



JC Music Connection, A History

In the Beginning - The Independent Christian Music Association (ICMA)

In the year 2000 our founder, Joe Nicholson had, (like so many others), the dream of becoming a popular singer-songwriter and performing on stages across America. But before investing too much time and money into this venture, he decided to learn what he could from more seasoned artists who had already "been there, done that". So he began seeking interviews with artists who met the following criteria and were within driving distance throughout the Pacific Northwest: 1.) They had a full length CD commercially available to the public. 2.) They were actively performing in concerts as headliners or opening acts. 3.) They had at least one song that had been played on broadcast radio at one time or another. With this criteria, Joe was able to reduce the list from hundreds to a few dozen. He then went on an interviewing "tour" for about a year to follow, treating almost every artist or band member to lunch or dinner as he did - a very expensive tour! In the course of conducting all these interviews, Joe discovered that, in terms of support and resources, there were many things they held in common, (both strengths and struggles), and yet, there were also things one band would lack that another band would have in abundance, and visa versa, . After discovering that nearly every band felt they desperately needed help in at least one area or another, Joe began thinking about ways to form a networking organization which bands, individual artists, and those in the music support industry could join for the purpose of helping each other. At first, the concept for this organization was with the intent to help Christian artists exclusively, and thus rough idea for what he called the "Independent Christian Music Association" or the "ICMA" was born.

Do Good Music

In 2001, with not much more than a concept and a name, Joe began a second tour throughout the Pacific Northwest, meeting with many of the same and some new bands and artists, promoting the idea of what the ICMA was and recruiting as many members as he could for what he hoped would become the existence of a real, thriving organization. The idea received a lot of head nods, and people saying, "that would be nice", but many were skeptical as to whether it would ever actually happen. Still, Joe persisted in talking with as many artists as he could about the idea, and eventually the word started spreading beyond his own direct influence. One day, "out of the blue", Joe received a call from an organization based out of Palo Alto, California called, "Do Good Music" (DGM). The president of DGM, (Lewis Greer), said to Joe, "We've heard of a lot of great things about your ideas about for the ICMA, and we very much like these ideas ourselves, but we have just one question: 'Why are you trying to re-invent the wheel when we've already done it?! Why don't you join us instead?'" . At first Joe couldn't believe what he was hearing. After receiving so much skepticism, he was beginning to believe himself that such an organization could never form, and yet, here was one just a few hundred miles away that had already been operating for a decade or longer. So after a trip to Palo Alto to meet with the DGM executive team and a few contracts signed here and there, Joe returned to the Seattle area as a representative of Do Good Music . Very soon after starting, his assignments required that he not only reach out to potential members in the region, or even nation, but to the whole world! And so, that is what commenced for a couple of years to follow; seeking, finding and signing up artists and bands to join the DGM organization with the hope that through that affiliation the artists would find the help they needed in order to succeed.

JC Music Connection

By 2003 Joe had come into contact with countless artists and bands from the Pacific Northwest region and all over world, but he was beginning to see that Do Good Music simply did not have resources or a large enough staff to effectively serve such a large group of artists. Do Good Music had been charging a small membership fee to join, but there was simply not enough revenue to afford the amount of staff and logistics needed to adequately serve a worldwide membership. The concept was a great idea, but the target market was simply too large and the revenue stream was simply too little. This reality was not lost on the DGM officers, and eventually they were forced to change their business model. Instead of being low-priced helpers to thousands, they became high-priced consultants to the few that could afford it. It was a risky decision for DGM, but it paid off - at least for a short while. For the first time since their founding, DGM's books were in the black! But by changing their business model, Joe realized *his* original passion to help *all* artists, (whether they could afford it or not), was lost. Joe believed that the only way to effectively build a viable organization that would remain affordable for everyone was to start small and stay local, helping people one-on-one and one-at-a-time. And so, on friendly terms, Joe stepped down from his position with the DGM staff and continued pursuing his own vision where he had left off - this time deciding to include all musicians both Christian and secular that were dedicated to clean, family friendly and radio ready music. In November of 2003, JC Music Connection was born and once again Joe began promoting the concept of an A-Z resource for artists, but this time with focus on the solely on the local greater Seattle / Puget Sound market.

