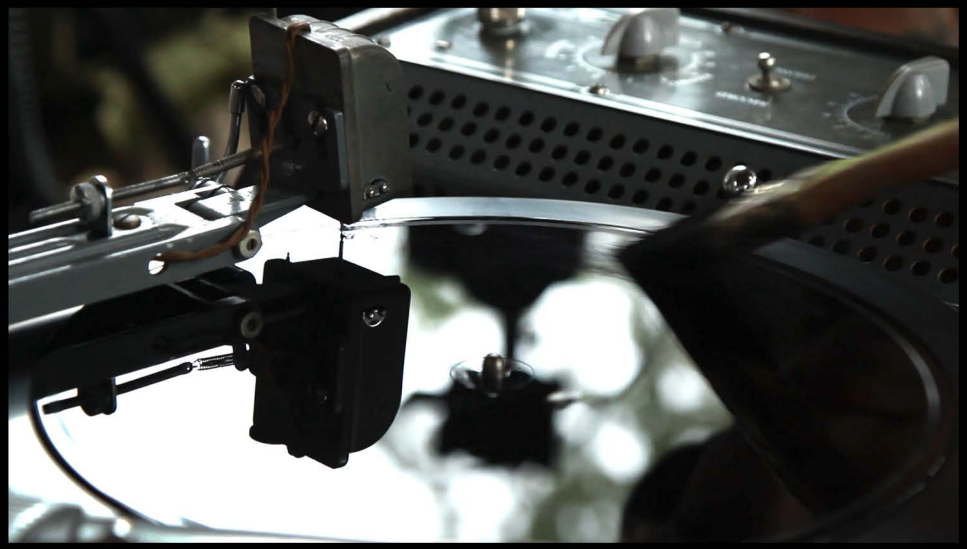
THE 78 PROJECT MOVIE

"The ineffable romance of old recordings makes for magic…ripe with wonder."
- The Austin Chronicle

The 78 Project is on a journey across America to make one-of-a-kind 78rpm records with musicians in their hometowns using a 1930s Presto direct-to-disc recorder. With one microphone. With one blank disc. In one 3-minute take.



THE 78 PROJECT MOVIE

Director, Editor, Camera
Alex Steyermark

Producers
Lavinia Jones Wright & Alex Steyermark

Presto Recordist
Lavinia Jones Wright

Running time: 95 minutes

"I didn't imagine anything like The 78 Project, in which we discover that not only are dead media platforms not dead at all, but that they can be gateways into their own peculiarly new universes of creativity."

William Gibson

"Rises above simple vintage worship and does more than just glorify the past—it helps us experience it."
The Village Voice

A story of two people driving across America to record contemporary musicians on a 1930's Presto direct-to-disc recorder.

Sea of Bees records at home in Sacramento, CA

The 78 Project creators Alex Steyermark and Lavinia Jones Wright shot The 78 Project Movie from August 2012 to September 2013, driving across America in a tiny Kia Soul loaded to the roof with cameras, their Presto, spare tubes, blank discs and a toolbox (which for better or worse they ended up using nearly every day). Over the course of their journey, the pair visited established and emerging musicians in their homes to cut once-in-a-lifetime 78rpm records.

Louis Michot, Corey Ledet and Ashlee Michot
Arnaudville, Louisiana

The Reverend John Wilkins records
"I Want Jesus to Walk With Me"
Hunters Chapel in Como, MS.

"The 78 Project grabs American music by the roots."

USA Today

John Doe
Fairfax, CA

The Bo-Keys featuring
Percy Wiggins
Memphis, TN

The 78 Project Movie is a film about connections. From Tennessee to Mississippi and from California to Louisiana, the folk singers, punk rockers, Gospel and Cajun singers in The 78 Project Movie tell in their own words what it is to be American today, sharing their lives and histories through intimate musical performances of classic American songs.

Coati Mundi
Murietta, CA

Holly Williams & Chris Coleman
Nashville, TN

The Presto machine The 78 Project uses is the same model of device on which American folklorist and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax recorded his legendary field recordings between 1933 and 1942. Artists who participated in The 78 Project Movie performed their song in one take, recording directly onto 78rpm acetate disc, in exactly the manner that America's authentic musical forms were originally captured.

John Paul Keith records"The Knoxville Girl" in Memphis' Hi Tone Cafe.

Carrying the gear into Topanga Canyon to record Little Wings in his cabin.

Wayne Cory explains how lacquer acetates are made.

