

Honky Talkin'

Press Kit



Key Personnel

Director: Eric Weltner

Cinematography: Eric Hintz, James Wood

Edit & Post Production: Matthew Davis

Re-recording Mixer: Tim Dutton

Writer: Eric Weltner

HONKY TALKIN'

TALES  TRAVAILS FROM THE
HONKY TONK TRAILS

Real
life stories
from
real life
honky
tonkers.



Sierra Productions presents a film by Eric Weltner

A man wearing a light-colored cowboy hat and a dark, ornate, sequined suit jacket is playing a yellow electric guitar and singing. He is looking to the right with an intense expression. The background is dark with some blurred lights.

HONKY TALKIN'

Media Coverage

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MOVIES & TV

Cincinnati Filmmaker's New Documentary Highlights Touring Musicians' Struggles and Successes

Featuring Kentucky honky tonk legend Bobby Mackey and others, *Honky Talkin'* premieres Aug. 23 and explores the everyday realities of professional musicians.

By [Ashley Moor](#)

Aug 7, 2025 at 5:46 pm

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Audio By Carbonatix

A new music documentary featuring legendary figures in the local country and rockabilly scenes debuts at the Southgate House Revival later this month.

Honky Talkin': Tales & Travails From The Honky Tonk Trails, a documentary that intimately examines the lives of working musicians, will premiere at the Southgate House Revival on Aug. 23.

Longtime Cincinnati resident Eric Weltner — the film's director and writer — created *Honky Talkin'* to explore how musicians navigate the unique pressures of life on the road, from grueling hours and creative ruts to financial uncertainty.

"I was always just intrigued in what that life is, because I think a lot of people have this image of being a professional musician, that everybody is Taylor Swift or Beyonce, and about 99.5% of them are not — they are real people doing a job," Weltner says. "A lot of it is like any other job — a lot of travel, a lot of arranging, a lot of cold calling, trying to get gigs, dealing with car trouble on the road, just ordinary life things."

Weltner has previously directed two films, *International Incidents* and *The Mohawk Monopoly* — both about minor league hockey.

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To better understand the lows and highs that musicians face, Weltner and his locally-based production team interviewed a number of bands and

musicians – including Northern Kentucky legend Bobby Mackey and Vevay, Indiana rockabilly band Jerry King and the Rivertown Ramblers.

Though Mackey's honky tonk in Wilder, Kentucky (now temporarily located in Florence while they build a brand new, one-story bar on the same site in Wilder) is perhaps more locally famous than its namesake, the musician behind the legendary establishment is just as interesting.

Inspired by country music heavyweights like Hank Williams, Merle Haggard and George Jones, Mackey began making his own signature brand of country music after graduating from Lewis County High School in 1968. In 1978, Mackey opened Bobby Mackey's Music World in Wilder – a true honky tonk with music, ghosts and plenty of stories that make it into the *Honky Talkin'* documentary. Last year, Mackey was inducted into the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame.

Weltner told *CityBeat* that his crew was the last professional film crew in the old Bobby Mackey's Music World location before demolition began in December.

"Bobby Mackey has been around for 50 some years, and had his own club for nearly 50 years at this point, and his story is interesting because he had to choose – go to Nashville and make it, or do I stay here where I'm established, and run my own thing? That's what he did. He's been highly successful with it," Weltner said.

Jerry King and the Rivertown Ramblers have been making country and rockabilly music and touring locally since the early 2000s. In 2006, they achieved breakthrough success with their hit "Honky Tonk Bop," a true country-rockabilly tune. The band has recorded tracks at the legendary Sun Studio in Memphis, where rock and roll, country and rockabilly artists like

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Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis recorded music from the mid-to-late '50s.

Other bands and music industry professionals featured in the documentary include The Royal Hounds, Morgans Mill, Jason & The Scorchers lead singer Jason Ringenberg, Bobby Mackey's Music World General Manager Denise Mackey and Southgate House Revival owner Morrella Raleigh.

