

Real People's Music – Specialists in Multi-Cultural Programming since 1975

Exclusively Representing

JENI & BILLY

Jeni & Billy provide acoustic music lovingly dressed with graceful phrasing and old-time charm. It's soothing, relaxing, heartfelt and richly steeped in the traditions of old-time country and bluegrass.

*Joe Tennis,
Bristol Herald Courier*

Jeni & Billy bring not only heart and soul, but an authenticity all too rare in today's folk world. Hearing them sing their real lyrics of the coal life at Seedtime on the Cumberland, in the heart of the coalfields, was incredibly moving.

*Art Menius,
Director of Appalshop*

***Captivating New Old Songs & Stories
Fine Harmonies & Excellent Instrumental Work
Rooted in Appalachian Culture***

www.realpeoplesmusic.com

www.jeniandbilly.com

Photo by Kim Sherman, Nashville

JENI & BILLY

Jeni & Billy will draw you into captivating narratives of heartache and hard living, of true life blues and unexpected grace.

Their top of the Folk DJ charts CD, *Jewell Ridge Coal*, chronicles the changing fortunes of the Southwest Virginia coal mining community of Jewell Ridge. Though the subject is regional, the songs present universal themes — earth & heaven, rich & poor, love & loss, work & rest. Jeni and Billy's music mixes delightful shocks and pleasant surprises.

Jeni comes by her mournful, lonesome voice honestly. Born in the coalfields of Southwest Virginia, her singing has been compared to that of Maybelle Carter and Hazel Dickens. A born storyteller, she has been a writer almost since she could put pen to paper, a vocation inherited from her journalist father and grandfather. Jeni honed her powers of observation and turn of phrase as a student of Pulitzer Prize winning Northern Irish poet, Paul Muldoon.

Billy comes to the duo with a long history of music-making. He has been everywhere from Germany to the Grand Ole Opry playing his guitar and singing. A Baltimore native, he was introduced to the world of country music through the fateful movie house experience of seeing *Bonnie & Clyde* featuring Flatt & Scruggs's soundtrack, going back just to listen fourteen times. He has played numerous bluegrass festivals sharing stages with Jim & Jesse and Jimmy Martin. Billy has leant his talents to the shows of many folk luminaries including Oscar Brand, Christine Lavin, and Tom Paxton.



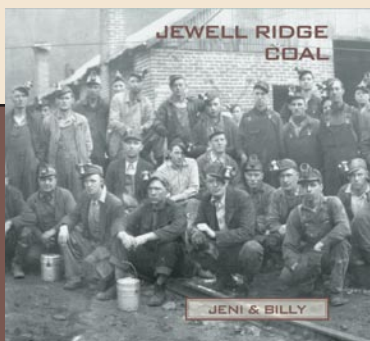
Barnsley (UK) House Concert (photo by Bernadette Goddard)



Tazewell County Fiddlers' Convention (photo by Gordon Whitted)



Beverly (UK) Folk Festival (photo by Kelly Foley)



JEWELL RIDGE COAL

From the liner notes to Jeni & Billy's CD Jewell Ridge Coal —

JEWELL RIDGE is a coal camp in Southwest Virginia right up against the West Virginia border. I do not know the future of Jewell Ridge, but I can tell you something about its past — and about its present. It was courted by the coal companies up through the 1950s only to be forgotten when the price of coal fell, left with a legacy of black lung, poverty, and drug addiction, to find its own path among the slate dumps and the cinders.

Today, the camp is full of cars, dogs, and kids on bicycles with cap guns and Barbies. Parents drive an hour each way to make car parts or work down in Richlands doing hair or tagging clothes at Magic Mart. Old-timers sit on front porches with the jobless and displaced, smoking or rubbing their hands together, remembering. On Sundays, the faithful gather in little churches strung across the ridges, to be washed in the blood and speak in tongues of fire. And there they find hope.

Jewell Ridge has been part of my life ever since I had life in me. During summer and Christmas breaks my sister and I would go up there and stay with Maw-Maw on Smith Ridge. We watched soap operas with our great-grandmother on the TV, but the “stories” could hardly compare to the dramas that unfolded in the family — divorce, untimely death, prison, wrecks, and unemployment.