The 78 Project Movie includes experts from every facet of field recording: Grammy-winning producers, legendary 78 collectors, the family of the Presto inventor, the factory workers who make the blank acetate discs, and curators from the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian. The kaleidoscopic viewpoints of these technologists, historians and craftsmen provide the context that allows for new connections to emerge between people from different generations and seemingly different cultures.

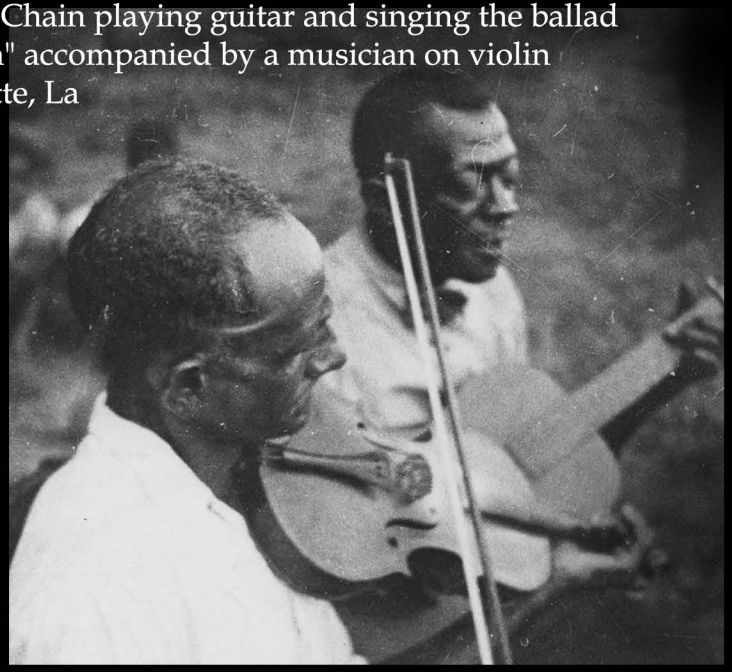
Hundreds of aluminum discs wait to be coated with lacquer at Apollo Masters in Banning, CA.

"For fans of pure recording and its history, it's compelling and informative."
Billboard SXSW: The Fest's Top Films

Workers in the 1940s assemble model K8s in the Presto Factory in New Jersey. One of those might even be ours...

Curator Todd Harvey with the sleeve from Georgia Turner's "Rising Sun Blues," the original recording of "House of the Rising Sun," in the vault at the Library of Congress.

Stavin' Chain playing guitar and singing the ballad "Batson" accompanied by a musician on violin Lafayette, La



Wayne Perry playing fiddle Crowley, Louisiana

Photos and recordings made by John and Alan Lomax on their journeys to the South link to traditions that are still alive today, direct ancestors of the modern musicians in The 78 Project Movie.

Renowned 78rpm record collector and recordist Joe Bussard records "Guitar Rag" as a Christmas greeting in Frederick, MD.

Musical Performances by:

Dawn Landes - “The Brown Girl”

Reverend John Wilkins - “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”

John Paul Keith - “The Knoxville Girl”

Ella Mae Bowen - “The Love of God”

Holly Williams & Chris Coleman - “I Saw the Light”

Jimmy Peters and Ring Dance Singers - “Je veux me marier”
(Courtesy of The American Folklife Center)

Louis Michot, Corey Ledet & Ashlee Michot - “’Trape mon chapeau”

Ben Vaughn - “Worried Man Blues”

The Easy Leaves - “Saddle Fork (Cotton Fields)”

John Reilly & Tom Brosseau - “Careless Love”

Coati Mundi - “Billy Boy”

Sea of Bees - “In My Time of Dying”

Little Wings - “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen”

Gaby Moreno & Adam Levy - “After You’ve Gone”

Joe Bussard - “Guitar Rag”

Jaron Lanier - “Walrus of Thieves”

The Bo-Keys feat. Percy Wiggins - “Deep River”

Dylan LeBlanc - “Where Did You Sleep Last Night”

John Doe - “Skip to My Lou”

Victoria Williams - “Take This Hammer”

THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

"The ineffable romance of old recordings makes for magic in this self-produced account of Alex Steyermark and Lavinia Jones Wright giving musicians the chance to record on an acetate disc."

OXFORD AMERICAN

"I didn't imagine anything like The 78 Project, in which we discover that not only are dead media platforms not dead at all, but that they can be gateways into their own peculiarly new universes of creativity." - William Gibson

MORNING EDITION from NPR NEWS npr

"Wanting to tap into the America that Lomax was recording, Wright and Steyermark went out and found some antique Prestos of their own. For the past few years, Jones and Steyermark have been hauling these machines around the country to capture raw performances. They go to places that are not ideal for recording — but that's part of the point."

