

Contact Details:

Janette Frawley

PO Box 8155

Camberwell North VIC 3124

Australia

hgavic@gmail.com



<http://www.hgavic.com/>

Volume 14 – Edition 3

HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – May 2017

Welcome

Welcome to our May 2017 newsletter. I have very busy lately, as I have tried to keep up with the many concerts and events organised for Aspen in October. It is shaping up to be a wonderful celebration of John's music and I am really looking forward to attending. I have all the events listed on our HGA website.

<https://www.hgavic.com/aio>.

May 22 is the third anniversary since our good friend, Steve Weisberg passed away. We remember with fondness, a great bloke, who was so generous with his time.

Jimmy Fong in Melbourne

Music is one of the most nostalgic artforms on the planet.

A melody can take you back to childhood...

A riff can solidify a minute in time...

A simple lyric can pack in more meaning than you ever thought possible!

Let Jimmy Fong take you down memory lane in his new, intimate show, 'Music is the Journey and the Journey is Music.'

He'll play all the favourites, including hits from Elvis, John Denver, Jim Croce, some Blues, and some of his own originals.

The songs that led him to the guitar are the ones that have kept him strumming ever since!

When?? Friday, June 9, 2017 at 7:30pm

Where?: Albert Park Port Lounge, 5 Aquatic Drive, Albert Park

Tickets: Adult \$25, Concession, \$20

<https://www.trybooking.com/book/event?embed&id=270982>



<https://www.evensi.com/music-is-the-journey-amp-t.../207623565>

2017 JD Tribute Weekend

Our 2017 JD weekend will be held somewhere in NSW (near Bellingen), in line with the official

dates for Aspen in October. More details to come soon.

Higher Ground Australia Website

Our web address is <https://www.hgavic.com/>. It belongs to all of us, so please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any thoughts or items of interest that you think should be included. As part of the site, we will include many tribute artists, many of whom we know personally. Please check the links I have added and advise if they are incorrect or need to be updated. The site will be maintained often and links checked periodically. Our aim is to keep our information current and to provide information for the widest audience possible. Feedback on the site is always welcome. Please contact me on

hga.vic@gmail.com with your comments.

The Kings of Country (In Australia)

Direct from the USA and after sold out shows in North America, Abstract Entertainment presents this unforgettable tribute to the biggest names in country music this century.

Phillip Bauer as Johnny Cash has been recreating the sound and the look since 1985. This with Phillip's uncanny natural resemblance and his stage presence leaves his audiences' spellbound as he recreates the era of Jackson, Folsom Prison Blues and all the songs that made Johnny Cash the king of country music.

Michael Moore as the outlaw Willie Nelson is the world's leading Willie Tribute artist and as well as working with the Kings of Country he also does his own show extensively in the United States.

Ted Vigil as John Denver has just been awarded the Rising Legend Award by the American Country Music Association. John tours the United States regularly with his own show.

Together with their own band make The Kings of Country a must see show.

For full details of remaining concerts in Australia, follow the link. *The Melbourne show has been cancelled.*

<http://abstractentertainment.net/the-kings-of-country/>

It's John telling his story

Sally Brooker April 12, 2017

The voice of John Denver will reverberate through the Oamaru Opera House on May 7.

Well, not exactly his voice, but internationally-renowned sound-alike Bevan Gardiner. The

Dunedin-based musician has become synonymous with the singer-songwriter who died in a plane crash in 1997.

Gardiner stars in a touring show called "Take Me Home – The Music & Life of John Denver". He is accompanied by five musicians, including Canadian musical director David Walker and vocalist Georgie Daniell.

While they perform, archival film footage of Denver's life and achievements is screened to the audience. The show has been authorised by Denver's long-serving personal manager and friend Harold Thau, becoming the only official tribute show. Gardiner fell for Denver's music at the age of 7, when he first heard it on a cassette tape during a family holiday. The partially-sighted musician, who sees people only as silhouettes, was eventually invited to perform at the 10th Annual John Denver Tribute Week in Aspen, Colorado, in 2007. He met Denver's mother and brother and performed with members of his original band. When Gardiner was Charley Pride's support act during an Australasian tour in 2013, the American said, "Close yesterday our eyes and it's just like listening to John." Gardiner spoke about the show to the Oamaru Mail via phone from Dunedin, where he is a music teacher in between tours.

"I think it will have a shelf-life, but at the moment there's still demand for it and we're going to do it. "The band, myself, and the production crew, we all enjoy it. It's a good format."

There was a lot more to it than just singing Denver's songs, he said. "It's John telling his story. "We have fun. At each show, we come down the front and meet the audience afterwards. We love doing that."

The performers sit at a table and sign programmes and CDs.

"It's a great way to get feedback," Gardiner said. It was also gratifying to leave each venue knowing they have made people happy.

Denver's early death led to improved safety in aircraft, so Denver's death was not in vain, Gardiner said. "And he died doing something he loved."

The show did not leave the audience dwelling on the tragedy, he said. "We bring them back up with a couple of good songs. It's great we can do that." Gardiner, who has performed in the Oamaru Opera House with Isla Grant, said he was looking forward to returning.

"It's cool coming through the smaller centres." Bevan Gardiner will be touring New Zealand in May and June with his show, *Take me Home, The Music and Life of John Denver*. Please check his website for the dates and locations of all his forthcoming concerts.

<https://www.eventfinda.co.nz/2017/take-me-home-the-music-life-of-john-denver/dunedin>



2017 JD and Folk Music Festival

June 23-24

34264 Country Road 14,
Keenesburg, CO.

Australia's own Pixie Jenkins of Bullamakanka (Home among the Gum Trees) will be appearing. All queries to ph: +1 970-590-0465.

www.nearlythere.co



Hello, fellow folk music lovers! We are the founding members of the band, Nearly There! Don Mares and I (Paul Wigton) have performed together now, for over 42 years, ever since we were in high school, together. What we discovered was, we both loved the music of John Denver, and a 40+-year friendship began! We began as a duo, then grew to our current four members, occasionally growing to six. We always wanted to do this as a living but...you know...life! So, a few years back, we decided to have our OWN John Denver and Folk Music Festival, out here on the high plains of Colorado. JD loved this area as much as he loved the mountains, so we felt it was perfectly appropriate for us to do it out here, on the wide-open plains, with the majestic Rockies in sight to the west! To read more of Harry's story, please click this link.

