

Ron Tintner
SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR 2011

Ron Tintner has been a member of HSA since 2005. In 2012 Ron became president of the HSA. Ron has been active in many songwriting groups for several years including the Dallas Songwriters Association. Ron has written a lot of songs. His music can be heard at <http://www.soundclick.com/bands/default.cfm?bandID=385038>. He goes by the name of “The RT Project.”



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Tell me a little bit about your general background.

Musically, I started on violin in my Junior HS orchestra for two years. The summer after 8th grade, I took up guitar. A friend and I got together and started a band, which evolved over the next five years. Learning “hits of the day” I learned a lot about instrument and vocal harmony arranging and picked up keyboards, bass and a little drums along the way. I had side projects along the way: “Blood, Sweat & Tears” and “standards”-like horn bands, where I learned something about writing horn charts, a folk group and a vocal/guitar duo with my girl friend. In later college, graduate and medical school my music went into a relative hiatus. When I was a neurology resident in Dallas, several things happened to change that. First, I was given a cassette of the group The LA4, which did Latin-Classical- Jazz fusion, which prompted me to go through several volumes of Aaron Shearer’s Classical Guitar Method to play finger style Latin jazz. Next, we had a Resident party where everyone was supposed to perform something. I dusted off my guitar and a bunch of songs, had a great time and ended up jamming with some of the other residents

for hours and was musically re-charged. Then the MIDI revolution started where there was fusion between the world of music and computers. I was heavily involved in programming since early college and that also really turned me on. Soon after I had gotten a MIDI keyboard, had a MIDI-based trio and was sequencing accompaniments for covers. Over the next several years, besides various band projects, I had started to get interested in Song Writing and began attending the Dallas Songwriters Assoc. I met a friend that was a pro session keyboardist, and we started getting together once a week to write. I moved from Dallas to California from 1994 – 2000 and again my music went into relative hiatus. I moved to Houston in 2000. A few years later, I got involved with some fellow physicians in a cover band and ignited my songwriting fires. I joined HSA in 2005 with the vow to have a song done each month under any circumstances. In my professional/academic life in neurology/neuroscience I have also pursued a number of areas related to music and the brain, which have in turn reflected backward and informed my songwriting/producing. Also in the last couple of years, I have become emerged in the ukulele, which is guided by music along the way. I think my science background has definitely pushed my usual development and I remain absolutely intrigued by all aspects of music: production, cognition, performance, physics, music theory, behavioral and physiological effects, yada yada yada.

What was the first song you learned how to play, and on what kind of instrument?

Probably Mary had a Little Lamb on violin (7th grade) – On guitar, probably some Beatle song.

What are your primary musical influences?

The Beatles – Their emergence was at the same time as my real musical awareness and I learned Beatle songs as my primary pop training. But also, their evolution through fusing various styles and genres coincided (and probably prompted) my own musical excursions.

J.S. Bach – I absolutely love counterpoint and Bach was my guide to this. In addition, The St. Mathew Passion has become one of my favorite pieces. In addition, The” Toccata and Fugue in C minor” leads off Fantasia (one of my favorite movies) and leads into Lukas’ “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” another of my all-time favorite pieces.

(Antonio Carlos) Jobim – Brazilian Jazz is probably my favorite genre and Jobim is the king – He defines the genre – “The Waters of March” is my favorite piece.

Do you perform as well as write songs? If so, at what venues can people find you?

Yes – Mostly, I perform in my home studio, recording my songs. Live, mostly open mics on guitar, uke or keyboards, as well as with “HSA on the Road” at retirement and nursing homes – also I have been involved in the TONIC program, “troubadouring” room to room at Texas Children’s Hospital.

How would people describe your songs? What do you think sets them apart from other writers?

Hopefully they’re described as both musically and lyrically literate, interesting and possibly intriguing. I think one of my core traits is intellectual curiosity and I believe that is reflected in my songs.

How long have you been writing, and what is your process for developing a song?

A few (very bad) songs as a teenager (late 60’s to 70’s) several better ones in the early 90’s and with a real passion since about 2004.

Song development can take a number of routes. Most commonly, some idea comes to make and while I am running, walking the dog or driving I will develop the idea melodically and lyrically. By the time I get to an instrument, the song is largely done, although typically it will go through revisions when I am working at it on an instrument. I usually will try to play it on acoustic guitar, acoustic piano and ukulele to see if the different instruments caused it to go in various directions. I will usually record a simple two-track documentation version. At some point, I will sit down and record it into my DW (Sonar X1) - usually I will put down a rudimentary drum track, then a simple piano accompaniment and a rough vocal, then start working on other instruments and harmony parts. Usually, I pretty much have the arrangement/orchestration in my head before I start at the computer, but again it may take various directions depending on my progress. I typically then like to make a CD and play it in the car so I can practice singing the song as well as have an extended critical listen to the track as a whole.

What are your musical goals?

Write and produce interesting songs and tracks although I would certainly be tickled pink to accomplish something in the “business of music.” Realistically, that is not a high-ranking goal, and wouldn’t let that interfere with the pleasure I get from just producing songs and tracks that satisfy me.

What three albums influenced your style the most? What five singles would you take with you to a desert island?

Albums:

Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band – The Beatles
Blood, Sweat & Tears (II) – BS&T
The LA4 Scores – The LA4

“Singles” (really album cuts):

I Love You More Than You’ll Ever Know (Al Kooper; BS&T, from “Child is Father to the Man”)
Your Latest Trick (Mark Knopfler; Dire Straits “Brother in Arms”)
Josh Groban, Mi Mancherai (From Il Postino, track from the album “Josh Groban”) – Absolutely beautiful. Lyrics are in Italian and for a long time I had no idea what they meant
The Sorcerer’s Apprentice (Dukas) Fantasia Sound-track
Kari – from “One on One” Earl Klugh & Bob James

Interview arranged by Buddy Trotter