All of the featured interviews help paint a clearer picture of what life looks like for the working musician – from the highs of stellar performances to the lows of missing out on family life while on tour.

"I was told by one of the bands that divorce is a very common situation in the music industry, where people feel almost estranged from their families by being on the road eight or nine months out of the year, and have somewhat tenuous relationships with their spouses and their children," Weltner said.

Though some musicians, like Mackey and Ringenberg, have achieved this familial balance and mainstream success, they sometimes face new sorts of challenges once they make it to the big leagues. The documentary touches on the pros and cons of getting signed to a major record label. For many, being signed to a major label means finally outsourcing tougher aspects of the job – like marketing and booking tours – to someone else. However, that major label deal can also come with less creative freedom and more pressure to constantly deliver.

There are also plenty of fun insider stories in the documentary, including a recounting of Ringenberg's experience opening for The Ramones in Texas in 1983.

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"There are a lot of little nuggets that people will just find fascinating," Weltner said. "You know, maybe even hearing about a professional oboe player who tried to crash a CD release party to be onstage with one of the bands. Things like that. Those are things that really happen to real people. Or maybe a random rockabilly show in the middle of Indiana at three o'clock in the morning at a Waffle House – things like that appear in the film ... We get stories of the fun, the entertaining, the bizarre, the less-than-fun, like buses breaking down and equipment being stolen, things like that. So there's a lot to the story, and there's a lot to being a professional, touring musician."

Honky Talkin': Tales & Travails From The Honky Tonk Trails premieres at the Southgate House Revival on Aug. 23. The night will also include performances from Ringenberg, The Royal Hounds and Jerry King and the Rivertown Ramblers. For more information about the premiere, visit southgatehouse.com.

For more information about *Honky Talkin': Tales & Travails From The Honky Tonk Trails*, visit the film's [Facebook page](#).

Watch the trailer for *Honky Talkin'* below:

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John Kiesewetter: Media Beat

For more than 30 years, John Kiesewetter has been the source for information about all things in local media — comings and goings, local people appearing on the big or small screen, special programs, and much more. Contact John at johnkiese@yahoo.com.

New 'Honky Talkin' ' film a rockabilly road trip

91.7 WVXU | By [John Kiesewetter](#)

Published August 20, 2025 at 10:57 AM EDT



Scott Willis Photo / Courtesy Eric Weltner

Jason Ringenberg, former lead singer for Jason and the Scorchers, with his two favorite instruments.

Documentary premiering Saturday shows musicians' unglamorous life on the road.

They make it seem so easy. Band members take the stage and play a couple of hours for

Eric Weltner's new [*Honky Talkin': Tales and Travails from the Honk Tonk Trails*](#) documentary, which premieres 7 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 23, at the Southgate Revival House-Sanctuary, takes us on a road trip with several musicians to and from their gigs.

"It's a grind," says Weltner, a Greater Cincinnati advertising executive and filmmaker who recently moved from Newport to Gatlinburg, Tennessee. "We see these people on stage and see their personalities, and we think we know them. But they have 22 hours to deal with life, get to their next gig, and book their shows. Unless you reach a certain level, you're doing it all on your own."

Over the past two years, Weltner and his camera tagged along with Jerry King and the Rivertown Ramblers, based in Vevay, Indiana; Jason Ringenberg (former front man for Jason and the Scorchers); and the Royal Hounds from Nashville. He also interviewed the Morgans Mill band from Knoxville; Bobby Mackey's wife Denise; and Morella Raleigh, owner of the Southgate House Revival-Sanctuary. He shot performances at the Southgate Revival House in Newport and at Bobby Mackey's in Wilder just before it was closed and demolished last year.

WVXU

The Middle With Jeremy Ho...



Courtesy Eric Weltner

Poster for Saturday, Aug. 23, premiere party at the Southgate House Revival in Newport.

Twenty-nine original songs are featured in the movie, including "Honky Tonk Bop" by King.