<https://www.gofundme.com/2017johndenverfolkfestival>



Jimmy Fong in Aspen

Jimmy Fong will be performing his My Time with John Denver show in Aspen on **Saturday 14th October at 7:30pm**. Jimmy performed with John Denver at a private function for the Malaysian King in 1994. This is the story of a young Chinese boy growing up amidst civil unrest and turning to music to conquer the challenges of living in politically unstable times. It is the story of later not only meeting his hero, but having the opportunity to play and sing with John Denver under extraordinary circumstances. Tickets are available from www.rockymountainfpa.org



46 Years Ago: John Denver's 'Take Me Home Country Roads' Is Released

Gayle Thompson, April 12, 2017

Forty-six years ago today, on April 12, 1971, John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads" was released as a single. The song is from his 1971 album Poems, Prayers & Promises.

Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert originally started writing "Take Me Home, Country Roads" for Johnny Cash. But, when Denver learned of the track, he requested to help finish it and decided to include it on one of his records.

"I played him what I had of "Country Roads," and he said, 'Wow! That's great, that's a hit song! Did you record it?'" Danoff recalls to NPR. "I said, 'No, we don't have a record deal.'"

At the time, Danoff and Nivert were both struggling musicians who were trying to make a name for themselves together. While the two may have found success by releasing "Take Me Home, Country Roads" as their own tune, neither of the songwriters regrets letting Denver have what became the biggest hit of his career.

"It wasn't a country record," Danoff maintains. "We could've beat up Nashville and nobody would've recorded it. One thing I learned in this business is that things turn out other than you planned them to, no matter what it is. And you can't predict what's going to happen."

"Take Me Home, Country Roads" was a hit on the country charts as well as on the all-genre

Billboard Hot 100 and the Billboard Adult Contemporary charts. More than a dozen artists, including Ray Charles, Loretta Lynn, Eddy Arnold, Lynn Anderson and Daryle Singletary, have recorded cover versions of the tune; Carrie Underwood also performed the song during her 2010 Play On Tour. In 2014, the song became the official state anthem for West Virginia, and in 2016, the Country Music Association used the song as part of their all-star "Forever Country" mashup in celebration of the CMA Awards' 50th anniversary.

"Take Me Home, Country Roads" remained a staple of Denver's live shows throughout the remainder of his career. The artist passed away in 1997, when his airplane crashed in California. Denver's version of "Take Me Home, Country Roads" is available for download on iTunes.

http://theboot.com/john-denver-take-me-home-country-roads-released/?trackback=fbshare_top_flat_3&trackback=tsmclip

So You Think You Know John Denver?

Gene Santoro, Music Aficionado, April 4, 2017



John Denver could play hellacious guitar.

Today, it's easy to forget about this side of Denver. You won't hear it on endlessly recycled studio mega-hits like Annie's Song, swaddled in the cheesy overproduction typical of the era's corporate soft rock.

But he had a broader musical palette, and much more going on as a songwriter and artist, than stuff like that represents.

History is an ongoing process of revising what we think we know. Today, many remember John Denver, if they think about him at all, as a soft-rock schlockmeister. So it's time to flip the script. Below are twelve tracks that capture Denver from some unaccustomed angles—and argue that his memory and art deserve better.

In the late eighties, John Denver commissioned five custom acoustics from Yamaha, including the stunning 12-string pictured here.



"The John Birch Society"

Like Stephen Stills, Denver was raised in a military family. His disciplinarian father shuttled around postings, leaving the introverted boy friendless and having to constantly be the "new kid." He repeatedly ran away from home. Music became his mooring, as it had for Stills. You don't have to be a shrink to figure out why his rebellious path led to the 1960s folk revival.

The Chad Mitchell Trio was one of the revival's leading groups, when Denver replaced Mitchell in 1965. And one of their specialties was political satire. Titles like *Your Friendly Liberal Neighborhood Ku Klux Klan* and *"The I Was Not A Nazi Polka (Sieg Heil!)"* spiked their albums and set lists. The John Birch Society, a far-right group with many descendants over recent decades, was a favorite satirists' target. Bob Dylan wrote *Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues*. George Carlin pilloried their McCarthy-ite conspiracy theories.

Later, Denver mostly avoided agitprop anthems like these, because he didn't want to preach only to the already converted. His belief in his fans was as real as his commitment to his causes. And so his music reflected his shrewd assessment of how to lead in a democratic society: give people a personal emotional attachment to issues, then give them reasons to act. It worked.

"Bells Of Rhymney"

In the live video clip below, Denver explains that this song was his solo spot with the Mitchell Trio. It flashes his considerable 12-string chops. He "peals" harmonics and manipulates tones to mimic the bells, uncorks very fancy fingerpicking, overlays ominous modulations, beats out wicked strumming. The man had it...when he chose to flash it.

This song appealed widely to folkie vets like Denver. Put together by Pete Seeger from a Welsh poem about a coal-mining disaster and failed miners' strike, it resonated as both a tale of human horror and a call to action. Lots of people played it, most notably the Byrds. A historical irony: Roger (then Jim) McGuinn, Mr. Twelve String, accompanied the original Chad Mitchell Trio.

