



# JOSH OTTUM

I used to work at an adult day center as a case manager. The center had facilities for clients with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. During my time there, the role of case manager slowly turned into "*unlicensed music therapist*". I'd come in with my guitar and just strum old tunes out of these dusty Reader's Digest books. We did all the hits: "*Moon River*", "*All Of Me*", "*Amazing Grace*", and "*Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*". There was a forty year old client named Mel who'd been a victim of drug abuse in his twenties and it had left him with the intellect of a three year old. He didn't say much and usually responded in the same way to questions with a simple "yes" or "no". Once in a while I'd break into a medley of blues and spiritual songs. He'd instantly jump up, dancing and singing. His eyes would light up as, for a single moment he was living a different life. As soon as the song was over, we'd settle back into the routine. I saw the same with many clients throughout my time there. Awakenings, like the movie, people coming alive and responding to music in a way that contradicted their current state. Music has the power to transcend the facts. It can heal and change people. If I listen to "*God Only Knows*" alone in my Honda at the right time, I'm a different person. If I listen to "*Feels Like Home*" by Randy Newman with my main squeeze, everything moves in slow motion and the word "*worry*" doesn't even exist. I think God gives us this stuff. Songs are like vitamins. I can take one or two to get healthy and in touch.



**JOSH OTTUM**

**SINGER-SONGWRITER**