Project Won Studios

Joe was determined to build an organization that was a ministry first and a business second - an organization that was not born out of the profit motive, but out of a genuine desire to help anyone with talent and ambition, no matter how capable or incapable they were of affording the services they needed. It's not like Joe had anything against businesses in the music industry that were built for turning a profit. He understood the necessity of making a profit to stay in business and he knew he couldn't expect other businesses to adopt the "service-to-all-regardless" model. So, he realized the only way he was going to be able to test his model was to offer as many services as possible by himself and whomever else he might find willing to volunteer. At the time, the number one thing an artist needed access to but might struggle to afford was recording in a professional studio - Thus the reason Project Won Studios was born.

2003 - 2006

By June of 2003, Joe had found the means to finance and build the first home for Project Won Studios in the basement of a house he was renting. The room most that presented the most suitable environment for a studio needed a lot of work, and having only a small recording set-up in his bedroom prior, he knew he was going to need a lot in the way of equipment and software as well. The studio started out simple. The room required insulation, drywall, paint, molding, trim, carpet and many other things to make it suitable for anything! So all that was purchased along with a modest investment in new recording equipment, computers and software. The end result was a definite step up from the set-up he'd had going in his bedroom before! Then after converting a closet into a vocal isolation booth, Project Won Studios was finally able to be open to the public by that November. Work for the studio was slow at first and Joe was able to handle all the work for the studio and the JC Music Networking/Referral service and still hold a full-time outside job. But after a few months, the studio work began to steadily increase, and he felt the need quit his outside job and start working in the studio full-time. One day Joe got a call from an artist that made an interesting offer. The artist didn't have money, but did have a lot of nicer gear and he was willing to let Project Won Studios borrow it all in exchange for part-time use of the facility. About the same time, Joe had the opportunity to assist in the liquidation of another studio that was going out of business, and instead of taking a fee for his services, Joe was able to acquire even more equipment

for his own in trade. The combination of these two events led to a complete remodel of the studio, which included a separate control room and the addition of more professional mixers, monitors, computers and recording software. From then on the studio continued to grow even more with new clientele and increased business. Then, in summer of 2005, this silent partner decided the time had come for him to build his own studio. And so there went nicer, more professional equipment and software Joe had become dependent on and first, Joe thought this would mean the end to his studio. But to his surprise, he was tremendously blessed by a greater influx of clientele than ever before! All this made the occasion more sad and desperate when came the fateful day when the owner of the house Joe was renting paid he and his wife a visit a 30 day vacate notice because the owner needed to move back in. So, with nine separate recording projects put on hold, Joe and his family had moved out, and the first chapter of Project Won Studios had come to an end.

2006 - 2007

For the rest of the year following their first move, the studio existed only in Joe's mind and dozens of boxes. He and his family had moved into another rental home in another city not far from Mukilteo and started all over again. This time the only place even remotely suitable for a studio was the garage. And so, with scraps of building material he'd managed to salvage from the first studio and much a smaller investment in new material, Joe began building Project Won Studios # 2. This new studio was much smaller and not really suitable for more than just a hobby operation, but Joe gave it a try anyway. The main problem with this new location however, was in keeping it warm. The furnace was an old 1960's era diesel fueled model that was very old and inefficient. To make matters worse, the price of diesel had risen sky high, and after getting a fuel bill one particular month when the amount due for the diesel was almost the same as their rent for the house, Joe and his wife came to the conclusion that studio business or not, they could not afford to stay there any longer. Project Won Studios # 2 had been host for only one "in studio" client and only a few of the nine unfinished projects from studio #1 were completed when, in October of 2007, Joe and his family moved out - and now the second chapter of Project Won Studios had come to an end.