"She Loves You"

This is an unusual snapshot what was happening as the British Invasion overrode the mainstream appeal of the folk revival. Some folkies, like the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, and Lovin' Spoonful, reacted by plugging in their axes and old songs, like *"Bells of Rhymney,"* and inventing folk-rock. Here's the inverse: a leading folkie outfit covers the Beatles on mainstream US TV. Denver plays his 12 string—one of the relatively rare shots of him doing so with the trio. Too bad: you can imagine what he might've done if he'd had more space.

"Violets Of Dawn"

Eric Anderson, who wrote this tune, was one of many "New Dylans" critics hyped after Dylan crossed over into folk-rock. Despite its bouts of verbal diarrhea—a parody of Dylan at his worst—the song became an instant classic, because it fit the druggy cosmic feel filtering into pop lyrics.

There's some swell 12-string work backing the Mitchell Trio's trademark smooth harmonies, which seem almost hilariously out of sync with the disjunctive lyrics. But read it as an attempt to stay "relevant" in the face of classic rock's creative surge. Like this contemporary version of the song by the Blues Project, New York's super-garage band.

"Leaving On A Jet Plane"

"Leaving On A Jet Plane" is one of Denver's most beautiful songs, a jewel that refracts the singer's restless, shifting perspectives via its understated facets. It was also his ticket to a record deal. And thereby hangs a tale.

Wanting to go solo, Denver made demo tapes of songs he played onstage and gave them out as Christmas presents. Producer Milt Okun, who worked with the Mitchell Trio, passed this tune to another of his acts—Peter Paul & Mary. Their version hit Number 1 on the Billboard charts. In 1969, that got Denver signed with RCA for his first album, *Rhymes and Reasons*, which is where his version of *Jet Plane*, featuring tasteful folk-rock backing by the John Denver Band, appeared. But RCA wouldn't pay for Denver to go on the road. So he cobbled together a Midwest tour on the fly, roving from town to town, finding likely venues, putting up posters and flyers, cadging interviews on local radio, playing for free, passing the hat. A year later, he'd built a devoted fan base—and sold enough records—so RCA extended his deal. Soon the hustling DIY wannabe was market gold.

The above video is a revealing instance of how Denver used this tune to make the political personal. For a 1972 TV performance with Cass Elliot on *Midnight Special*, his heartfelt vocal and striking 12-string are recast as an appeal for renewed political engagement and voter registration drives at the dawn of Watergate.

"City Of New Orleans"

This brilliant song captured the impact of the decline of America's railroads in a handful of verses. Written by folkie Steve Goodman, it quickly became a folk-rock standard; Arlo Guthrie was another who covered it.

The deft rootsy backing is courtesy of the John Denver Band, a floating group of ace players that began as a folk-rock trio in 1969 and, in various forms, continued till Denver's death. Key members included guitarist Mike Taylor, multi-instrumentalist John Sommers, banjo picker Eric Weissberg, and dobro/pedal steel ace Steve Weissberg. This reminds us of Denver's genuine



musical range—and that not everything he recorded was overproduced.

"Take Me Home, Country Roads"

When this song came out in 1971, it hit a larger cultural nerve. Back to the land movements already saw urban hippies streaming to California's Humboldt County, rural Vermont, Colorado backwaters, and yeah, West Virginia—anyplace where land was cheap and America's churning, increasingly impoverished cities were farther away.

Denver co-wrote this lovely, yearning song with two friends, using excerpts from another pal's letter from West Virginia. It became the template for much of his output: evoking the nostalgia always lurking in the American psyche that's part of our Jeffersonian legacy, which equates rural life with simple goodness and cities with money-grubbing sin.

"Circus"

This tune would be a dazzling gem in any songwriter's catalog. Denver's deft fingerpicking undergirds its folk-rock progression, while the lyrics vividly paint a stalemated relationship's complex emotional edges. Call it his version of Dylan's Don't Think Twice, It's All Right. The circus and Mexico are longstanding American symbols of places to run to start fresh. Denver's incisive twist: the desire to "make mistakes again." Anything is better than being trapped in an endless loop; mistakes, at least, teach us how to deal with life. It's a brutally honest and gripping portrait of love at the end of its rope.

"Rocky Mountain High"

In the early 1970s, Colorado became the dominant image for freedom from...well, pretty much whatever you wanted to be free from. Beautiful and isolated, it seemed like a possible Eden. It elicited lots of paeans. Only Stephen Stills' Johnny's Garden, though, speared the dream's irony: Eden was for sale. "There's a place I can get to/Where I'm safe from the city blues/And it's green, and it's quiet/Only trouble was, I had to buy it."

Denver foresaw and decried the changes development would inevitably wreak on his favorite state: massive ski resorts, endless golf courses, suburban tract house sprawl, and Disneyland chalet villages. When he wrote this song, the Environmental Protection Agency was not yet two years old, and he was already championing the idea of cleaning up the environment. In fact, the album this song appeared on was originally titled Mother Nature's Son, after the Beatles' song, which Denver and his band played the hell out of and endowed with Poco-esque harmonies.

But he wasn't only an environmentalist. He got involved in Farm Aid, space exploration, antiwar and anti-hunger crusades, fighting AIDS, setting

up the Windstar Foundation to promote sustainable living, denouncing the National Rifle Association, decrying the Chernobyl disaster, leading the opposition to oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—and more. Few if any pop stars of the era—Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt, Willie Nelson, and Bruce Springsteen—equaled his range of activism.

Ironic postscript: Years later, radio stations, fearful of Tipper Gore's censoring Parents Music Resource Center, banned "Rocky Mountain High" for its allegedly dangerous, druggy lyrics. So it happened that Denver joined Frank Zappa and Dee Snyder—talk about an unlikely trio—in testifying to Congress against PMRC.