Still, the folks on TV didn't have as much fun as we did: backyard weddings, trips to the lake and the beach, Vacation Bible School, Fourth of July parades, climbing apple trees, and making sea foam candy. Without Jewell Ridge I don't know if I would have ever written a song. People up there seem to live between the extremes of joy and despair, with a love so fierce and determined it's almost dangerous. These are the kind of stories you'll hear on this record.

It seems to me I've been called to tell about this place, though I am myself a rank stranger there. I hope the good people of Jewell Ridge will forgive my trespasses.

I love them and pray God will bless them.

WELCOME TO JEWELL RIDGE.

— Jeni Hankins, 2008

Vintage Photos: Jeni's Aunt Edith Smith Mullins, Great Grandmother Narcie Hylton Smith, and Great Grandfather Babe Eli Osborne.

They sound so natural together, it feels calming and clear. It's as if you were there sitting on a back porch in the old-timey South and they were right there with you and just stumbled upon some instruments.

— Nicole Levitz, *Feminist Review*

CONCERTS

In concert, Jeni & Billy present original and traditional songs that draw from Country, Appalachian, Old-time, Country Blues, Bluegrass and Folk music styles to create a sound uniquely their own.

Many concert-goers have proclaimed their poems and their re-counting of the tales behind the tunes every bit as enjoyable as the songs themselves. Instrumentation includes guitar, banjo, harmonica, and autoharp.



Photo by Kim Sherman, Nashville

A sampling of Jeni & Billy's credits includes:

- Seedtime on the Cumberland (KY)
- The Buskirk-Chumley Theater (Bloomington, IN)
- Bristol Rhythm & Roots (VA/TN)
- Beverley Folk Festival (UK) • Eddie's Attic (Atlanta, GA)
- McGlohon Theatre (Charlotte, NC)
- International String Band Festival (Calhoun, GA)
- Kirksville Arts Association (MO)
- Coffee Gallery Backstage (CA)
- North Wales Bluegrass Festival (UK)
- Music on the Square (TN)
- Ram's Head On Stage (Annapolis, MD)
- Columbia Lakefront Festival (MD)
- Richlands Citizens for the Arts (VA)
- Philadelphia Society for Art, Literature & Music
- Champlain Valley Folk Festival (VT)
- North Wales Bluegrass Festival (UK)
- Virginia Mountain Music Festival
- Collier County Libraries (FL)
- Erlanger Public Library (KY)
- Staunton Public Library (VA)
- University of NC - Asheville

SELECTED WORKSHOPS

FOR MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS AND A COMPLETE LIST, PLEASE SEE INSERT

WRITING AND PERFORMING THE CONTEMPORARY APPALACHIAN BALLAD *(PRESENTED AT UNC - ASHEVILLE)*

In this workshop Jeni & Billy share their approach to writing and performing original and traditional Appalachian Ballads. In a longer residency, participants will be encouraged to draw on what they have learned to write and/or present their own ballads for discussion.

MUSIC OF THE COALFIELDS *(PRESENTED AT THE SOUTHEAST REGIONAL FOLK ALLIANCE)*

Through their own songs about the Southwest Virginia coal mining community of Jewell Ridge, Jeni & Billy illustrate the various song forms and sounds that music of coal can take and introduce their audience to the great coalfield songwriters and artists including Hazel Dickens, Jean Ritchie, Nimrod Workman, and Phyllis Boyens.

WRITING & PERFORMING POETRY *(FEATURING JENI)*

Pulitzer Prize winning Northern Irish poet, Paul Muldoon, likes to say that "everyone has at least one great poem in them." As a student of Muldoon, Jeni learned how form and structuring a poem line by line can be a path into finding that "great poem." Jeni will also touch on how she and Billy present poetry as part of their concerts..

DUET HARMONY SINGING IN TRADITIONAL, COUNTRY, AND FOLK MUSIC STYLES

Jeni & Billy illustrate the fundamentals of roots harmony singing – type of harmony, chord/harmony relationship, ornamentation and phrasing – through recorded examples and live performance.

SONG ARRANGING FOR THE STAGE & THE STUDIO

Through recorded examples and live performance Jeni & Billy will show how form, tempo, rhythm, dynamics, mood, and voice & instrument placement all come into play when arranging a song.

BOOKING – Please contact Josh Dunson at rpmjosh@aol.com for more information. Phone: 708-386-1252 • www.realpeoplesmusic.com

"These guys understand the magic of understatement and the pure, unadulterated simplicity that flows through all great American roots music. Their songs tell stories, simply and with a minimum of fuss, and the result is one of the albums of the year so far. Their sound is free of additives and as fresh as Appalachian spring water."