2007 - 2009

For the rest of 2007 and sometime into 2008, the studio once again was something only in Joe's mind and dozens of boxes. He and his family had moved back to Mukilteo and much closer to their kid's schools. In that respect, the move was an improvement. But the rental house they moved into was only 1,200 square feet, whereas both of their previously rented homes were in excess of 2,100 square feet! So where do you put a studio? Once again the only answer was the garage, which was once again, unfinished. To make room for things Joe built an extension to the attic and a large outdoor storage shed. That helped a bit, but the need to combine the studio with their office was still a necessity and one corner of the room needed to remain a garage. Despite the challenge, the task of insulating the attic and putting up interior walls commenced. Even before the studio was close to completion but had become functional enough to work, Joe began taking on a few small projects that were new, but mostly finishing up old projects that remained unfinished from Studios #1 and #2. Joe had some good things lined-up for when the studio would have been finished, (a radio ad for UPS as one example), but sadly, that day never came! After they'd been in this home for almost 2 years, Joe and his wife got a call from the property management company explaining their lease would not be renewed. Why? Because once again, the owner's of the house needed to move back in! With the exception of a few customers who had hired Joe to make some Tape and Vinyl to CD transfers, there had not any new business for this new studio and there never would be. In November of 2009, the 3rd chapter of Project Won Studios had come to an end!

2009 - 2014

Being forced to move again didn't seem like a good thing at first, but it turned out to be one of the best things to ever happen to Joe and his wife and family! In November of 2009, they were able to purchase their first home. No more renting! No more potential for old owners to move back in! And no inefficient diesel furnace to deal with! This house was large and spacious and although the garage was still the only suitable place to build a studio, it was a large garage with a layout that was immediately obvious would make a great studio! The problem was, having moved three times since 2006 and having already financed the construction for three studios, there was no money to build a fourth! So once again, Project Won Studios existed only in Joe's mind and dozens of boxes... and Google Sketch-Up! After being introduced to the program by his son, Joe began designing studio #4, knowing that this time, if he could only find a way to finance it, he could build a studio bigger and better than any he had before and this time keep it for good! So although he had no way of actually building it - yet - he spent the better part of a year carefully researching studio design on the internet and books from the library. And then one day, a miracle happened! Joe had been playing bass for a weekday ministry group at his church. At an evening event, while sitting down to have a quick bite to eat, a lady attending, (Stephanie Alderman), that had known of Joe's previous studio work sat down beside him and asked, "So Joe, why haven't you built a new studio in your new home?" "Time and money", Joe replied. "Well, I can't help you with the time", the lady said, "but perhaps I can help you with the money. How much do you need?" So Joe told her an amount, and although his estimate turned out to be far less than what it would actually cost, it was enough to get things started. A few months after that conversation, Joe got a call from that lady letting him know she was ready to write him a check! And so now having the seed money to get started, Joe set about acquiring the needed building materials to get started. That's when another member of Joe's church stepped in and offered to help, (Don Schwab). Though he was a firefighter by trade, Joe's friend was also quite an accomplished home builder as he had built a very nice house for himself and his family. He didn't pay to have contractors build it. He literally built it himself! So after learning that, Joe had no doubt this man was well qualified to help build the studio! So now that there was money for the materials and the design was on paper, away they went at it! This studio was to be like none of the others. This studio was built like a studio should be built! Staggered stud framing, 6" to 10" thick walls, double drywall hanging on resilient channel with Green-glue sandwiched in-between layers, stone wool insulation, floating hard wood floors, solid core doors, 1 & 3/8" thick windows... the works! While the construction was coming along, Joe got another grand opportunity. Another studio in another nearby town was going out-of-business and had advertised the sale of their equipment. Joe was fortunate to be the first responder and after meeting with the owners, he gave them an offer to buy everything... and it was accepted! Because it was a "buy everything deal", the actual cost of each individual item was deeply discounted! Even though Joe didn't need everything, he knew those items he didn't need could easily be sold, and he knew the overall value of the deal was just too good to pass up! Two 10' x 12' bedrooms were filled, one literally from floor to ceiling, with the gear Joe acquired from that purchase and a few other great deals he found from other sellers in the local area. Finally, in October of 2012, the new studio, that is Project Won Studios # 4, was complete! All that was to be done now was for all the gear to be moved in and hooked up! By early November of 2012 the studio was ready for business and the first session was booked and more and more business came in rapidly as many people had been patiently waiting for the studio's construction to be completed and once it had, the news via word-of-mouth spread fast! By 2014 Joe had finished many projects and the influx of business coming in via word-of-mouth and his presence on the internet had increased to the point that very little "looking" for new business was needed - truly a blessing! In fact, word-of-mouth was working very well and one thing led to another, which led to another which led to Joe being introduced to a young man by the name of Nathaniel Chapman - and nothing has ever been the same since!

