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HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – December. 2016



Welcome

Welcome to our December newsletter and the last one for 2016.

I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Happy Chanukah, Happy Hannukah, and Happy Holidays

This is the last newsletter for this year, as I will be taking a break from writing newsletters for a couple of months over the holiday season, whilst Tom and I set off for a new adventure in Cuba. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and assistance over the course of the year. We will be back bigger and better next year, and I look forward to catching up with many of you through this newsletter, Facebook, or via email.

NEW WEBSITE

I am launching the new Higher Ground Australia website with the release of this newsletter. I have completely revamped and updated the website and we have a new web address, which will be easier for everyone to remember.

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

I have added a new page for tribute artists with links to their websites, Facebook pages, or You Tube videos. Please check it out. If you would like me to change the link that I am currently using, please let me know on hga.vic@gmail.com.

If you are a tribute artist and I have not included you, please email me with your details and I will update the page.

This is a work in progress and will be expanded and updated regularly. It has been presented to a group of professional marketing people recently, and it was extremely well-received.

I would be happy to receive your feedback and any suggestions that you may have would be considered.

Update from Peggy McDonald

Peggy has recently been in Abu Dhabi to do further study at the Falcon Hospital. Here is the update

from her.

Hi Janette and all my Higher Ground friends,
Just letting you know that it has been a topsy turvey time since my return home 2 ½ weeks ago, my young whippet nearly died from a mystery illness but is slowly crawling back to life again 8 days later – thankgoodness. I have been staying at the vets with him and then he was able to come home a few days ago on his drip and medications and is looking better each day

Hard work and lots of studying and I passed all my exams at the Abu Dhabi falcon Hospital, I am the only person ever to complete and pass them all so I am very happy.

I just wanted to let you know that HigherGround Raptors is now moving forward with a logo etc now being finalised, next the website and facebook page which are under way and I am looking forward to sharing with you all.

It is very exciting and there are some great plans I have that will of course all be good for our magnificent birds and I hope will make my mission a little easier. I will have more control to thank/include you when it is all up and running and that will be great.

Have you seen the Nov/Dec issue of Australian geographic????? Just wondering.....

Six new birds have come in, another wedgetail nestling is coming tomorrow and 4 more are waiting. No more typing for now – just wanted to let you know I am back, all is well and HigherGround is moving forward again. Kindest regards to you all. Peggy.

Also – please never forget if any of you are about this way you are welcome to call in

We donated a total of \$600 to Peggy from our fundraising efforts this year. Here is Peggy's response.

WOW – only??? \$600 – that is incredible and I am so grateful. Now I have enough to go ahead with stage one of the wedgie intensive care unit, hooray.

Thank you to you all so very much, your support is

not lost on me, and I am trying to build the facilities up even bigger and better (I have a Plan B brewing) so this is an amazing step forward. Max and John have also started to get new growth after their haircut so happy days.

2017 Trip to Aspen

There are a number of Aussies going to Aspen in 2017 for the 20th anniversary John Denver Tribute Week. I am currently organising a road trip from LA to Aspen between the 2nd October from Anaheim CA, arriving in Aspen on the 11th. I would have room for two more people (preferably two females sharing a room or a husband and wife). **All** expenses to be shared equally, including car hire, fuel, entrance to state and national parks. For further details regarding the itinerary, please contact me on hga.vic@gmail.com. This is designed to be a fun road trip, with plenty of photo stops. We will not be driving for too long each day, and our stops are designed to include as many places of natural beauty or of historical interest as possible.

Milt Okun Dies at 92 years old

Milton Okun, Legendary Producer & Cherry Lane Founder, Dies at 92
11/15/2016 by Colin Stutz



"I have a producer who looks like an accountant and an accountant who looks like a producer," John Denver described Okun.

Legendary producer Milton "Milt" Okun, who produced for John Denver and Peter, Paul and Mary and founded the highly successful Cherry Lane Music Publishing Company, has died. He was 92. Okun has been called one of the most important music producers of all time.

