

Rod MacDonald – Bio

Rod MacDonald was born on August 17th, 1948 and raised in the town of Southington, Connecticut. His father had Scottish/Irish roots and hailed from Nova Scotia, while Rod's mother is of Polish extraction, having been born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. Following High School, Rod attended the University of Virginia where he majored in History, graduating in 1970. Three years later, he graduated with a Law degree from Columbia Law School in New York.

Music had been MacDonald's consuming passion from an early age, and Rod decided that his future lay in being a musician, poet and songwriter. During 1970 he was part of the five piece, folk group The Lovin' Sound. In the summer of 1971 he worked as a reporter for the Washington DC bureau of Newsweek, covering the Jimmy Hoffa parole hearings and the Pentagon Papers trial. The following summer he performed as a solo singer at a club in Newport, Rhode Island. After graduating from Columbia, Rod began performing regularly in New York City clubs and cafes. His first major engagement came in late 1973, when he opened for Peter Yarrow at Max's Kansas City. A couple of year's later, John Hammond was on the verge of offering Rod a CBS recording contract. The label's interest in MacDonald waned when Hammond suffered a heart attack and retired from the music business. At the dawn of the eighties Rod appeared on his first recording "**The Songwriters Exchange**," a compilation that featured writers who appeared at the Cornelia Street Café's weekly Songwriters Exchange. The performers on the subsequent twelve-track disc, issued by the jazz imprint Stash, included Cliff Eberhardt, Lucy Kaplansky, David Massengill and Rod. An eighteen-track version of the recording featuring three of Rod's songs was released on CD in 1990.

The Exchange was a harbinger of Fast Folk Musical Magazine. The Magazine made its debut in 1982, with Jack Hardy at the helm. Rod occasionally wrote for the publication, and in the ensuing years he contributed sixteen selections to their recordings. Rod's "American Jerusalem" was the opening cut on the first disc of the 2CD compilation "**Fast Folk – A Community Of Singers & Songwriters**" issued by Smithsonian Folkways in early 2002. From 1982 till 1985 Rod was booker at The Speakeasy on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village, a performance venue for Fast Folk writers. MacDonald had begun to study Buddhism and Native American culture while still a student and lived, for a time, with the Sioux Indians in South Dakota. In 1987 MacDonald co-founded and organised the first Greenwich Village Folk Festival.

Mindful of what had happened with CBS, MacDonald decided he would be the master of his own destiny, as far as his recording career was concerned. He made his own recordings, leasing the masters to interested labels. His first album "**No Commercial Traffic**," appeared on the Cinemagic label in 1983. The German Autogram label issued a recording titled "**Album 2 : For Sale**" in 1985, and the following year it appeared as "**White Buffalo**" on the McDisk label. A subsequent version of the album was released by Mountain Railroad. "**Bring On The Lions**" was issued by the Swiss Brambus label in 1989. Over the years, Brambus have released further MacDonald recordings including an enhanced version of "**White Buffalo**." During the late eighties Rod lived for a time in North Eastern Italy, and it was there that he recorded the cassette only, band album, "**Simple Things**." While resident in Italy he composed "The Way To Calvary," and the song closed "**Highway To Nowhere**" Rod's debut album for the Shanachie label. A number of tracks from "**Bring On The Lions**" resurfaced on the latter recording. His "**A Man On The Ledge**" collection followed a couple years later. For a year during the early-nineties, Rod managed a club in Michigan for an old college friend. The latter experience undoubtedly gave rise to the song "The Last Train To Pontiac" on his Brambus album "**And Then He Woke Up**."

In a musical career spanning three decades Rod has performed in clubs and at summer festivals throughout North America, and he has appeared in concert in most European countries. He made two historic trips to Czechoslovakia around the time that the communist regime crumbled, and performed in front of massive audiences. Midway through the nineteen nineties Rod relocated to Florida. The songs on the recording "**Into The Blue**" chronicle his life in the sunshine state. While "Deep Down In The Everglades" focuses on the 1996 ValuJet plane crash, the listener can sense in songs such as "I Have No Problem With This" that MacDonald has concluded that life in Florida possesses definite advantages over "*some little apartment on some city street*." MacDonald's "**Recognition**" was released in the early Fall of 2002, and in the early summer of 2005 the Wind River label in the States, and Brambus Records in Switzerland, released "**A Tale Of Two Americas**."

Big Brass Bed, a Florida based quintet formed by MacDonald [guitar, harmonica, vocals] during January 2002, was originally composed of James London [guitar, vocals], Tom D'Angelo [bass], Mike Kerrigan [keyboards] and Bill Meredith [drums]. This Dylan tribute band made its debut at the Bamboo Room in Lake Worth, Florida during March 2002. Their eleven-track debut recording "**A Few Dylan Songs**" was released on the Soltice Record label in 1st September 2003. D'Angelo played on the band's album, but subsequently relocated to New York and then Nashville, and Mike Kerrigan subsequently filled the bass slot. The Village Dudes, a quartet of [at one time or another] well-known Greenwich Village based folk performers composed of MacDonald, Jack Hardy, David Massengill and Frank Christian, made its concert debut at the Outpost in the Burbs during November 2004. The quartet planned to record an album, but to date nothing has officially surfaced. MacDonald reissued his debut album "**No Commercial Traffic**" on CD during 2002. Produced by J.P. Bowersock, "**This One**" was a sixteen song collection that included new interpretations of previously recorded songs as well as new material, and was released by Brambus Records during early September 2008.

Discography : "**No Commercial Traffic**" [1983] ; "**Bring On The Lions**" [1989] ; "**Simple Things**" [1989] ; "**White Buffalo**" [1991] ; "**Highway To Nowhere**" [1992] ; "**A Man On The Ledge**" [1994] ; "**And Then He Woke Up**" [1996] ; "**Into The Blue**" [1999] ; "**Recognition**" [2002] ; "**A Tale Of Two Americas**" [2005] ; "**This One**" [2008] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 08/02, 11/02, 06/05 & 09/08.

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