Boat Rocker Records

Joe had been invited to a church hosting a Celebrate Recovery meeting specifically to meet Mr. Nathaniel Chapman who was leading worship and playing some of his own original material that night. Joe instantly knew that if Nathaniel would be willing to record with him, there would be the first album for Boat Rocker Records, (which to this point had only existed on paper). After about a year and half in the studio, Joe and Nathaniel completed his first album in 2015 and that was followed by many, many other "firsts" as Joe introduced Nathaniel's album to the world! But even before it was finished, the creation of the album caused Joe to cross the paths of several other people, but none so prominent and influential as Mr. Bob Brooks, the former manager of Imperative Studios in Mukilteo, WA, and before that the owner of Little Mountain Studios in Vancouver B.C. Little Mountain was the recording central for many artists and bands known all over the world, such as Bon Jovi, Aerosmith, Olivia Newton John, Bryan Adams, Motely Crue and Metallica - just to name a few! So how does Project Won Studios fit into all this? Well, Nathaniel's album had been tracked, edited and mixed, but still needed mastered. So Joe sent out an email to his friends and acquaintances in the industry and just on a whim sent one to Bob Brooks as well, having met him only twice and barely knew him at all. Joe was just looking for a good recommendation for a mastering engineer, but never in his life would have expected Bob Brooks to become interested in mastering Nathaniel's album himself! But the fact was, Bob became so interested in Nathaniel's music and what Joe was doing with Project Won Studios that he felt compelled to come down from Canada to meet with Joe and Nathaniel and to see the studio in person. What he saw, he loved - so much that he was willing to invest in a new sound system for the studio, because that was just about the only thing Bob could see that needed improvement. The system Joe had been using was a good one, but was getting old and Bob could tell. So Bob agreed to finance a completely new system if Joe would agree that Bob would have the first right of refusal regarding anything Joe produced that was intended for commercial release - and Joe accepted! After that, Bob not only became Joe's mastering engineer, but a counselor, coach and mentor as well. It's no wonder then that with a great artist and a great mentor, that Project Won Studios and now Boat Rocker Records continued to grow and expand by serving many other great artists!

Rock The Church

With the partnership with Nathaniel Chapman came many other things, including Joe being introduced to a pastor couple of a small local church who had a vision that was anything but small! Via a mutual friend of Nathaniel's, (Douglas Aaron), Joe was introduced to a Mrs. Kathy Jo Kahn and the two of them were soon blessed with the opportunity to share with each other the greater vision each had for their own ministries and discovered that very much of their separate vision for their ministries were very much aligned - particularly for Christian music in the greater Pacific Northwest. It was during this time Kathy Jo created the "Rock The Church" Christian music festival, which was from the beginning, intended to be an annual event designed to give Christian musician's of all genres and levels of experience an opportunity to represent The ONE church, made of many, which for one day out of the year would meet to share music not as individual congregations, but as ONE church! By introduction through a friend and fellow musician, (Ron Burns), Kathy Jo booked John Elefante, the former lead singer of the famous rock band, Kansas and invited Joe to assist in organizing and managing the event. Since then countless people have come to get to know Joe and Kathy Jo and work closely with both of their organizations. And perhaps it's needless to say, the studio experienced another season of tremendous growth as a result!