"This Old Guitar"

Denver was 12 when his grandmother, who he often stayed with during family moves and turbulence, gave him a 1910 Gibson f-hole jazz guitar; it changed his life. By the time he was a teen, he'd run away to California to try to get into music, but his father flew out there and fetched him home. In college, while he studied architecture, he started playing coffeehouses. Soon he moved to L.A. and played the club circuit there, which is how he hooked up the Mitchell Trio. He was playing at Ledbetter's, a West L.A. club owned by Randy Sparks of the New Christy Minstrels, when Sparks suggested he change his last name, Deutschendorf, so it would fit on marquees. After a few random alternatives, he settled on Denver, for his favorite city. Listen to how he uses his story about the guitar to connect with the crowd. His uncanny ability to evoke empathy was a vital part of how he did what he did, whether in music or in promoting social activism. The perpetual "new kid" had grown up to claim a rare gift that mixed creativity and leadership.

"Pickin' The Sun Down"

You have to give Denver his props as a bandleader: Over the decades, the John Denver Band housed lots of stellar players, and he was happy to turn them loose, especially onstage. At the group's core were guitarist Mike Taylor and bassist Dick Kniss, but on this bluegrass-flavored outing John Sommers' banjo and Steve Weisberg's dobro especially shine. More proof he never lost touch with the roots and soul that first brought him into the music as a rebellious, rootless boy looking for ways to connect with people.

"Music In The Mountains"

Check out this cliché-shattering scene from Denver's 1981 TV special Music in the Mountains, where he uncharacteristically grabs a mandolin and joins versatile classical violinist Itzhak Perlman for some hot bluegrass. Talk about the unexpected! And yet, they bring it off with real flair and a palpable sense of sheer fun—the most



audience-engaging trick any musician can use.

Editor's Note: Refer to the website to view YouTube videos of the songs mentioned in the article.

https://web.musicafictionado.com/main.html#!/article/do_you_think_you_know_john_denver_by_gen_esantoro

Remembering John Denver, The Singer who Embodied Colorado

David Hill Colorado Public Radio, October 5 2016

http://www.cpr.org/sites/default/files/audio/john_denver_special_final_web_audio.mp3 (download)

Singer-songwriter John Denver touched millions of people and reached superstar status with his folk-based pop songs, many of them based in Colorado.

Born Henry John Deutschendorf Jr., in Roswell, New Mexico, he fell in love with Colorado and eventually settled in Aspen. More than a few people beat a path to Colorado after hearing Denver's popular anthems to his adopted state. "I don't think there's any other performer who embodies Colorado like John Denver," said G. Brown, curator of the Colorado Music Hall of Fame. In 2011, Denver was named the Hall of Fame's first inductee.

Today, he personifies the state for people worldwide. "Certainly, in my travels, you meet someone from the other side of the world, someone from New Zealand, and you say, 'I'm from Colorado,' and the first thing out of their mouth is, 'Oh, John Denver!'" Brown said. Denver's first Top 10 hit as a solo artist, after a short career performing in small folk music groups, was "Take Me Home, Country Roads," co-written with Bill Danoff.

Danoff wrote the song with Johnny Cash in mind, but when Denver heard an early version, he knew right away the song could be a hit single. The singer recorded the song just a few days later after performing it to an enthusiastic audience in Washington, D.C.

"Country Roads" appeared on Denver's fourth album, "Poems, Prayers and Promises," released in 1971.

Throughout the 1970s, Denver toured frequently. To help stay grounded on the road, he turned to Tom Crum, a friend from Aspen who taught Aikido, the Japanese martial art. Crum also became Denver's bodyguard and they later co-founded the Windstar Foundation, an environmental organization based in Snowmass. "There was something in John's voice that resonated with all of us and spoke to something a little deeper than just the lyrics or just the ego involved in any singer," Crum said. "And it was that depth of spirit, that depth of heart, that depth of compassion which I think really resonated with the people around the world, and made him one of the biggest artists of the '70s."

Former Colorado state senator Bob Hagedorn is one of many who were touched by Denver's songs.

In 1973, Hagedorn was a junior at the University of Colorado School of Journalism. He and his then girlfriend were camping in the mountains one night when they both hit on the idea that John Denver's "Rocky Mountain High" would be the perfect state song for Colorado. (Never mind that Colorado already had one -- a song called "Where the Columbines Grow.")

Years later, Hagedorn led the effort in the state assembly to name "Rocky Mountain High" Colorado's second official state song.

"It's so descriptive of the beauty of Colorado and why a lot of people love our state," Hagedorn said.

"I can't tell you how many people have told me over the years that the reason they came to Colorado was because of John Denver's 'Rocky Mountain High.' It seemed like a natural to be the anthem for the state of Colorado."

John Denver died in October, 1997 at age 53.

The songs mentioned in Colorado Matters' special, "Remembering John Denver," are:

"Take Me Home, Country Roads," John Denver, John Denver's Greatest Hits

"Rocky Mountain High," John Denver, John Denver's Greatest Hits

"Leaving on a Jet Plane," Peter, Paul and Mary, Album 1700

"Sunshine on My Shoulders," John Denver, John Denver's Greatest Hits

"I Guess He'd Rather Be In Colorado," John Denver, John Denver's Greatest Hits

"Flying for Me," John Denver, Rocky Mountain Collection

"Calypso," John Denver, The Essential John Denver

"Rhymes and Reasons," John Denver, Rhymes & Reasons.

<http://www.cpr.org/news/story/remembering-john-denver-singer-who-embodied-colorado>

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Steve Weisberg back in Aspen for Tribute to John Denver

Stewart Oksenhorn The Aspen Times, October 13 2011

ASPEN — Like a good number of people, Steve Weisberg was drawn to Aspen in the 1970s because of John Denver. Unlike most, Weisberg wasn't drawn by the description of Aspen and Colorado that Denver described in songs like "Starwood in Aspen" and "Rocky Mountain High," or by the prospect of getting to rub elbows with the singer himself. Weisberg wanted a job — specifically, the job of lead guitarist in Denver's band.