— *Ralph McLean, BBC Radio, Northern Ireland*



POETRY

Jeni & Billy's concerts often feature a poem or two by Jeni with musical accompaniment by Billy. The duo offer a workshop in the writing and performance of poetry.

Smith Ridge Church of God with Signs Following

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. — Mark 16:17-18

MawMaw said, "He didn't hold the faith like he should have. When the hedge is broken the serpent will bite, so says the Bible, Ecclesiastes ten and eight. Amen." But I had seen Uncle Taft follow the signs my whole life and he lived in Jesus

name. He had real good Victory in Jesus with handling serpents. While in the Spirit, his faith was equal to the whole congregation. Pick any sign and he'd done it, but the deadly thing broke him. The little word "if" and the Lord took him. Amen. Last Sunday evening Uncle Taft opened his Bible

to Mark sixteen and read out the signs. His Bible was greasy with anointing oil and the writing was red where Jesus spoke. He held it up to us to show us the word. Amen. Then he took a bottle of poison to prove his faith and mixed strychnine with water in a jar with a broken lip. And he drank from the sharp side saying, "If I show signs

of fading from this earth, wrap me in linen and lay me under the sign of the Cross. Lay your hands and your Bibles upon me for three days. Let the circle be unbroken and on the third day I will rise from the dead. Praise Jesus!" The jar dropped from his hand, but faith kept us up as he fell down dead. Amen.

So we all laid hands upon him, saying all the while Amen. And those who had real good Victory in signs stood the closest to him, so that by their faith he would revive. And we laid serpents upon him and Bibles. We spoke in tongues over him and moaned "Sweet Jesus." And a Sister, who had the gift of interpretation, broke

down in tears because she could not find the words, just broken sounds, "sheb hedehdiah gadoosh heddedai, amen . . . Thank you, Jesus. Sweet Jesus. I love you, Jesus." We swayed like a many legged spider, ignoring the signs that the third day was ending. And as the sun set, our Bibles seemed to go all red with the Lamb's blood, so strong was our faith

that the broken would be restored. But the signs said different. Amen. So we shut our Bibles and caged our snakes and I told Jesus he could keep his faith.

Jennifer Hankins © 2002



North Wales Bluegrass Festival (photo by John Routledge)



Norm's River Roadhouse, Nashville (photo by Kim Sherman)



North Wales Bluegrass Festival (photo by John Routledge)



RADIO

Jeni & Billy's 2008 CD *Jewell Ridge Coal* received airplay on more than 100 folk and bluegrass radio stations, reaching #5 on the Folk DJ Chart.

"Discovery of the month (or maybe the year) is Jeni & Billy, whose release *Jewell Ridge Coal* arrived a few days ago. I finally got it in the player yesterday, and have been totally captivated. The songs are great and Jeni's voice makes the hairs stand up on my neck — a pure mountain voice that is beautiful."

— Mike Kelsey, WFHB Community Radio, Bloomington, IN

DISCOGRAPHY

Sweet & Toxic – 2006

Jewell Ridge Coal – 2008

This World Ain't My Home
Winter 2009

The Old Hotel – 2010

ACCOLADES

- Champlain Valley Folk Festival — 2008 Winners of the Open Stage Contest
- Tazewell County Fiddler's Convention, Tazewell, VA —
2nd Place Guitar (Billy) 2007 & 2008
2nd Place Flatfoot Dance (Jeni) 2008
3rd Place Folk Song (Jeni) 2008
- 2008 Laurel Bloomery Fiddler's Convention, Laurel Bloomery, TN —
2nd Place Guitar 2007 (Billy)
3rd Place Duet Singing (Jeni & Billy)
5th Place Folk Song (Jeni)
- Jeni: Thomas J. Watson Fellow, researching Religious and Popular Devotionalism in Europe and Japan
- Billy: University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 2006 Outstanding Alumni Award in the Visual and Performing Arts

Vintage Photos: An unidentified Jewell Ridge couple; Jewell Ridge Coal Company miners from 1933, including Jeni's Great Grandfather Avery Smith (second from left); Aunt Edith Smith Mullins with an unidentified suitor, and a house in the Jewell Ridge Coal Camp (photo by Jeni).