Alpha and Omega Singer Songwriter's Association

As if Joe's association with Nathaniel hadn't put him in contact with enough great people in the greater Puget Sound music scene, Nathaniel did it again by introducing him to the president of the Snohomish County Christian Songwriter's Circle, (Ed Alexander), who then introduced him to a Mrs. Ann Johnson, the president of the Alpha and Omega Singer Songwriter's Association. That introduction marks another very important time in the history of JC Music Connection. Through the friendship and collaboration with Ann that followed, Joe was introduced to many other artists, many of whom found themselves a recording in the studio and some even stepping into the Boat Rocker Records album line-up. Even though the Alpha and Omega Songwriters' Association is now more, (Ann retired in August of 2017), the legacy created by that marvelous organization lives on!

Right Cut Records

After all these introductions to great organizations and other methods of exposure, the artists began to line-up more and more... and pile-up more and more in the studio production queue and eventually Bob Brooks took notice and became concerned for how Joe was handling his new found success. So, he called for a top-to-bottom audit of everything the studio was concerned with, and this led Joe to being introduced to Bob's friend and CPA, Mr. George Watts. The two of them thoroughly went over all that is Project Won Studios and Boat Rocker Records and had much advice for Joe following. One such bit of advice was to not refer secular artists who had recorded albums at the studio to other labels, but to represent them instead. At first Joe objected, because Boat Rocker Records had always been for exclusively Christian albums. "So start another label - a clean secular label!", was Bob's advice to Joe and so... Joe did! Sadly, this idea came too late for several outstanding secular artists had already come and gone to work with other labels or remain independent. Perhaps the greatest loss was The Valadares Band who wanted to be represented by Joe and Boat Rocker Records, but at the time, Joe couldn't decide whether to sign them on Boat Rocker or give them up to sign with another label. So when artists Collin Beasley and Pocket Bilt Cannon came around, Joe was determined not to let them go! And so, in November of 2016, Right Cut Records was born to provide a home for "clean, family safe or radio friendly" that was not necessarily Christian in nature. That same month, Right Cut Records proudly announced their first release with Collin Beasley's debut EP, "Ghost". Since that time, BOTH record labels have released multiple new albums and the line-up is ever increasing. The fiscal and logistical management is also improving, thanks to the care and oversight of Mr. Brooks and CPA George Watts.

Worthy Music Ministries

With the exception of a brief collaboration in 2005, Worthy Music Ministries and JC Music Connection had been working independently from each other, though both shared many mutual connections and similar vision. And then, as if it was always meant to be, Chuck and Linda Worthy of Worthy Music Ministries reached out to Joe in the Spring of 2017 with the invitation to join them with his artists and theirs on the stages of the Tacoma Freedom Fair and Airshow on July 4th and then later in September of 2017 on stage at the Washington State Fair in Puyallup. The result? Even more networking and great events happening in the interests of serving "worthy" artists dedicated to producing clean, family safe and radio friendly music!

The Present and Beyond...

With all the set-backs the studio received over the years, it may not be hard to understand why the organizational and networking ministry and the record labels took so long to get off the ground. Having a solid physical location and the means to directly offer artists services was a foundational, key component to this ministry/business and that was simply not to be had until Project Won Studios #4 came into being in 2012. But that was just the beginning. Having the stability of a permanent studio, the record labels and JC Music Connection as a whole, working closely with other significant organizations, allowed each group individually and as combined effort to help, promote and share the beautiful, meaningful and impactful music of our artists more than ever before. With the combinations of these existing associations and the addition of new relationships that are seemingly developing at a constant rate, "We", that is the combination of all groups and individuals have more ability than ever to demonstrate vision, integrity and service!