"I came to Aspen in 1972 to let John Denver discover me. Seriously," Weisberg, a down-home, talkative 61-year-old with dark eyes, gray hair and a thick Texas accent, said this week in the lobby of the Limelight Lodge. "My wife and I decided I



needed to try out for the big leagues. We'd been to Aspen skiing in the late '60s and saw posters – John Denver, Steve Martin, the Dirt Band. Because of the math, with Aspen being such a small town, I figured it was impossible for me to come here and John not discover me. If you were doing something musical, people were going to find out about it." Weisberg may have had his math right, but his calculation was based on some faulty data. A friend, Nick Illes, had told him two things about John Denver who, in 1972, had one bona fide hit to his name, "Take Me Home, Country Roads." The first thing Illes said was that he had just seen Denver perform, in Austin, and it was the greatest concert Illes had ever seen. This got Weisberg's attention, because he knew Illes to be a rocker, favoring the Doors and Hendrix, not soft country-folk. The second thing Illes told Weisberg was that Denver did not have a lead guitarist. This turned out to be inaccurate; Mike Taylor, who had played the signature licks that open "Country Roads," played lead guitar for Denver at the time. But that piece of false information opened the door. Weisberg moved from Austin, where he had been studying liberal arts, then business, and playing in a series of cover bands, to Colorado. In Aspen, he hooked up with Alan Garber for a full calendar of weekly shows: "Four apres-ski gigs at Highlands where nobody listened, and four evening gigs at Jake's Abbey where nobody talked," Weisberg, who is back in Aspen to play the 14th annual Tribute to John Denver Concerts, Friday and Saturday, at the Wheeler Opera House, said. "It was a listening room, and if you spoke, the person next to you shushed you." Not among those who turned up to listen was Denver himself. It didn't get Weisberg down. "It was naivet, confidence. But it never entered my mind it wasn't going to work," he said of his plan to be discovered. A couple who was friends with Garber were regulars, and were also friends of Denver, and eventually the information got passed along. One day Weisberg's phone rang; Denver was on the other end, with an offer to audition the guitarist when Denver got back from a tour of England. The audition, at Weisberg's house near Aspen Highlands, was "magical," as Weisberg recalls. "We stopped and I looked at my watch and said, 'Oh God, that was three hours we'd been playing.' We were in that zone. I figured, no question, the job is mine." In fact, what Weisberg got was a second audition, at Denver's house, where Weisberg recalls he was auditioning as much for Denver's wife at the time, Annie, as he was for John; and then a third audition, which seemed to be for the benefit of Denver's road manager, Kris O'Connor. Weisberg apparently cleared all the bars, and got the job. It turned out to be a dream gig, more, in fact, than Weisberg ever could have dreamed of. Denver's

career was in its initial stage of ascent. In 1974, Denver released "Back Home Again," with Weisberg on guitar and dulcimer; it became Denver's first No. 1 album. The following year, Denver released "Windsong" and the live "An Evening With John Denver," both of which also went to No. 1. Weisberg would play on eight of Denver's nine platinum albums: "I had John in his richest years," Weisberg said.♦♦♦♦Weisberg, though, looked at playing with Denver entirely as a career move. He figured he'd use the exposure he got as a stepping stone to his own band – something more electric, louder, more rocking. What he didn't anticipate was that he, like a lot of fans, would come to see Denver as more than just a singer." I expected to meet a very ordinary guy. Because at the time, I didn't understand his songs," Weisberg said. "I was young, 22, and a lot of what John was doing went over my head. I valued wit more than warmth, heat more than warmth. But John was the clearest individual I ever met. Totally genuine, totally driven, totally determined to make the impossible happen – a folksinger outselling the Beatles." Growing up in Dallas, Weisberg's first musical love was the trombone. It was a total infatuation; Weisberg calls the instrument "the magic carpet," and he played it in the shower. Then surf music came along, and then Chuck Berry, and the trombone was pushed aside in favor of the guitar. First came an acoustic six-string from a garage sale; then an electric guitar out of a catalog. He wanted to be loud; he wanted to rock like the Beatles; even now, Weisberg says old-school soul with an edge – Sam & Dave, Otis Redding – remains his favorite style. In 1972, just before moving to Aspen, Weisberg started to get a different idea about music. He saw Michael Murphey – not yet known as Michael Martin Murphey – play in an Austin coffeehouse. "It was spellbinding, just playing acoustic guitar," Weisberg said. "That made me sell the Marshall amps, unplug and realize I'm not destined to be the next Hendrix. Every lead guitarist wanted to be the hottest, but no one wanted to be warm. I thought, I just found my niche in this industry, but I don't know how to get into it." Weisberg saw Denver as a way to break into the music business. New York and Los Angeles, the centers of the industry, seemed too crowded with musicians for him to stand out; Aspen was not only tiny, but home to a singer who was beginning to get major recognition. It was a smart career move. When Weisberg started with Denver – part of a band that included Dick Kniss, John Sommers and Hal Blaine – they played for crowds of 5,000 at most. Within two years, they were filling arenas. Weisberg benefited from Denver's famous generosity toward his band members, traveling first-class, eating in top restaurants. "If you worked for John, you'd take a