Once a child prodigy pianist, Okun suffered nephritis in his early teens. At a time before antibiotics, he was bedridden for two years and on recovery found that his gift of virtuosic playing was gone. After studying music and conducting at Oberlin, he became a music teacher in the New York public school system at the advice of conductor Dean Dixon until his love of folk music brought him to back to the music business as a singer, arranger and conductor with Harry Belafonte and the Harry Belafonte Singers.

"I have a producer who looks like an accountant and an accountant who looks like a producer," Denver described Okun.

In the early 1960s, Okun began his career as a music producer, working with folk acts such as Denver, Peter Paul and Mary, The Brothers Four, The Chad Mitchell Trio, Odetta, Laura Nyro and Tom Paxton, blending classical arrangements with

folk and pop stylings. Over the span of his career, Okun earned more than 75 gold and platinum records and 16 Grammy nominations for his work. Okun also had a successful career as a music publisher, founding Cherry Lane with his wife Rosemary in 1960 and building it into one of the world's largest independent publishing companies. In 2011, he released his memoir *Along the Cherry Lane*.

Okun is survived by Rosemary, his wife of 58 years, and their children, daughter Jennifer Okun Sparks with husband Richard Sparks and their daughter Elizabeth, and son Andrew Okun with wife Julia Blanchard and their children, William and Emily Okun.

<http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/obituary/7580399/milt-okun-legendary-producer-cherry-lane-founder-dies-92>

An Interview with Milt Okun of Cherry Lane Music Group

This Youtube video is an interview with Milt Okun, which I am sure you will enjoy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZKzOsKJd6c&pp=desktop>

Along the Cherry Lane by Richard Sparks and Milt Okun is an interesting memoir written as an interview. It is well worth reading, if you are interested in Milt Okun's own story.

<https://www.amazon.com/Along-Cherry-Lane-Industry-Legend/dp/1423499492>

Chris Nole Applauds Masterful Troubadour John Denver 20 Years after his Death

Jeremy Roberts November 15

Perhaps tough to fathom, but posthumous Grammy winner John Denver would be firmly ensconced as a septuagenarian had he lived. The radio friendly, environmentally conscious singer-songwriter possesses an impressive body of work. Fifteen Top 40 singles and nearly 40 studio and live albums have cemented his legacy as one of America's greatest artists. While he began strictly as a folk singer, Denver successfully incorporated pop, rock, country, and bluegrass into his musical arsenal. In an exclusive interview, Chris Nole, Denver's final pianist, goes on the record about his days spent assimilating the subtle colors and dynamics of music from a genuine master of the art form. Nole joined Denver in January 1994, replacing noted Elvis Presley sideman Glen D. Hardin's vacated piano stool.

The jazz-influenced pianist remained a valuable asset to Denver's road and studio band until the songwriter's sudden death on Oct. 12, 1997, in a freak accident over the Pacific Ocean involving an incongruously placed fuel selector valve handle in his experimental two-seat airplane.

Soundly proving early detractors wrong who took absolute pleasure in criticizing Denver's gentle odes to nature, interest in the late songwriter continues to



accelerate in the twenty-tens. Indeed, anew generation of artists, spearheaded by My Morning Jacket, Brandi Carlile and Dave Matthews, covered Denver's music on the well-received Music Is You: A Tribute to John Denver.

An integral component of a triumphant road show that lasted three years with Country Music Hall of Famer Don Williams, Nole also finds the time to revisit his association with the "Take Me Home, Country Roads" balladeer whenever the John Denver: A Rocky Mountain High Concert tour gains traction. The pioneering multimedia experience combines members of Denver's former band with archival video footage capturing Denver's vocals and acoustic guitar.

So sit back for awhile and pull up a rocking chair as Nole, who has incidentally toured in modern times with Faith Hill, Shelby Lynne, the Oak Ridge Boys, and Emmylou Harris, reminisces about hearing the lilting "Annie's Song" radiate through AM radio, having a single rehearsal and then debuting by the seat of his pants in Detroit the next evening, the beloved songwriter's homespun sense of humor, whether the singer had any pre-show superstitions, the significance of the platinum-selling Wildlife Concert, and where he was when he received the devastating news of Denver's passing.

