

chased by so many musicians: a couple of major record labels had expressed interest in signing Ballard and the band to a recording contract. At that crucial juncture, two longtime band-members quit. Faced with finding and grooming new band-members, which was akin to starting over, Ballard opted to go a new direction—he built a recording studio in his Kenmore home and began writing/demoing songs for music publishers.

From 1989 to the present, Ballard's Skylyne Studios has recorded numerous local bands, solo performers and ensembles often with Ballard acting in a combined role of recording engineer and producer. In the late 90's, through various contacts in the industry, Ballard began composing soundtrack music for independent films as well as a variety of industrial videos/informercials for clients ranging from Goodyear, Timken, Nationwide and Apple to the University of Akron. A commercial for the latter, aired during Super Bowl XL in 2006, featured Ballard's music.

A commission to compose music for a massage/therapy business inspired Ballard to release the resulting compositions in the collection *Wexford Lane* released in 2010.

Then, Ballard began re-visiting songs from his back catalog intrigued with the idea of how his 60-year-old self would produce songs written by his 30-year-old self. The resulting album, 2011's *Wood & Wire*, marked his return to the singer/songwriter genre and features Ballard's multi-instrumentalist talents on tracks ranging stylistically from classic rock & roll, to folk, blues and Americana roots music. A fresh, new batch of original songs followed on his 2012 release, *Human Harvest* including *Save Me A Place*— a loving tribute to Ballard's late mentor and friend, John Bassette, sung with another of Bassette's protégés, Alex Bevan.

Ask John Steinbeck

One swerves to hit him

One swerves to miss

Ain't that the way that it goes

Pieces of silver all from a kiss

Just ask John Steinbeck

He knows

The most recent path taken by Ballard on his musical trek began in 2014. In keeping with his instinct for social commentary/justice, and heeding the precept that a creative person's task is to "travel to where the map says 'here be dragons' and report back", he conceived fourteen songs. When the time came to record these new songs, Ballard repaired to his studio and began the process of bringing the compositions to life. Not unlike the planning Ballard undertakes to prepare for a marathon, his approach to recording music follows a similar meticulous methodology: decide on instrumentation, create arrangements, lay down "sketches" of tracks, then fill-in the details.

Ballard describes his typical line-up as drums, bass, a couple of guitars and a