bullet for him. He treated musicians like family," he said, echoing a familiar refrain about Denver. In time, Weisberg got attached to the gig: "I figured, after a few years, I'd have my own band. But I realized, this isn't a gig you quit." Weisberg was eventually cut loose in 1977, when Denver made a radical shift from a small, folk-leaning group to a big band made up largely of former members of Elvis Presley's band. "Elvis had the best band money could buy. And John wanted them," Weisberg said. Weisberg understood the motivation: "I guess John wanted a different sound, a big band. Not this little five-piece any more." Still, he said parting ways with Denver was crushing. (Weisberg did, however, have the comfort of staying two more years in Aspen, calling his six years here "the longest party I've ever been to." Known around town as the Mad Jammer, for his love of sitting in with other musicians, Weisberg toted two guitars, a dobro, a banjo and steel guitar in his trunk, so he was always prepared to play.) Weisberg found plenty to love about Denver. Weisberg, a fan of great guitarists, thought Denver was in the upper ranks. "Like a freight train. He played acoustic guitar with a sledge hammer beat," he said. At the same time, Denver's music has a simplicity and directness. "'Back Home Again' – I thought, God, that's just three chords," Weisberg said. "It was simple and I didn't understand simple. I didn't understand the commonalities in all of us that John understood. That song – if you're gone and miss being home, that becomes a big deal. I understand that now. Those simple songs, simple emotions, they were perennial. Which gets to the most significant point about Denver, the reason that much of Weisberg's music career still involves playing John Denver songs for fans around the world. Denver built an extraordinary connection to his audience." He was not just a folksinger," Weisberg said. "It was quite evident that what he was singing about became a call to action. He made people want to do something. He made people join the Peace Corps, travel to Africa." And 14 years after Denver died, when the plane he was flying crashed into California's Monterey Bay, crowds gather in Aspen to hear Denver's songs. The main event is the Tribute to John Denver Concerts, featuring Denver's bandmates and writing partners. This year's lineup includes Weisberg, who is making his first appearance at the concerts in more than a decade; comedian Gary Mule Deer, who was Denver's frequent opening act; singer Mack Bailey; saxophonist Jim Horn; banjoist Herb Pedersen; Denny Brooks; and Bill Danoff, who co-wrote the Denver hits "Country Roads" and "I Guess He'd Rather Be in Colorado." All profits from the concerts will go to Pete Huttlinger, a Denver bandmate who is fighting a severe heart

condition. Among the other events, the Windstar Foundation, on Sunday, Oct. 16, presents a day of talks, music and a community lunch." There's a part of me that's astounded that people still want to hear this," Weisberg said. "But part of me sees it – those songs make people be introspective in the best sense. Not laboriously, but to see the best in themselves." Years ago, when Denver was playing a concert at Madison Square Garden, a worker at the venue told Weisberg something that startled him." He said there were only two human beings who walk into this place and get everybody quiet, without exception – Frank Sinatra and John Denver," Weisberg recalled.

stewart@aspentimes.com

<http://www.aspentimes.com/news/steve-weisberg-back-in-aspen-for-tribute-to-john-denver/>

TRIBUTE ARTISTS

The best thing you have to offer the world is yourself. You don't have to copy anyone else. If you do, you're second best. To achieve success is to be first, and that's being yourself. (John Denver).

We will feature some tribute artists in our newsletters this year. Please provide me with relevant information if you would like to be included in our next newsletter.

Jimmy Fong

Jimmy Fong launched his new website late last year. Here is the link <https://www.jimmyfong.net/> Contact Jimmy through his contact page <https://www.jimmyfong.net/contact> for information about forthcoming performances. You can also purchase his CDs through this website.

Jimmy has announced his first show in Melbourne, which will be on the **9th June**. Tickets are available from

<https://www.trybooking.com/book/event?embed&id=270982>

Mark Cormican

Mark Cormican has a wonderful website; easy to navigate and includes lots of information about him and his band. Check it out for forthcoming shows, CD sales and bookings.

<http://markcormican.com/>

Tom Becker

Tom Becker's "Back Home Again- A Tribute to John Denver. Tom is a former member of the *The New Christy Minstrels*.

He recently had his show recorded for PBS. you can view the show here on his website.

www.johndenvertribute.net

Chris Westfall

Check out Chris' website. Chris performs his own interpretations to the music of John Denver and others.

<http://www.chriswestfall.com/home.html>



Mack Bailey

Mack Bailey, an Aspen resident and well-loved musician, will be performing at the Wheeler Opera House in October. Check out his website.

<http://www.mackbailey.com/>

Jim Curry's Newsletter

Jim Curry's newsletter has been posted (click link below) Jim and Anne put together an excellent newsletter regularly. It also includes a link to Anne's blog, which is always fun to read, plus a full listing of where they are appearing in concert. Great news again – Jim and Anne will be cruising to Alaska on July 24. There are still some cabins available. To sign up for Jim Curry's regular newsletter, click the link

https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001wdP2pGZj8l1R_u_z3YiPuJ78QAJhuJB_N.

Chris Collins

Well, this got a bit complicated. I have been working with an awesome agent for the last couple of years and he's really helped us get John Denver's music out to the masses. He called me the other day with an offer for a 5 show tour in Canada from Winnipeg to Ontario at some really great theaters. But there was one caveat, it was going to be on the week of Oct 11-15. I tried to get the dates changed, but to no avail. The bottom line is that I won't be in Aspen this year. I'll certainly miss you guys but I am excited to take John's music on the road to a whole new audience for our band. The good news for Boulder Canyon and I is that we do have the Wheeler booked for next year, unless John's old band should come back again. In which case, I will always yield to them. I'm still hoping that we can produce a cookhouse event for everyone this year with a special guest performer.

I'm bummed that I'll miss this big year in Aspen. I've put a lot of heart, soul, and joy in to helping with a lot of Aspen events from our concerts to hayrides, cookhouse events, and even working with Windstar and helping other performers with their concerts. Not everything has always gone smoothly and there have certainly been conflicts to work out at times. But in the end, we have always managed to come together. It's been a real learning experience about people and the music business and I've made some amazing friends along the way. My life has changed a lot in the 14 years that I've known most of you, lots of broken bones, broken hearts, losing friends, finding friends, great concerts, and living out dreams. Through all of it, John's music has been the soundtrack of my life.

I just want to say thanks for the support and for all the great times. I hope everyone has a great experience this year. I'll certainly miss you in Aspen!

Editor's Note: Chris Bannister will be appearing at the Pine Creek Cookhouse this year. The event has been booked out.

American Veterans Radio

American Veterans Radio is honored to feature the wonderful music of John Denver. Please join Willie from Dillon on his regular Music of John Denver radio show. Here is a link to the podcast of the last show.