Only about 40% of the film is from concerts. The rest shows the musicians loading equipment in their vehicles and driving hundreds of miles, or talking about life on the road.

"I found it fascinating. They play up to 250 dates a year and put a lot of miles on their car

WVXU

The Middle With Jeremy Ho...

The Facebook campaign [has promoted the film](#) with sayings such as, “There’s a lot more to the music business than music,” “A profession with more red ink than red carpets,” and “Just paying your dues isn’t a down payment on success.”

[The premiere party](#) will include performances by Ringenberg, the Royal Hounds, and King and his Rivertown Ramblers at the Southgate House Revival, 111 E. Sixth St. Newport. Tickets are \$35 plus fees.

Weltner says he’s been a fan of live music most of his life. He saw Jason and the Scorchers play the Ohio University Spring Festival in 1986, when he was an OU senior. (*Honky Talkin’* includes some OU student video from the festival.) Weltner first saw King and the Rivertown Ramblers at Top Cats on Vine Street in Clifton. The Columbus-area native says he frequently travels to Nashville to enjoy live music.

His first two films were about hockey, his other passion. Weltner produced *International Incidents*, about the old Columbus Owls hockey team in 2020, and [The Mohawk Monopoly](#) in 2023, about the 1950’s Cincinnati Mohawks championship hockey teams.

After the premiere, Weltner plans to enter *Honky Talkin’* into film festivals “to see if we can garner any kind of attention from Netflix, Amazon, or other platforms,” he says.

Read more:

- ['Cradle of Coaches' documentary to premiere next spring](#)
- [LISTEN: Local musicians discuss Cincinnati's jazz scene](#)
- [Cincinnati Black Music Walk of Fame announces 2025 class](#)

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New documentary *Honky Talkin'*



Ohio University alumnus Eric Weltner: writer, director, filmmaker

New film by OHIO U alum Eric Weltner will be screened at Tennessee film festival



Ken Klein 
Research Assistant at Ohio University



October 27, 2025

The latest documentary by [Ohio University](#) alumnus [Eric Weltner](#) will be screened at the [TIFFF - Tennessee International Indie Film Festival](#) (November 6-9).