The Chris Nole Interview

Do you come from a musical family?

I've learned over the years that some of my family was and is indeed musical. One of my mom's cousins, Tony Costa (kinda my uncle), made a living in Las Vegas as an entertainer. Uncle Tony hung out in the Rat Pack crowd during the '60s and up through the '80s. He was a very talented pianist, vocalist and all-around fun guy. We lost him a few years ago.

I also learned that my mom was an aspiring singer as a youth. But due to her strict family upbringing, she was not allowed to pursue that very far. As for our immediate household, all of us three boys were involved with music starting at a young age. My younger brother is a former drummer now mainly playing electric bass guitar. My older brother was a percussionist in high school.

How did you first become aware of John Denver?

My earliest memories of John are of growing up in the early to mid-'70s in New Jersey and hearing "Annie's Song" on our AM radio. I also vividly remember having the "Back Home Again" sheet music on my piano as a young boy taking piano lessons. Little did I know at the time that I would eventually be in John Denver's band. I may still have that sheet music around somewhere [laughs].

Did you immediately become a John Denver fan, or did you venture into different musical directions?

I did both. I obviously wanted to learn John's music as a youngster via the sheet music. The seventies was a great time for all kinds of music. I was a huge

fan of the Eagles, the Allman Brothers, Billy Preston, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Elvis Presley, the Beach Boys, and many, many more.

I ventured into many musical directions at the time and still do. I spend a lot of time these days delving into blues, New Orleans piano, jazz and other styles. I feel all styles relate to each other in some way or the other. My newest recording project It Be What It Be is a celebration of vintage blues, rock & roll, and New Orleans-style piano and song.

I also have toured with some fabulous country acts here in Nashville. My last major tour was from 2013 thru 2015—I did over 200 shows with the great Don Williams. I think the diversity keeps me well rounded as a musician, writer, and music producer.

Where were you when you got the word that John was interested in you joining his band?

I was home in Nashville. I got a call from John Denver's tour manager and good friend, Kris O'Connor, who I befriended around a year beforehand. From previous conversations with "KO" I knew that there were possible changes on the horizon for John's band and that they were interested in me for the piano/keyboards position. I was contacted sometime in 1993 about possibly filling in for John's pianist at the time, Glen D. Hardin [well regarded as a member of Elvis Presley's famed TCB Band]. Glen was having some serious back trouble then.

The sub date did not happen, but I did get to meet John around that time at the Opry House in Nashville at one of his shows. He thanked me for being willing and available to assist with the piano sub spot if necessary.

The official call and offer came in January 1994. Kris O'Connor talked to me then about signing on for an Asian tour and other dates with John during the year. Of course I took them up on their offer [laughs].

My first gig with John was on Feb. 23 at the Fox Theater in Detroit. Alan Deremo, who tours with us on the special multimedia John Denver: A Rocky Mountain High Concert, was not in the band when I joined. Jerry Scheff—best known as Elvis' bassist in the TCB Band—was still doing the bass gig. Alan came in maybe a year later.

Let's revisit your Feb. 23, 1994, debut at the Fox Theater. John remained in Detroit for five shows. Did you undergo an extensive rehearsal?

Not really; the first time we all got together was in a meeting room at our hotel in Detroit. After a casual rehearsal, we hit the stage. All other 'tightening up' was done at future sound checks—5 p.m. every show day. John was very confident with his own stage presence and abilities, and he trusted his professional musicians to cover the rest.

My memories of that day are of trying to grasp all the details being thrown at me for the show and basically just trying to fit in. I was mainly focused on learning and playing John's show the best that I could.



