Musician / Engineer
George Stetten
releases first CD
Awake at the Wheel

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Fixing broken microphone cables is what got George Stetten into electronics more than 30 years ago, and since then he has always had interesting day-jobs. He has built deep-ocean computers, designed radio telemetric eggs, and invented an ultrasonic system called the “sonic flashlight,” featured recently in Discover Magazine. But Stetten has never given up his music, and has recently released ten of his original songs on a new CD, Awake at the Wheel. His mix of folk, rock, and jazz, comes with thoughtful lyrics and humable tunes. He performs all the instrumental parts on the CD, and sings with backup from his wife and daughters. He also did the artwork for the album. Stetten’s musical background includes twelve years of classical piano lessons and years of playing in bands and solo. He spent a year in a master’s program at New England Conservatory studying piano improvisation with Ran Blake and Jaki Byard. He worked with electronic music innovator Barry Vercoe at the MIT Computer Music Studio (now part of the MIT Media Lab) and invented an early touch-sensitive electronic piano keyboard. While designing the first computer systems for Deep Submersible Alvin in Woods Hole, Cape Cod, he worked with veteran sound-engineer Jim Akens in the early 1980’s. In Woods Hole, Stetten was the house pianist at a seaside restaurant, the Fishmongers, where he refined his songwriting and performance styles. He played at the Philadelphia Folk Festival with folk musician Bill Staines in 1983, and appeared solo in the PBS television series, All American Jazz, in 1989. He founded the Duke University Music Exchange (DUME) in 1997, producing their first CD, Voices of DUME, to promote popular music by students and faculty at Duke. His piano playing may be heard from time to time as a segue on the PBS radio program, All things Considered. Stetten currently holds faculty positions in the University of Pittsburgh Bioengineering Department and the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Institute.