

Future rides on long shot

Why songwriter sticks with struggle for fame

By Craig Picheura
staff writer

In the heart of an itinerant computer programmer beats the soul of a songwriter.

Bill Schoen, a 35-year-old Farmington Hills resident, makes a good living job-hopping as a computer specialist with clients such as Detroit Diesel Allison, Federal-Mogul and Kmart.

But he has set out to become a successful songwriter by doing more than just daydreaming.

"I've got \$8,000 riding on a million-to-one shot," Schoen said.

Two songs penned by Schoen — "Roll, Roll, Roll" and the "B-Side Blues" — appear on a local single released on Schoen's own label — Newtastic — which he hopes will catapult singer Donna Watton of Birmingham to national attention.

Nothing will deter Schoen from his dream, he said. Not even the year he spent in Nashville living in a boarding house with his wife, Maureen, trying in vain to sell his songs.

"We spent a year low-living it," Schoen said. "I drove a cab for the Yellow Cab Co. in Nashville. It's a good job for a songwriter. You get a vignette of

people's lives. You get the shrewdness of a woman who thinks you're short-changing her one minute, and the next ride is a nice old man who tells you all about his old Model T."

SCHOEN IS NOTHING if not enthusiastic about his latest project. He is prone to making hyperbolic statements such as "Linda Ronstadt, hell no, I'll take Donna Watton. Olivia Newton-John, hell no, I'll take Donna Watton."

He is convinced he's on to the next big thing and is tireless telling others about it.

"I figure even if I can't get this

record going I've still got two master-quality records in my control of Donna Watton, and one day Donna Watton is going to make it. And when she does, I'll be making my money back. It's a business venture that makes business sense."

Schoen admitted he gets carried away at times but said "hyper" is just the way he is. His "hippie days are over," he said. He and his wife are raising a 7-year-old son, Charley, who shows visitors his Pac-Man watch that beeps, and an 8-year-old daughter, Marlayna, who takes swimming lessons. He's a responsible parent but still

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BILL SCHOEN

not a button-down corporate computer type.

"Everybody's weird to a certain extent," Schoen said. "I might be surface weird but down deep I'm normal. I'm creative. I'm always thinking of inventions, ideas, songs. My mind is someplace else. When everybody else in a room is talking business, I'm usually the guy who says something off the wall."

Business ventures Schoen has pursued aren't limited to the music business. There was the pressure-activated Christmas tree stand he worked on a while back but never got around to patenting. Sure enough, last Christmas he saw the same principle on sale in a hardware store.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY members say Schoen's unbridled enthusiasm is refreshing in a time when cynicism is the norm.

"He's definitely high-energy," said singer Watton. "He is funny about it, but what's nice is all that enthusiasm is genuine. All that money he's spending on this project (the record) he and his wife could be using to take a vacation in Hawaii. But he believes in me, and I think that's nice."

Schoen's wife, Maureen, said the record was her husband's idea, his dream, "but his enthusiasm is contagious."

The whole family gathered around the television set Monday evening when Channel 7 did a feature story about the singer and the songwriter behind her.

After fidgeting with the volume dial and calling his kids indoors to see the segment, Schoen said he looked a little nervous on TV but was glad the message was getting out.

Every record has to have a gimmick, Schoen said, and his is no different. Each record of "Roll, Roll, Roll" is

numbered in a limited edition of 1,000 records. With the record comes a post card promising the buyer that "If this record is successful enough to launch NEWSIC as an ongoing business, a celebration will be in order."

IF THE RECORD clicks, a party for everyone who bought the first 1,000 copies will be held, probably on the Bobbo boat, Schoen said, and he's footing the bill. Seven-year-old Charley's already asking his dad if he can bring a friend along for the boat ride even if he never bought a record.

The other gimmick of the record is its flip side. Unlike most records, the artist on the B-side isn't the same as the one on the side they're pushing. Schoen doesn't want to waste the second song he's had Watton record because he wants a follow-up if "Roll, Roll, Roll" is the big hit he hopes it becomes.

The flip side song is titled, appropriately enough, the "B-Side Blues" and the performer is identified only as "Mystery Bluesman." Mystery's message is a mournful one about how nobody listens to him because he comes from the wrong side of a hit record.

