

small potatoes

“These folks are wonderful; fun, energetic, and great musicians. They're two of my favorite performers.”

Bill Staines, Singer/songwriter

“Behind the humble name hides a creative couple of singer-songwriters who know a thing or two about keeping a crowd laughing, smiling, and occasionally crying.”

Bill Lynch, Charleston Gazette, Charleston, WV

19 Years and a Million and a Half Miles...

Nineteen years ago, Jacquie Manning and Rich Prezioso, the Chicago-area duo known as Small Potatoes, decided to hit the road. “In one year, we quit our jobs, bought a house, bought a car, and became full-time folk singers—not exactly the greatest combination, financially speaking, or what most people would call a sound business model. We didn’t throw darts at a map, but we might as well have.”

They might not have had the best plan, but what they did have were great songs and musicianship, and the ability to put on a show. Eighteen years, more than a million miles, 3000 shows, and five Dodge Caravans later, they are listed as a “favorite act” by many coffeehouses, clubs and house concerts across the U.S. They have made repeat appearances at major folk festivals, including the **Kerrville Folk Festival**, the **Walnut Valley Festival**, and the **Philadelphia Folk Festival**.

From the start, they’ve called themselves eclectic-manics and described their music as “Celtic to Cowboy”. They say it has taken them “years of careful indecision” to come up with a mix of music that ranges from country, blues, and swing to Irish, with songwriting that touches on all of those styles and more. Their four recordings, ***Alive!***, ***Waltz of the Wallflowers***, ***Time Flies*** and ***Raw*** demonstrate that “indecision” can be wonderfully entertaining. They both sing, they both play guitars and an array of other instruments. They even yodel.

“Jacquie Manning and Rich Prezioso combine cleverly witty with powerfully poignant songs, along with well chosen covers to present an unusually entertaining and involving repertoire engagingly delivered. Prezioso's song "1000 Candles, 1000 Cranes" is one of the most outstanding songs of the past 50 years.”

Rich Warren, The Midnight Special - WFMT Radio, Chicago, IL

“Make ‘em Laugh, Make ‘em Cry, Make ‘em Think”

When you see Small Potatoes perform, you hear two great voices, some fine guitar playing, and a touch of tin whistle, flute, mandolin, bodhran and other percussion toys. Together they present a truly rare blend of vocal and instrumental abilities, award-winning songwriting and arranging talents. They have the unique ability to adapt to the style of music they happen to be playing, and they also pay attention to the little things, the warmth, the humor and a rapport with the audience that makes for a memorable performance.

“Specificity Leads to Extinction?”

“They don’t sound like anybody else. I like that. They lay out a blanket and every song is a picnic.”

Warren Nelson

Big Top Chautauqua/Tent Show Radio--Wisconsin Public Radio, Bayfield, WI

These words mean a lot to us. They make us think we’re doing something right. We joke about “specificity leading to extinction” --for us, at least, we believe it really would. There are many great performers who do one thing and do it extremely well--that’s what makes them special. Not us. Actually the eclectic-maniac business began as an accident. We are absolutely no good at decision making, if someone told us we could only do one thing we’d probably implode. So we began by playing some of our favorite songs...and we do like a lot of different kinds of music. It’s become a kind of mission now, our audiences love it--no one (except for a few people in the music industry) has ever told us we bounce around too much. We figure “focus” is an overused word anyway. We still play our favorite songs. We try to write songs in all kinds of styles, but it doesn’t matter if we wrote the song or not, or if it’s an old song or a new song, or if it’s a folk song or not. There’s a lot of good music out there.

“I’m a kind of an old-fashioned folksinger...you guys are new fashioned folksingers. You share something with me, in that you sing whatever songs you feel are right for you, instead of limiting yourself to your own compositions, or to one particular genre. Good way to make magic.”