The New York Times NYTIMES.COM

"..."The 78 Project" — is becoming a small industry. Each performance was videotaped for an episode on the project's website. This week, Ms. Jones Wright and Mr. Steyermark released an LP (yes — a vinyl LP that plays at 33 1/3 r.p.m.; it comes with a code for a digital download), "The 78 Project: Volume 1".... Mr. Steyermark and Ms. Jones Wright also traveled the country for a year, recording other musicians, and expanding on the web series for a feature-length documentary, which will have its premiere at the South by Southwest festival in March."

USA TODAY POP CANDY

"Sometimes the simplest way is the best way. The folks behind The 78 Project seem to agree with that saying; this year creators Alex Steyermark and Lavinia Jones Wright have been traveling the country, recording early American music with technology of the past."

THE NEW YORKER

"'Each song receives a single take. That was the field-recording tradition,' Steyermark said. 'One Shot. We don't want people to fix up their performances.' Wrght asked June to sit in front of the microphone so that she could set the levels on the Presto. Out on the street, a fire truck passed. 'We always seem to get a siren,' Wright said."

the village VOICE

"At the Independent Filmmaker Project's recent film-week event, most people screened, well, films. Alex Steyermark and Lavinia Jones Wright chose not to. Instead, they cut a live record on a 1930's Presto direct-to-disc recorder, giving the audience at the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center a chance to experience field recording firsthand."

BBC RADIO

"New York is buzzing with retro-chic products these days, but few can match the authenticity of a project that aims to bring alive the sound, touch, and even smells of recorded music's first golden period..."

SOUNDCHECK WNYC

"The 78 Project is on a mission to record today's musicians with yesterday's technology - a 1930s PRESTO direct-to-disc recorder. We'll hear about the project and give it a go, as the project records our musical guest, Justin Townes Earle, live on the air...

The 78 Project story has expanded across mediums. It is a groundbreaking documentary-based transmedia project that began as an acclaimed web series in 2011 and has since evolved to include an ever-growing collection of full-length webisodes and streaming acetate recordings, soundtrack albums, live events series, and now a feature length film.

The 78 Project web series has over 1 million views to date.

MARCHÉ DU FILM
FESTIVAL DE CANNES
Cannes Cross Media Corner
Official Selection

Power to the Pixel
Cross Media Forum London
Official Selection

IFP's Independent Film Week
Official Selection

IFC Center
Short Attention Span Cinema

Funding Partners for The 78 Project Movie

Fiscally sponsored by the
Independent Feature Project

The 78 Project Movie was
crowdfunded through Kickstarter

The 78 Project Movie
received funding from
New York State Concil on the Arts

The 78 Project creators

Contact:

Alex Steyermark
Alex@the78project.com

Lavinia Jones Wright
Lavinia@the78project.com

www.the78project.com

ALEX STEYERMARK
(Director/Producer/Camera/Editor/Writer)

Alex Steyermark's feature films, "Prey for Rock & Roll" (2003), "One Last Thing…" (2006), and "Losers Take All" (2013), with casts including Cynthia Nixon, Ethan Hawke, Gina Gershon, Michael Angarano and Wyclef Jean, have been acclaimed at US and International film festivals from Sundance to Toronto to Tribeca, and are distributed throughout the world. Steyermark started his filmmaking career as a documentary cameraman and editor, before segueing to feature film picture and music editing. Prior to directing, he distinguished himself as a film music supervisor and music producer working with a wide array of recording artists (including David Bowie, Public Enemy, Michael Jackson, Dave Grohl and more) on films by Spike Lee, Ang Lee, Jonathan Demme and Robert Rodriguez, among many others.

LAVINIA JONES WRIGHT
(Producer/Presto Recordist/Writer)

A Philadelphia native and current Brooklyn resident, Lavinia Jones Wright has documented and contributed to both the New York and Philadelphia music scenes extensively. Most recently as a member of ASCAP's marketing department, she wrote and edited words, audio and video for ASCAP's Playback Magazine, website, award shows and ASCAP's Field Recording web series and coordinated ASCAP's Inside Music e-newsletter. As a journalist, Lavinia has contributed to Billboard, SPIN, WSJ Speakeasy, AOL Spinner, Harp, Magnet and Crawdaddy! among others. Both independently and with venues and promoters, Lavinia has organized numerous concerts, festival shows and special events. She has recorded and performed as a member of Adam Arcuragi and the Lupine Choral Society, the inventors of the Death Gospel genre.

Contact:

Alex Steyermark
Alex@the78project.com

Lavinia Jones Wright
Lavinia@the78project.com

www.the78project.com/feature-film