<http://www.avradio.org/rewind---podcasts.html>

This show airs fortnightly at the following times

4:00 - 6:00pm Eastern time

3:00 - 5:00pm Central time

2:00 - 4:00pm Mountain time

1:00 - 3:00pm Pacific time

12:00 - 2:00pm Alaskan time

6:00 - 8:00pm Chilean time

9:00 - 11:00pm UK time

10:00 - 12:00Mid European time

Next Morning

6:00 - 8:00am Japan/South Korea time

8:00 - 10:00am Australian time

10:00am - 12:00Noon New Zealand time

Forthcoming Event

Chris Collins and Boulder Canyon

September 11 – 6pm Derby Dinner Playhouse

Tickets available from 812-288-8281

December 9 – 7:30am Norwood Theater,

Norwood, MA www.norwoodstage.com

Chris Westfall

May 20 – 7:30pm Silver Lake Nature Center.

1306 Bath Road, Bristol

<http://silverlakenaturecenter.org/>

July 15 – 7pm Raystown Lake

https://www.facebook.com/events/583154151875473/?acontext=%7B%22ref%22%3A%2222%22%2C%22feed_story_type%22%3A%2222%22%2C%22action_history%22%3A%22null%22%7D&pnref=story

Mark Cormican

May 27 – 7pm Kenton County Library (Durr

Independence, KY. More information on

(859) 962-4000

June 10 – 8pm Dickens Opera House 300 Main

St. Longmont CO. Admission \$15. More info on:

(303) 834-9384

Check Mark's website for more events

<http://markcormican.com/schedule/>

Darcey Anne

July 21 – 7pm Annual John Denver Potluck

Dinner in Upstate NY 19 Roosevelt Ct, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-9011, United States. For information

https://www.facebook.com/events/241693136295805/?acontext=%7B%22ref%22%3A%2222%22%2C%22feed_story_type%22%3A%2222%22%2C%22action_history%22%3A%22null%22%7D&pnref=story



ASPEN IN OCTOBER 2017

Check the HGA website for the latest updates to the AIO schedule. www.hgavic.com/aio

Aspen in October – Student Magazine

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the AIO magazine. Your articles and poems have been much appreciated, and it is currently being finalised by the students before they are assessed on their work. So far, it is looking really good. Thanks again for your assistance.

John Denver Memorial Peace Cloth

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find out anything about the whereabouts of the missing Peace Cloth panels. Please ask anyone who may have been once involved with the Peace Cloth, and may know who is holding onto those panels. I would love nothing better in this 20th anniversary year, than to present these missing pieces to Eve Kleinfeld, who has the remaining cloth. Please, please put the word out that we would like to make the cloth whole again.

All of My Memories (AIO)

The All of My Memories commemorative book and presentation can now be reserved!

This is a full colour book with approximately 100 pages and over 1,000 pictures and stories of the many events spanning the 20 years we have gathered in Aspen. Advance orders are necessary because payment must be made to publisher at time of printing.

Book orders prior to Aug. 25, 2017, includes admission to the All of My Memories presentation (space available) Oct. 12, at 11 or 1 p.m. The hour-long event expands on the book with memories and stories of Aspen in October and is limited to approximately 100 occupants for each presentation.

Prices:

\$35 for the All of My Memories book and presentation.

\$30 for additional book(s) if purchased at same time as first book. Does not include admission to presentation.

\$15 for presentation event only, space available.

Mailing in US - Include \$5 for postage for each book. Out-of-country (US) folks should contact JP McDaniel for special instructions on payment or mailing.

Extra books (in limited quantity) will be available from JP McDaniel or Jennifer Anderson at the Mountain Chalet.

Advance orders: Check or can be billed to your credit card. Purchase in Aspen: cash or credit card.

Send check or your email info for credit card billing to:

JP McDaniel, 9552 W. Capri Dr. Littleton, CO 80123

jpmcdaniel12@gmail.com (Please specify AIO in heading) Include your:

Name and email or contact number:

Number of books ordered:

Extra presentation ticket(s) ordered:

Mailing address if book to be mailed (include \$5 postage/handling for each book):

Email for credit card billing invoice.

Preference for the All My memories presentation (11 am or 1 pm).

AIO EVENT SCHEDULE

11th October:

10am – Meet & Greet at John /Denver Sanctuary.

1pm – JDPB and Chris Liebig A tribute to John Denver. Tickets available

<https://www.rockymountainfpa.org/show-tickets>

4pm – Mark Cormican & Starwood at Aspen Chapel 77 Meadowood Drive, Aspen. Tickets \$25. Contact Sharon on alaskanchild@yahoo.com

4pm – The Aspen Meadow Band Mountain Chalet

7pm – The New Christy Minstrels at Wheeler Opera House. Tickets www.aspenshowtix.com.

8pm – Sing-a-Long at the Mountain Chalet

12th October:

11am – All of My Memories Pitkin County Library <https://www.facebook.com/events/203233473421025/> for more information.

1pm – All of My Memories Pitkin County Library <https://www.facebook.com/events/203233473421025/> for more information.

2pm – Chris Westfall Aspen Centre for Environmental Studies 100 Puppy Smith St, Aspen. Tickets \$35 srose312@embarqmail.com

4pm – The Aspen Meadow Band Mountain Chalet

7:30pm Steve Rodman *His Song is in my Soul* Tickets \$35 Aspen Chapel.

7:30pm - In Memory of John Denver: Rhymes & Reasons at Wheeler Opera House Tickets \$50. Tickets are available from Aspen Showtix www.aspenshowtix.com

8pm – Sing-a-Long at the Mountain Chalet

13th October

12pm – Susan Kay Burke Luncheon and Concert. Mountain Chalet, Tickets \$40. More information <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/john-denver-tribute-concert-and-luncheon-featuring-susan-burke-tickets-31979459424?aff=efbeventtix>

1pm - 2nd Annual AIO Singer/Songwriter Event Venue to be advised.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/415320008855942/>

1:30pm – Tom Becker: Back Home Again Aspen Community Church. Tickets \$35.