Phil Shapiro

Bound for Glory, WVBR-FM, Ithaca, NY

Selected Appearances

Philadelphia Folk Festival, Schwenksville, PA
Walnut Valley Folk Festival, Winfield, KS
Summerfolk, Owen Sound, Ontario Kerrville Folk Festival, Kerrville, TX
Musikfest, Bethlehem, PA Kentucky Music Weekend, Louisville, KY
South Florida Folk Festival, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Kuumbwa Jazz Center, Santa Cruz, CA
The Fret House, Covina CA Swallow Hill Music Assoc., Denver, CO
Front Porch Music, Valparaiso, IN FitzGerald’s, Berwyn, IL The Ark, Ann Arbor, MI
The Ten Pound Fiddle, E. Lansing, MI Cedar Cultural Center, Minneapolis, MN
Fiddle and Bow, Winston-Salem, NC Club Passim, Cambridge, MA
The Nickelodeon Folk Club, Calgary, Alberta
Twelve Corners Coffeehouse, Rochester, NY Kirkland Arts Center, Clinton, NY
Pistol River Concert Assoc., Pistol River, OR Corvallis Folklore Society, Corvallis, OR
Godfrey Daniel’s, Bethlehem, PA Caliope House Concerts, Pittsburgh, PA
The Bluebird Cafe, Nashville, TN Uncle Calvin’s Coffeehouse, Dallas, TX
Rouse House Concerts, Austin, TX Acoustic Concerts, St. George, UT
Seattle Folklore Society, Seattle, WA Big Top Chautauqua, Bayfield, WI

Some People We’ve Opened for or Shared Stages with:

Tom Paxton, Greg Brown, John McCutcheon, Utah Phillips, Cheryl Wheeler, Robin & Linda Williams, David Wilcox, Bryan Bowers, Peter Rowan, Kate & Anna McGarrigle, Bill Staines, Trout Fishing in America, Austin Lounge Lizards, Susan Werner, Willie Porter, the Bobs, David Massengill, Steve Gillette & Cindy Mangsen, James Keelaghan, Cliff Eberhardt, John Stewart

They say the nicest things...

“Small Potatoes might well be leading mainstays of the folk scene for many years to come.”

Mike Regenstreif
Sing Out Magazine

“[Waltz of the Wallflowers] is smart, funny, wistful, hip -- crosses many musical boundaries (traditional, Celtic, jazz, even American theater) -- is beautifully and simply produced. The first song on this album is so amazing...you won't find anything better than this -- it's up there with the best Rodgers & Hammerstein songs you've ever heard.”

Christine Lavin
Singer/Songwriter

“They’ll never open for me again!”

Cliff Eberhardt
Singer/Songwriter

“There aren’t many groups, folk or otherwise, with a broader range than these tater tots, but Small Potatoes can turn heads with more than just its range. The duo brings an impressive mastery of detail to each genre...Small Potatoes is obviously steeped in the tradition of the entire folk spectrum.”

Rick Reger
Chicago Tribune

“I’ve never been so fascinated by a singing duo. They’re original, funny, energetic, profound, always respectful of the music but always daring to try new things. When they get their hands on music, rhythmically and harmonically, it just takes off. The audience here loves them. It’s a stand-up-and-shout kind of love.”

Phee Sherline
San Diego Folk Heritage Society, San Diego, CA

“Small Potatoes did one of the best shows we have ever had at the Rouse House Concerts. Many of our regulars believe it was THE best show they have seen - bar none! They are great.”

Bruce Rouse
Rouse House Concerts, Austin, TX

“Take a bunch of styles of acoustic, folk, western, blues and swing, add very hot guitar work, and vocals so tight you need WD-40 to get them apart, and you have what Rich and Jacquie dazzle audiences with. They perform wonderful covers, and award winning originals (98 Kerrville Songwriting winners), and are wonderful people to boot! ”

Tom Otte
Fondy Acoustic Music Alliance, Fond du Lac, WI

“SPUDS rule!”

Meredith Carson
Swallow Hill Music Assoc., Denver, CO