

John McCutcheon

folk music's renaissance man — master instrumentalist, powerful singer-songwriter, storyteller, activist, and author

"John McCutcheon is not only one of the best musicians in the USA, but also a great singer, songwriter, and song leader. And not just incidentally, he is committed to helping hard-working people everywhere to organize and push this world in a better direction."

— Pete Seeger

"The most impressive instrumentalist I've ever heard."

— Johnny Cash

"He has an uncanny ability to breathe new life into the familiar. His storytelling has the richness of fine literature."

— Washington Post

No one remembers when the neighbors started calling the McCutcheons to complain about the loud singing from young John's bedroom. It didn't seem to do much good, though. For, after a shaky, lopsided battle between piano lessons and baseball (he was a mediocre pianist and an all-star catcher), he had "found his voice" thanks to a cheap mail-order guitar and a used book of chords.

From such inauspicious beginnings, John McCutcheon has emerged as one of our most respected and loved folksingers. As an instrumentalist, he is a master of a dozen different traditional instruments, most notably the rare and beautiful hammer dulcimer. His songwriting has been hailed by critics and singers around the globe. His thirty recordings have garnered every imaginable honor including seven Grammy nominations. He has produced over twenty albums of other artists, from traditional fiddlers to contemporary singer-songwriters to educational and documentary works. His books and instructional materials have introduced budding players to the joys of their own musicality. And his commitment to grass roots political organizations has put him on the front lines of many of the issues important to communities and workers.

Even before graduating summa cum laude from Minnesota's St. John's University, this Wisconsin native literally "headed for the hills," forgoing a college lecture hall for the classroom of the



Photo: Irene Young

eastern Kentucky coal camps, union halls, country churches, and square dance halls. His apprenticeship to many of the legendary figures of Appalachian music imbedded a love of not only home-made music, but a sense of community and rootedness. The result is music ... whether traditional or from his huge catalog of original songs ... with the profound mark of place, family, and strength. It also created a storytelling style that has been compared to Will Rogers and Garrison Keillor.

The Washington Post described John as folk music's "Rustic Renaissance Man," a moniker flawed only by its understatement. "Calling John McCutcheon a 'folksinger' is like saying Deion Sanders is just a football player ..." (Dallas Morning News). Besides his usual circuit of major concert halls and theaters, John is equally at home in an elementary school auditorium, a festival stage or at a farm rally. He is a whirlwind of energy packing five lifetimes into one. In the past few years alone he has headlined over a dozen different festivals in North America (including repeated performances at the National Storytelling Festival), recorded an original composition for Virginia Public Television involving over 500 musicians, toured Australia for the sixth time, toured Chile in support

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breaking tradition

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of a women's health initiative, appeared in a Woody Guthrie tribute concert in New York City, gave a featured concert at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, taught performance art skills at a North Carolina college, given symphony pops concerts across America, served as President of the fastest-growing Local in the Musicians Union and performed a special concert at the National Baseball Hall of Fame. This is all in his "spare time." His "real job," he's quick to point out, is father to two grown sons.

But it is in live performance that John feels most at home. It is what has brought his music into the lives and homes of one of the broadest audiences any folk musician has ever enjoyed. People of every generation and background seem to feel at home in a concert hall when John McCutcheon takes the stage, with what critics describe as "little feats of magic," "breathtaking in their ease and grace ...," and "like a conversation with an illuminating old friend."

Whether in print, on record, or on stage, few people communicate with the versatility, charm, wit or pure talent of John McCutcheon.

"John McCutcheon is one of the best loved performing musicians in the country. His words combine the objectivity of a hard-news journalist and the sensibility of the Romantic poets. The result is something more universal than either."

— Marshfield News-Herald

"McCutcheon was the multi-instrumentalist wonder, a master at leading into a song with a story."

— The Sun, Lowell, MA

"John McCutcheon is a booster for all that is good in the human race. You can always count on John McCutcheon's music to provide quality time for families."

— Chicago Tribune

Workshops, Master Classes, and Residency Activities

John McCutcheon is an eloquent and experienced workshop leader. He is available to teach workshops on various topics including: Introduction to the Hammer Dulcimer, Hammer Dulcimer Master Class, Songwriting for Dummies, Songwriting Master Class, Writing on Purpose, and Culture & Community: The Arts & Social Movements. John's approach is one of respect, encouragement, and hope. Music, anecdotes, and insight are staples of these unique and challenging offerings.

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