The country A-side was record 1 at Sound Patterns in Farmington while the blues song was recorded in a basement studio in Berkeley. They had to finish the blues song by 11 p.m. because the producer had to get up for work at 5 in the morning and barely made the deadline because Schoen locked his keys in his car outside a Clock Restaurant, where he met Mystery Bluesman.

Putting a white, female, country artist on one side of a record backed by an unidentified blues singer is unconventional marketing, to say the least. But then Schoen is almost as convinced that Mystery will be as big as Miss Watton. Schoen, you see, doesn't have what you'd call a confidence problem.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Working on one of his melodies, Farmington Hills' Bill Schoen hopes to one day make it to the top of the musical world. Meanwhile, he hides his time as a computer specialist to make a living.

Fun centers launched

Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation has developed a summer fun program for youth. Incorporated are a variety of specialized activities which appeal to the interest of youth.

Fun squads will involve youth in drama, dance and music; art; outdoor adventure and sports activities and new games on a rotation basis at all fun centers. This is a high quality, fast-paced program

for summer fun.

The fee is \$3 a session. Register at the Parks and Recreation office or at your favorite fun center. All activities will include boys and girls 6 to 13 years of age (children must have completed first grade).

The accompanying table explains the class schedule.

MORNING — 9:30 - Noon

	June 28 July 1	July 5-8 VI	July 12-15 III	July 19-22 IV	July 26-29 V	August 2-5 VI
Forest	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	sports
Lansdale	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	art
Longacre	sports	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	art	drama/dance/music
Kendall	art	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	sports	outdoor adventure

Tues. & Thurs.

Flanders	sports	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music
Grace	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	art
Woodlark	art	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	sports	outdoor adventure
Woodlark	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	sports

AFTERNOON — 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.

	June 28 July 1	July 5-8 VI	July 12-15 III	July 19-22 IV	July 26-29 V	August 2-5 VI
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Lansdale	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	art
Longacre	art	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	sports	outdoor adventure
Woodlark	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	sports

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Lansdale	drama/dance/music	art	outdoor adventure	sports	drama/dance/music	art
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Michigan State names grads

Farmington-area residents were among Michigan State University candidates for degrees awarded at spring-term commencement exercises June 12 in Spartan Stadium.

Gov. William G. Milliken addressed the undergraduate ceremony, at which he and his wife, Helen, received honorary degrees. The governor was cited for his service to government, education and the arts, and received the honorary doctor of laws degree.

Helen Milliken was cited for her humanitarian and social concerns and for her service to the arts and the environment. She was awarded the honorary doctor of humanities degree.

John Canton, vice president for research and graduate studies, spoke at the advanced degree ceremony.

Those graduates from Farmington are: Randy Allison, Frederick Beattie, Martin Bona, Kathleen Chikol, John Dison, William Glola, Laurie Marie Hall, Janice Holzknecht, Lori Kanny, Randall King,

Ruth Kowaleski, Barbara Manderfield, Richard Milhizer, Sheila Moll and Cathy Mullen.

Those from Farmington Hills are: Pamela Alegnani, Michael Basha, Rosemary Battista, Sheila Bernhardt, Patricia Blum, Carol Blumberg, Kevin Briggs, Carolyn Chupinsky, Laurie Dahlstrom, Kevin Dalley, Joan Daly, Daniel Deighton, Jeffrey Doll, Robert Downie and Michael Drapalski.

Also included are: Keith Dreyer, David Good, Jeffrey Grass, Mark Greenbury, Rochelle Hamilton, Susan Harris, Brian Kaplan, Lisa Karlson, Leonard Kaufman, Gary Lefko, Robert Leland, Michael Madden, Lisa Mark, Cynthia Matthews and Susan Neball.

Also from Farmington Hills are: Richard Meng, Mary Metz, Beth Millington, Lynn Olivier, Sherry Pasfield, Catherine Patton, Mark Piotrowski, Daniel Pittel, David Radner, Thomas Reynolds, Kimberly Reed, Harold Rutla, Susan Sanford, Eric Schmidt, Kathy Sullwagan, Michael Verrill, Bruce Weider and Steven Weiner.

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