

Jonathan Edwards Biography

Jonathan Edwards was born in Minnesota and played his first music on piano, taking a few lessons from the lady who lived next door and then learning by ear.

He picked up guitar in high school in the early 60s. "I started on a \$29 guitar and immediately started putting a band together, writing songs and learning all the contemporary folk songs of the time", he recalls. "I just loved it, loved everything about it, loved being in front of people playing music".

He studied art in college but continued to play music. "I started getting electric about the time Dylan did, doing electric folk music. I joined bands by saying 'Can I be in your band?', and they'd ask, 'What do you play?', and I'd say 'What do you need?' I'm still that way. I still love to play different instruments. It helps me understand production techniques and performance capabilities". Instead of graduating from college, he decided to give music a shot. He sold the car that his father was lending him, bought a van for his band, and headed for the music scene in Boston.

The band soon found work, playing "6-40" jobs--six 40-minute sets per night--all over New England. They played cover tunes as well as their own country blues originals under various names, including the Headstone Circus, St. James Doorknob, and the Finite Minds, and they made an album for Metromedia Records as *Sugar Creek*.

After several years, Jonathan began to tire of the 6-40s and grew fonder of the sound of an acoustic guitar. "I just one night said, 'Hey fellas, this isn't sounding as good as it could, and I'd like us to sound more intimate'. I liked the sound of bronze strings on rosewood better than steel strings on magnets, and so I walked out of that club in Vermont, rented myself a van and PA system, and started traveling around the colleges in New England by myself, without gigs, just setting up in the lobbies of dormitories on a Saturday. Pretty soon I started getting a following. People would say, 'Has that guy been to your dorm yet? That guy just sets up, plugs in and plays all night'".

Soon Jonathan was booked to open for acts such as the Allman Brothers Band and B. B. King, and he signed with Capricorn Records. "We took about a year recording the first album--different times, different studios, different sounds, different techniques", he says. "Recording was so new in '69 and '70. There was a song on the album called 'Please Find Me', and for some reason the engineer rolled over it. It got erased. We spent hours looking for it. We fired the engineer and put 'Sunshine' in its place".

Like most of the songs on *Jonathan Edwards*, "Sunshine" was written shortly after Jonathan left the band. "I felt really fresh, really liberated", he recalls. "I just went out in the woods every day with my bottle of wine and guitar, sat by a lake near Boston and wrote down all those tunes, day after day".

"Sunshine" was an energetic, happy-sounding statement of protest and independence. "It was just at the time of the Vietnam War and Nixon", Jonathan recalls. "It was looking bad out there. That song meant a lot to a lot of people during that time--especially me". It started on a Boston radio station, and before long it hit the top five on the national charts. It earned him a gold record in 1971.

After the first album, Jonathan moved out of the city to a farm in western Massachusetts, which provided the rural, country inspiration for his second album, *Honky-Tonk Stardust Cowboy* on the Atlantic record label. This was an album of mostly self-penned acoustic, country-flavored songs about love and life and was closely followed by *Have a Good Time For Me*, also on Atlantic. This recording is a collection of songs written by Jonathan's friends, who, in those early years, were so important to his development as an artist, musician, singer, songwriter and performer.

But after more than three years of working five and six one-nighters a week, Jonathan was ready for a change. In 1973 he and his friends got together to record a wonderfully energetic live album for his fans called *Lucky Day*, which was a song he wrote in the truck on his way up to live in Nova Scotia. This "fresh-air break" lasted only a couple of months, when his old friend, Emmylou Harris, from the Washington, D. C. area, invited him to Los Angeles to sing backup on her *Elite Hotel* album. That led to a deal with Warner Brothers and two albums produced by Harris' husband/producer Brian Ahern--*Rockin' Chair* and *Sailboat*.

Jonathan moved back to the U. S. in 1979, to New Hampshire, and then two years later back to the northern Virginia area where he grew up. In 1983 he produced and recorded *Blue Ridge* with one of the best bluegrass bands in the world, The Seldom Scene, for Sugar Hill Records. Then in 1987 he recorded a children's album, *Little Hands*, which was released on the small independent American Melody label. It has been selected by the National Library Association as a "Notable Children's Recording" and has sold well over 20,000 copies.

Jonathan was touring as the lead in the hit Broadway musical *Pumpboys and Dinettes* when he met an old friend from the folk circuit, Wendy Waldman, in Nashville. She and Mike Robertson convinced Jonathan to come to town and record a country album. "I've been making country-sounding records all my life, but never in Nashville. Yeah, let's do it", Edwards said. So, *The Natural Thing* was produced, recorded, and released on MCA/Curb Records in 1989. "I was crazy about the songs we selected from those great Nashville writers, and the acoustic-based production that Wendy and I put together was just a joy to make and to listen to. I count that as one of the best albums I've ever been involved with".

So from then until now, Jonathan has been busy with touring, session work, and producing his own music as well as the music of other talents, such as Cheryl Wheeler ("Driving Home," "Mrs. Pinocci's Guitar"). He took part in the 1994 "Back to the Future" tour that also included Don McLean, Tom Rush, Jesse Colin-Young, Steve Forbert, and Al Stewart. It played major venues coast to coast and earned Jonathan rave reviews.

1994 also marked the release of *One Day Closer*, his first solo album in five years, on his new nationally-distributed record label, Rising Records. *Man in the Moon*, which includes several original Edwards' songs, followed in '97. Other projects included the scoring of the soundtrack for "The Mouse", starring John Savage. In 1998 he discovered he was a major star in The Netherlands, where his audiences knew the words to all his songs, wouldn't let him leave the stage, and bought every CD in sight.

In 2000 he narrated and performed in a 13-week travel series for Media Artists entitled "Cruising America's Waterways" (www.cruisingamerica.com), which was picked up by PBS-TV and is still being shown on PBS-TV stations from coast to coast. Media Artists also released a companion CD. Jonathan participated in a second 13-week "Cruising America's Waterways" series, which started running on PBS-TV stations in May, 2004.

The 2004 movie "Anchorman", starring Will Ferrell, included 30 seconds of "Sunshine" in the film and the entire song on the soundtrack.

Jonathan celebrated 30 years of "Sunshine" with a "First Annual Farewell Tour" w/Kenny White on piano in 2001. "First Annual" was prophetic, since he is touring now more than he has in years and shows no signs of slowing down. He recently recorded a live CD for his fans, *Live in Massachusetts*, released in December, 2006, and he is currently writing the soundtrack for "Chatham", a major motion picture scheduled for release in 2008. He also has a small role as a reformist preacher in the film.

Media Artists just completed a 90-minute documentary of his career, titled "*That's What Our Life Is*", which is available for purchase at shows and on his website.

jonathanedwards.net

"Edwards' voice is so naturally malleable that all he really needs is a song with a strong melodic hook and he's home free" -
- *Washington Post*

"His throaty tenor, one of the most distinctive voices on record, has always had a natural, unadulterated, undiluted quality"
-- *Music City News*

"An Edwards performance is an unforgettable roller-coaster ride which combines his remarkable singing, storytelling, and wit" -- *Martha's Vineyard Times*

"The perfect remedy for depression" -- *Cashbox*

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