John didn't play any practical jokes but did many nice things to make us feel welcome (guitarist Pete Huttlinger joined at the same time I did). We were treated first class all the way. Anyone who ever worked with John and his organization could attest to that. The band was always top consideration. Sorry to say, not so with many other acts. Two things stick out from our first few shows to me—first, I was knocked out by John's entertaining and vocal abilities—he was certainly one of the best, if not the best entertainer and vocalist I've ever worked with. I watched and listened to him perform many nights from 10 feet away and it was amazing. The second thing that sticks out in my mind was my touch on the piano. At the time, I was used to playing with much louder, less dynamic bands. John's show was all finesse. I had to dramatically adjust my approach to playing the grand piano to fit in with John's delicate arrangements and vocals. The dynamics and subtleties of John's music were much deeper than most any other act that I know of. Maybe the closest I've seen is with Don Williams. The performance on Don's stage is all based around the vocal as John's show was. Regardless, after a few nights in Detroit with John I believe I had it figured out [Author's Note: Nole also offers an in-depth account of his working relationship with Don "Gentle Giant" Williams here].

What was an average sound check with John like?

John's sound checks were usually around 20 to 30 minutes long. He would call just about any song at a sound check. If he liked how it sounded, it would sometimes make it into the show that evening. We would put the set list together usually at the piano after sound check. John had a pretty good idea of what he wanted to sing night to night. Once in awhile there may have been a suggestion from the band, or most likely Kris O'Connor. John would listen to what anyone had to say about the set list, but he always made the final call. When we would travel overseas the set lists would change more so than back in the states. John had so many special songs that he would do in others countries—songs where the lyric related to that country or people. When we were working on some of the more obscure material—we would spend more time at sound check.

Did John have any pre-show rituals or superstitions?

John usually got a massage prior to the show. He had a masseur that accompanied him on tour. He usually ate a grilled fish dinner—or something else pretty healthy—right after the show.

Did John experience any crazy fan encounters that you were privileged to experience?

Not really. By the time I got in the band, the touring extravagance and craziness had calmed down. But I'm sure the '70's were quite a ride for Mr. John Denver!

Were there any particular songs that John didn't like to perform live?

The only hit that sticks out in my mind that we rarely performed was "Thank God I'm a Country Boy." I remember that we did it once in the four years I was with him. I never asked him why—but if I had to guess, it may have been because we did not have a fiddle in the band.

The platinum-selling Wildlife Concert is an outstanding visual document of your time with John.

Released in June 1995, I feel that it is the most prominent recording project that we worked on together. A&E and especially PBS have shown it numerous times.

The Wildlife Concert showed the world just how seasoned and still relevant John had become over the years. He had matured into an iconic American singer-songwriter and vocalist. John's music was being appreciated once again, and the television special was the beginning of a comeback for him. John was very generous with his band on stage. Quite a few live shows that I played on were released after his death. I would recommend that you also listen to The Harbor Lights Concert [recorded on Nov. 9, 1995, in Boston] or his Christmas in Concert [Dec. 19–20, 1996, D.A.R. Constitutional Hall, Washington, D.C.]. These live albums give you a good sense of what we were doing.

We recorded just about every live show that we did. I wouldn't be surprised if there are more recordings out there that will surface at some point for Denver fans to hear and enjoy.

Was the September 1996 greatest hits re-recording summit your first time in a recording studio with John?

Yes, Love Again: Greatest & Latest, alternately titled The Unplugged Collection and A Celebration of Life (1943–1997), could be the first "in the recording studio" project that I did with John.

We cut all 16 tracks on Love Again at 16th Avenue Sound in Nashville. The studio is now called something else I think. We had been playing most all of the songs live onstage for some time that were included on that recording session. We pretty much kept to those beloved live arrangements for the record.

Let's dissect John Denver in a studio environment.

I was fortunate to have worked on a few studio projects with John, including his reimagining of his greatest hits and his Grammy-winning final album, All Aboard, a personal favorite of mine.

As with most professionals that I've worked with in the studio—John was very focused on the task at hand. Making the best possible recordings you can with the songs, engineer, producer, and musicians was and should be the goal. Everyone was on the same team.



