

## Craig Woodward, Musician/performer Bio 2022

For the past 35 years Craig Woodward has worked as a performing musician in both the live music industry and as a recording artist. Starting his career as a performer at 18 when he was able to drive himself to gigs and was legally allowed to perform in licensed venues his first musical outings were as a solo performer, performing America pre-war style 'country blues' music. Through the influence of western pop, rock and country music that he grew up listening to on the radio he had started digging back to find the roots of these contemporary styles and found himself developing a strong passion for the early blues music which opened up new windows and lead him to the discovery of other American 'Southern' traditional music styles, in particular Appalachian 'Old-time' and 'Stringband' music and the French 'Cajun' and Creole music of Southwest Louisiana and East Texas. His shift in focus from the African American country blues to the music of the Southern Appalachians and the prairie and bayou of the deep South lead him to transition from playing guitar exclusively to the study of 5-string banjo, fiddle, mandolin and the single row diatonic button accordion. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old-time\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old-time_music)

As well as being a performing member with the Le Blanc Brothers Cajun Aces at the time around 1993/94 his first professional Old-time 'Stringband' line-up Headbelly Buzzard started playing a weekly residency at the Rose Hotel in Fitzroy then moving to the Homestead Hotel in Clifton Hill followed by a move to Friday nights at the Railway Hotel in Nicholson St Nth Fitzroy where the band continued to perform weekly with a shift at some point to Saturday nights, various line-up changes and a band name change to Flying Engine Stringband in a residency continuing for nearly 20 years. Over this period the band recorded and released two studio and two live albums as Headbelly Buzzard following up with a more recent Flying Engine Stringband studio album in 2018 <https://www.facebook.com/Flying-Engine-436009906507910>

Craig has travelled to the USA on various occasions to research, perform, formally study and visit with traditional and professional musicians in the 'Old-time' and Cajun music genres. On his first, most formative and lengthiest visit to the US in 1998 Craig attended the oldest and most famous US Old-time and Bluegrass 'Fiddlers Convention' in Galax Virginia where he placed 8<sup>th</sup> in the Old-time fiddle category contest unexpectedly and unintentionally beating out a couple of his Old-time fiddle hero's Benton Flippen and J P Fraley. On this three-month musical pilgrimage he visited and learned from both well-respected veteran and relatively unknown young banjo and fiddle players in West Virginia, Virginia and Nth Carolina. Craig also made his first visit to Southwest Louisiana to hear and experience Cajun music and culture first hand around the Lafayette, Eunice and Opelousas communities attending local gigs and dances. <https://www.oldfiddlersconvention.com/>

On other US trips Craig has attended Cliff Top Stringband Festival in West Virginia and studied under respected Old-time musicians and teachers Brad Leftwich and Adam Hurt at the Swannanoa Gathering at Warren Wilson College near Asheville Nth Carolina <https://swangathering.com/>

With celebrated American performance artist Martha McDonald Craig collaborated as musical accompanist on fiddle, banjo and mandolin in her Melbourne performances 'The further the distance the tighter the knot' at Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts St Kilda in 2009 running October 31<sup>st</sup>-Nov 8<sup>th</sup>, fiddle for her performance of 'The Weeping Dress' at Craft Victoria on March 10<sup>th</sup> 2011 and fiddle and concertina for 'Deep Sea Shanties' a work commissioned by the Substation Newport on the Maribyrnong and Yarra rivers on board the boat the 'Blackbird' <https://vimeo.com/116886311>

In 2015 Craig travelled again to the US to collaborate with Martha McDonald providing musical accompaniment on fiddle and concertina for the performance of 'Hospital Hymn: Elegy for Soldiers' at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington DC on October 17<sup>th</sup> <http://marthamcdonald.blogspot.com/2016/01/hospital-hymn-elegy-for-lost-soldiers.html>

Although his primary interest has been performing at local bars, pubs, restaurants etc to bring Old-time and traditional acoustic music to the general public rather than making his career focus on specialised 'folk' and traditional music festivals and conventions over the years Craig has performed and conducted instrumental workshops at countless Australian music events and festivals including The National Folk Festival in Canberra, Port Ferry Folk Festival, Tamworth Country Music Festival, Woodford and Traditional Bluegrass and Traditional Country Music Festivals Yarra Junction Fiddlers Convention, Harrietville Bluegrass Festival, Dorrigo, the Kelly County Pick and Music Camp, Manjimup Bluegrass & Old-time weekend plus many others <https://kellycountypick.org/camp-info-2021/>

In 2019 Craig was invited to join the touring show 'Songs of Freedom, a Tribute to Woody Guthrie' as a feature instrumentalist, a show put together by local musician/singer/songwriter Bruce Hearn and his band 'The Machinists' where he had the opportunity to perform along side legendary Australian Folk music icons Eric Bogle, Mic Conway, Margret RoadNight, Kerry Simpson and Jan 'Yarn' Wositzky. The show was performed at the Powerhouse Theatre in Brisbane, The Frankston Arts Centre, The Athenaeum Theatre in Melbourne from which a live double album was released on vinyl, and the historic Theatre Royal in Hobart. Due to it's success and popularity a follow up show was performed at Melbourne's Memo Music Hall in St Kilda on Dec 11<sup>th</sup> 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wqAA6FQxuw>

As well as regular Band shows with Flying Engine Stringband and his traditional Cajun outfit The 'Johnny Can't Dance' Cajun Band as his main focus up until recently Craig has also performed and recorded two albums as part of the Old-time and Country Blues Duo 'Woodward and Rough' with veteran Melbourne blues guitar aficionado Warren Rough. For over 20 years Craig has been a highly regarded instrumental music teacher offering private lessons on Old-time and Cajun fiddle, 5-string 'clawhammer' banjo, guitar, mandolin and Cajun accordion from his home studio in Lalor and online. Craig has organised and lead a long-term weekly Jam session to both encourage the interest and promote Old-time music in Melbourne and provide somewhere for it to be shared as a social music interest which is continuously growing, this jam session has moved around many venues over the last 15 years or so and is currently held at the Coburg RSL every Saturday afternoon. <https://www.reverbnation.com/thejohnnycantdancecajunband>

In the past two years with the current climate and compromised hospitality and performing arts industries Craig has embraced the transition back to working as a solo performer around the smaller acoustic music venues in Melbourne's inner North which has become his current focus along side an exiting new collaboration with fellow Old-time music enthusiast and virtuoso fiddler Kat Mear <https://www.facebook.com/Craig-Woodward-music-835744616534917>