, "Still Out There" wasn't released until 1994. Gone At Last supported the release with a tour that same year in Scandinavia with the "The Band".

In addition to being a multi-instrumentalist, he is known primarily for his songwriting. He has now lived in Norway since 1983 and is perhaps best known for having written the lyrics to the mega-hit "Everyone Needs A Friend" (Dance With A Stranger), "Tell Me Where You're Going" (Silje Nergaard), and "Moving Time" (Rita Eriksen and Delbert McClinton).

He has written for and with among others; Adam Douglas, Didrik Solli-Tangen, Big Bang, Jonas Fjeld, Sissel Kyrkjebø, Knut Reiersrud, Mighty SamMcClain (USA), Jan Werner Danielsen, Rita Eriksen, Henning Kvitnes, Kristin Berglund, Harpo Svensson (S), Rick Danko (USA), Sanne Salomonsen (D), Anne Linnet (D), Tom Pacheco (USA). In addition, he's interpreted lyrics by Norwegian "national treasures" Åge Aleksandersen and Ole Paus into English.

Wasserman was signed to Warner-Chappell in 1994 but chose to leave in 1997.

Wasserman has over 400 songs registered in TONO (the Norwegian performing rights collection society) and has song cuts on over 85 albums.

In 2009 he was nominated for a Norwegian Grammy, "Lyricist of the Year".

In 2009 Jeff released his first solo album, Jeffrey & The Free Radikals

(Universal/Headwind), which he produced along with Knut Reiersrud. "The Knut Reiersrud Band" was the musical tree trunk for the album with Wasserman's many stringed instruments and guests Garth Hudson, Cindy Cashdollar, Fionnuala Sherry, Claudia Scott, Elg, and many more.

The release was followed by a tour with Garth Hudson and the Knut Reiersrud Band.

"He's great, we feel that Jeff follows in the tradition of great poetry and the great poets, and the musical end of it is assured". - Garth Hudson

The press was also impressed:

Dagbladet - 5 out of 6 stars

Blues News -5 out of 6 stars - *"One of the most fulfilling and lovely albums in Norwegian roots music in a long time"*

Rootstime.be - (Belgium) *"... This man is a true discovery .. a truly impressive album"*

FaroJournal - *"one of the finest Americana albums ever produced in Norway "*.

In 2016 he released "The Meeting of the Waters" (2016) only in physical format. Wasserman collected the strands of his rich musical life. He boiled his songs down to fiddle tunes and introduced them to his mentor from his formative teens, Jeff Davis, trad. American banjo, fiddle-man, and folklorist. Only songs that Davis found to be congruent with traditional folk music were recorded, and mostly in Davis's own living room. Wasserman traveled back to Norway and built upon the recorded fiddle tunes with his arsenal of instruments; added contributions from others in his musical family from 4 different countries – Norway, USA, Ireland, and Sweden which also included 18-year-old daughter, Ella who makes an impressive vocal debut. Other musical comrades in his "Intercontinental String Band" are also noteworthy – Paul Brady, Jonas Fjeld, Andy Irvine, Claudia Scott, Knut Reiersrud, Esbjørn Hazelius, and Brennen Leigh.

"The Meeting Of The Waters" is a wholly acoustic album and was recorded using vintage acoustic instruments and with the best "vintage" microphones available. The result is a rich, warm embroidery and highly organic recording giving the listener the sense of actually being in the same room as the musicians through 12 timeless songs.

T Bone Burnett – *"A remarkable collection of songs... One man's journey to the center of American music, and his trip back out to make his own ... Jeff has conquered the world through his soulful discovery". – T Bone Burnett*

Some other reviews:

Blues News (5) - "Wow! The record is fantastic if you want to lend your ear to the foundation of American folk music, mixed with some Irish and some Norwegian... the authenticity and timeless acoustic perfection and lush performance. I LOVE IT!"

Dagbladet (5) - "This is simply 48 minutes of euphony you should treat yourself to..."

Fidelity Magazine - "a new masterpiece"

fRoots (England) - "An album to look out for!"

Wasserman was awarded the **TONO EDVARD Prize** (as in Grieg; TONO is Norway's performing Right Organization) in 2016.

Wasserman found that it would take six multi-instrumentalists to perform the finely woven compositions from "The Meeting of the Waters" live. So, in 2017 he gathered a stellar multinational (Norway, Sweden, USA), multigenerational (from 26 - 74) group of multi-instrumentalist acoustic performers, into a band and named it "**Jeffrey's Reverie**" ([reverie](#) = daydream).



Jeffrey's Reverie toured extensively over the last four years in Norway. They developed a unique, eclectic sound deeply rooted in traditional American, Celtic, and Scandinavian folk music, the songwriting of Jeff Wasserman, and the vocal harmony chemistry of the three signature vocalists, Jeff, Anne Marit Bergheim, and Marius Graff. At the end of their 2019 Fall Tour, they went into the studio and recorded most of "We Shall Dance Again". Then the COVID pandemic hit and the record wasn't completed until 2023.

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