<https://www.rockymountainfpa.org/show-tickets>

4pm – Ron Matthews Mountain Chalet. Tickets at the door \$20.

7:30pm – Roy Rivers Aspen Community Church Tickets \$35. More information

<https://www.rockymountainfpa.org/show-tickets>



7:30pm – 20th Anniversary Musical Tribute to John Denver at Wheeler Opera House
Tickets from \$50-\$130. Tickets are available from Aspen Showtix www.aspenshowtix.com

8pm – Sing-a-Long at the Mountain Chalet
14th October

1:30pm – Great Voices Sing John Denver at Wheeler Opera House at Tickets \$25
www.aspenshowtix.com

4pm – Aspen Meadow Band at Limelight Hotel

4pm – Wildlife Concert Viewing Party Aspen Community Church. Tickets \$5
<https://www.rockymountainfpa.org/show-tickets>

7:30pm – Jimmy Fong MTWJD Aspen Community Church. Tickets \$35

<https://www.rockymountainfpa.org/show-tickets>

7:30pm – 20th Anniversary Musical Tribute to John Denver at Wheeler Opera House. Tickets from \$50-\$130. www.aspenshowtix.com

8pm – Sing-a-Long at the Mountain Chalet
15th October:

11am Pine Creek Cookhouse with Chris Bannister 12775 Castle Creek Rd, Aspen, Colorado 81611 **SOLD OUT** To be included on the waitlist email srose312@embarkmail.com

8pm – Sing-a-Long at the Mountain Chalet
16th October:

10am Goodbye Again /wagner Park

Preparing for Aspen in October, 2017

Over the next few months, I will include some articles and links about visiting Colorado to help you maximise your experience in October. Here is the first one, which gives you some options for visiting places near Aspen.

Things to see near Aspen

MAROON BELLS

A reflective lake and two giant snow-striped mountaintops, named Maroon Peak and North Maroon Peak, anchor a blissful panorama exemplified by a symphony of color that changes with the seasons. From Aspen, take Hwy. 82 to the roundabout on the west edge of town, choose the exit for Maroon Creek Road and keep going about 4.7 miles until you reach a welcome station002E **ICE AGE DISCOVERY CENTRE, SNOWMASS** In October 2010, a bulldozer working near Snowmass unearthed the tusk of a female mammoth. Spurred by this unusual discovery, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science moved in



for the next 10 months to conduct its largest-ever fossil excavation, resulting in the discovery of some 5000 bones from 41 different Ice Age animals (including camels, horses and mastodons – distant relatives of the mammoths).

The family-friendly discovery center was opened in 2011 to introduce the Snowmass site. Given the magnitude of the find, exhibits and displays will undoubtedly expand in the coming years. In the meantime, keep your eyes open for various activities: in summer you can sign up for free walks with ACES; in winter weekly ski tours are given. <http://www.snowmassdiscovery.org/>

GEORGETOWN

October 7 – 8 Pilgrimage to Georgetown on your way to the John Denver Celebration in Aspen. Spend time walking the same streets as John, attend screenings of The Christmas Gift, listen to a live radio broadcast of John Denver music, and join walking tours of locations where JD played music, relaxed, and filmed in his beloved Rocky Mountains. Photo opportunities with the one and only Busy Bee Cab, too! <http://georgetown-colorado.org/>



Thanks to Rhonda Banditt who regularly checks the trees in Boonah.

Some material included in this newsletter has been derived from the public domain, such as the internet and printed media. Articles and reviews are the opinion of the individual writer and as long as the content is of a reasonable nature and it is appropriate, it will be included. Organisations mentioned or featured in this newsletter are included to educate and inform people of their role and purpose. HGA does not profit from including the names of any organisation in this newsletter.

This newsletter is only emailed to those people who have individually contacted HGA and expressed a wish to receive it. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you no longer wish to receive the HGA newsletter.

Seasons of the Heart

*Of course we have our differences, you shouldn't be surprised
It's as natural as changes in the seasons and the skies
Sometimes we grow together, sometimes we drift apart
A wiser man than I might know the seasons of the heart*

*And I'm walking here beside you in the early evening chill
A thing we've always loved to do, I know we always will
We have so much in common, so many things we share
That I can't believe my heart when it implies that you're not there*

*Love is why I came here in the first place
Love is now the reason I must go
Love is all I ever hoped to find here
Love is still the only dream I know*

*So I don't know how to tell you, it's difficult to say
I never in my wildest dreams imagined it this way
But sometimes I just don't know you, there's a stranger in our home
When I'm lying right beside you is when I'm most alone*

*And I think my heart is broken, there's an emptiness inside
So many things I've longed for have so often been denied
Still I, I wouldn't try to change you there's no one that's to blame
It's just some things that mean so much and we just don't feel the same*

*Love is why I came here in the first place
Love is now the reason I must go
Love is all I ever hoped to find here
Love is still the only dream I know
True love is still the only dream I know*

Denver's next visit can't come too soon



'I DON'T know how to tell you, it's difficult to say, I never in my wildest dreams imagined it this way'.

True to form, that's how it was when the man who penned these words, John Denver, performed at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre last Wednesday night.

People sat in total silence as a lone performer and his guitar confounded them with his brilliance.

The oracle of lyricists spoke and the multitude listened.

Listening to the characteristically refined lyrics of Denver in an age where rock and roll takes pre-eminence was like finding a virgin in a brothel.

To me, an aspiring singer-songwriter, there was the sudden realisation that no one could be this good. Denver's talent saturated our souls like freshly falling rain on a parched and thirsty ground.

I sat, watched, listened to and admired a master at his craft.

— GARY SHAW