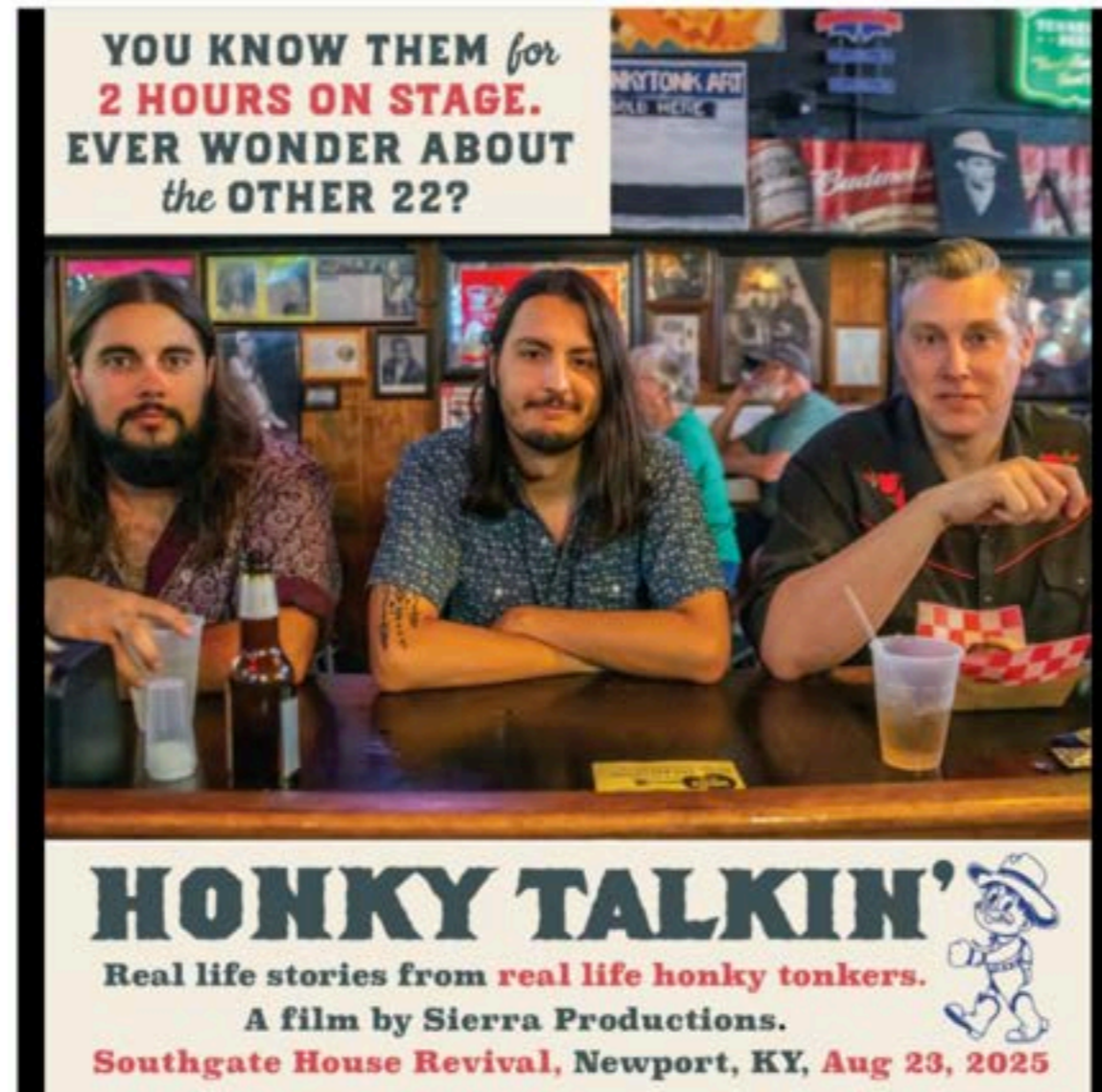
The film, written and directed by Weltner, features live rockabilly and country music performances and explores life on the road: loading equipment, driving many miles, and talking. [Click here](#) for trailer.

"It's a grind," says Weltner (Ohio University Class of 1986), referring to musicians' travel and setup.

Honky Talkin': Tales and Travails from the Honky Tonk Trails premiered August 23 in Newport, Kentucky.

Ohio University alum [John Kiesewetter](#) (Class of 1975/Journalism) [reported](#) on the film for [WVXU 91.7 FM](#) in Cincinnati.

"Weltner says he's been a fan of live music most of his life," wrote Kiesewetter. "He saw Jason and the Scorchers play the Ohio University Spring Festival in 1986, when he was an OU senior. (*Honky Talkin'* includes some OU student video from the festival.)"



Poster promoting the premier of Eric Weltner's film Honky Talkin'

Weltner's first two films were about hockey: *International Incidents* (2020) about minor pro teams in Columbus and *The Mohawk Monopoly* (2023) about the 1950s Cincinnati Mohawks championship teams.

Promotional Campaign

The Bobby Mackey Show



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TO THEM *it's a* **LIVING.**

HONKY TALKIN'

Real life stories from **real life honky tonkers.**

A film by Sierra Productions.



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MORE RED INK
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A film by Sierra Productions.





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IT MIGHT TAKE A
DECADE *to* BECOME AN
OVERNIGHT SUCCESS.**

HONKY TALKIN'

Real life stories from *real life honky tonkers.*

A film by Sierra Productions.



View the *Honky Talkin'* trailer here:

<https://youtu.be/h5h9cXJRSwE?si=2EFe41Cub1La9DMn>

IMDb:

[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt38546066/?ref =ext shr lnk](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt38546066/?ref=ext_ssr_lnk)