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Songwriting With: Soldiers Releases 'Daddy's Son' for Father's Day

 June 19, 2026  Bethany Bowman



Anyone who has listened to and/or written music knows that there is a healing aspect to it, and it is never more evident than when working with veterans.

Veterans John "PK" Kelley and Marc Budnik teamed up with Nashville songwriters Jay Clementi and Sean Bode to write a tribute to a fallen comrade's son called "**Daddy's Son**." With this heartwarming, tear-jerker of a song, the writers offer guidance, love, and life lessons his father never had the chance to impart, ensuring his father's spirit lives on through the stories and values he left behind.

Songwriting With: Soldiers (SW:S) holds weekend retreats across the U.S. for veterans from all conflicts. Since 2012, they have connected with hundreds of veterans and military families, creating a safe and inspiring environment where they can share their experiences and write songs with professional songwriters.



SongwritingWith:Soldiers - "Daddy's Son" (Acoustic Video)

Songwriting With Soldiers



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One of the first songwriters to work with SW:S was Jay Clementi, who has had songs cut by Luke Bryan, Darius Rucker, Kasey Musgraves, and more. Clementi got his start working with the renowned singer/songwriter **Radney Foster** and has been part of many of Foster's records since 2006. They formed the band, *The Lucky Bucks*, which was popular for a few years and toured with Dierks Bentley.

In 2011, Clementi, Foster, and Darden Smith had a retreat with veterans in Colorado. Clementi shared, "We were all so emotional, and we realized we have to keep doing this."

The retreat was so successful that it kept growing until it eventually became **Songwriting With: Soldiers**.

While Jay Clementi has been writing songs for well over 20 years, five years ago, Clementi became **the musical director for SW:S**. He explained, "When you are writing for other artists, there are a lot of things you can't say, a lot of filters. So, it is refreshing as a songwriter to take yourself out of the equation because it's all about them."

As these songwriters work with veterans, it is their job to take their truth, decipher all the pieces, and put the puzzle together. "We're the paintbrush, but they are the paint," Clementi confirmed.

"**Daddy's Son**" was written at SW:S retreat in Arizona in 2018. They got together with some Army Rangers. PK Kelley and Marc Budnik had this idea to write a song for the 18-month-old son of their Delta Company team leader, Tommy MacPherson (pictured here), who was killed in Afghanistan. At the time of the retreat, the son was eight years old, and Kelley and Budnik knew him well. They felt he needed to hear some words from his dad.

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With the words *We never got to play catch, so charge the ball/ Give your best/ Never start a fight, but don't back down/ Sometimes you gotta' walk away to stand your ground/ And if your heart pounds to a rockabilly song/ If your hair stands up when someone's being wronged/ And you're wondering where all of that comes from/ It's your Daddy, son, it's like a letter from a father to a son.*

Watch the heartwarming story behind the song [here](#).



SongwritingWithSoldiers - Story Behind the Song - "Daddy's Son"
Songwriting With Soldiers



Watch on

One thing that makes this particular song extra special to Jay Clementi is that his son, Brody, joined him for the [final cut](#). "I hope my voice can do it justice. It's powerful," Brody stated.

The Songwriting With: Soldiers Music Program was made possible by the generosity of the Johnson Family Fund, and since its inception, more than 1200 songs have been written, with an average of 200 per year. "For veterans to be understood, they need to be heard," SW:S proclaims.

Each song serves a dual purpose: connecting veterans who share similar experiences while educating civilian audiences about military life and sacrifice. The release of these songs through familiar streaming platforms ensures that these authentic stories reach everyone who needs to hear them and amplifies the voices of those who serve.

And while not every song written by SW:S can go into full production in a music studio, many of them are and can be viewed on their [YouTube channel](#).

SW:S uses songwriting as a catalyst for positive change. It starts with providing a carefully crafted experience so they can connect to themselves and others, and where songwriters can help shape their story into song. The non-profit offers its participants a unique way to tell their stories, rebuild trust, release pain, and forge new bonds. These collaborations take place during weekend retreats hosted in a trusted, evidence-based program designed to foster creativity, connection, and authentic expression.

SW:S is not therapy, political, religious, or military affiliated, but is a neutral ground, a blank page, to meet veterans where they are. Click here to [donate](#) to the marvelous non-profit.

Check out [Songwriting With: Soldiers Linktree](#) to connect and watch their videos.

You can follow Jay Clementi on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

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Bethany Bowman is a freelance entertainment writer. You can follow her [blog](#), [Instagram](#), and [TikTok](#).

Check out these new releases from SW:S

- May 23, 2025 – "The Man You Used To Know," written by veteran Bruce Anderson, his wife of 37 years, Lesley Anderson, and songwriter and producer Trent Willmon (Cody Johnson, Granger Smith) – performed by Trent Willmon.
- May 23, 2025 – "At Ease," penned by veterans Chadrick Allen, Rhonda Chavez, Sally Griffiths, Justin Lilley, Benjamin Liotta, Carlos Gomez Perez, Robert Heathe Shumate, and Tristan Wimmer along with songwriters James House, Will Kimbrough, Mark Nesler, and Terry Radigan – performed by Will Kimbrough.
- July 4, 2025 – "When You Look At Me" – Erin Enderlin feat. Randy Houser Songwriters: Veterans Tanja Struyck-Fogleman, Brent Fogleman, and Erin Enderlin
- August 15, 2025 – "Let Go Of The Pain" – Danny Myrick Songwriters: Veteran Daniel Cummings and Danny Myrick
- September 26, 2025 – "Hey Brother" – Mark Nesler Songwriters: Veteran Tristan Wimmer and Mark Nesler
- November 7, 2025 – "Strumming Hand" – Maia Sharp Songwriters: Veteran John Cameron III and Maia Sharp
- February 13, 2026 – "The One They Call" – Radney Foster and Kelly Willis Songwriters: Veteran Matthew Chapman and his wife Deborah, and Radney Foster
- June 12, 2026 – "Daddy's Son" – Jay Clementi feat. Brody Clementi Songwriters: Veterans John "PK" Kelley and Marc Budnik, along with Jay Clementi and Sean Bode