He preferred to record during regular studio hours—10 a.m. or so until around evening dinner. As I remember it, John tried to stay in work mode most of the time. Of course, there were lunch breaks and such where things could lighten up a bit.

Also, when things were sounding great, everyone would be thrilled and motivated to keep it up. There are nightmare stories of over-zealous producers and recording stars beating up their band or singers during a recording session. John was definitely not like that. He trusted the people around him.

Did you or the band make any song suggestions in the studio, or did John have it mapped out in advance as to what he wanted to record for that given session?

John did not compose any songs during any of the actual recording sessions that I participated on. The recording sessions that I did with John were usually easy going and laid back. John would often ask us (the band) how we felt about how things were sounding. Kris O'Connor, who co-produced many of the recording projects that we did with John, always offered up useful observations and suggestions to John and the band.

How many takes would John spend on a song before he was satisfied that he had reached a master?

Some songs were more difficult than others. I remember recording a tune on All Aboard! that had an old timey swing feel [possibly "The Little Engine That Could", "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe," or "Freight Train Boogie" / "Choo Choo Ch'boogie"]. Getting that track to feel right really took some time—maybe a few hours or so. Other than that one, recording most of the initial tracks moved along pretty quickly.

Are there any John Denver studio recordings that you wish you could have a second chance at playing?

Wow—interesting question. Probably! I really do not scrutinize my past performances that closely anymore. Every show or session is a different experience with different variables.

I believe that a creative person such as myself has to learn to accept and hopefully enjoy as we reminisce and revisit our past works. I am mostly concerned with the piece of music before me...right now.

Did John only play guitar in the studio?

Yes, John definitely played guitar in the recording studio. His guitar performance was a huge part of his sound. The band would work off of the tempos and rhythms that John set with his guitar and vocal. Occasionally he would sit down at the piano to relax and play around. I do not think he ever recorded piano in the studio. He did play piano on "For You" in The Wildlife Concert.

How advanced was John on piano?

John was a very basic pianist—he accompanied himself very well on a few of his own songs. It worked well for what the song called for. He would

mainly play piano on his solo shows when his regular pianist was not there.

He asked me once to show him the intro to John Lennon's "Imagine." That was cool. I think it was something that he wanted to learn for his own satisfaction. Maybe someday he would have performed "Imagine" in his show—but we will never know.

Did John have a home recording studio?

John had a little recording set-up in his house that he showed me. I think he used it mainly for capturing ideas and doing small demos. Home recording has come light years since the 1990's. If he were alive today, I'm sure he'd have a pretty impressive home recording studio.

Why do you consider the Grammy-winning All Aboard! to be a personal favorite?

I got to witness and be a part of John stretching out a bit with music that was not his typical genre and sound.

It was just a good week of making wonderful music with a great team of people. I'm sure there were moments of normal studio stress and pressure during that week at Encore Studios in Los Angeles—but two decades later, I am so very thankful to have been a part of it.

Upon hearing that John had received a posthumous Grammy for Best Musical Album for Children, I was saddened that John did not receive a Grammy while he was still here with us. But of course, I was happy for him and the family. I was also proud of all the people involved with making the record.

Before John's death, had he discussed any upcoming plans to enter a recording studio with the band?

Yes. John was finalizing a deal to go to New Zealand with us to record with the symphony there. I was under the impression it'd be a studio project—probably with video and such. That would have been amazing.

Did you have the opportunity to spend any holidays with John?

We did celebrate Thanksgiving together in 1994. The band and crew celebrated the holiday in Australia at a restaurant nearby the hotel—probably in Newcastle [we also did a live record and video shoot while we were down under titled Sing Australia].

We had a great time chowing down on a traditional American turkey dinner. If you have to be away from home and family on a holiday—that's the way to do it. I never got to spend Christmas or John's birthday with him as we never worked during the last couple of weeks of the year.

What are some of your special memories about visiting John's home in Aspen, Colorado?

One of my fondest memories is when we caught some fresh trout up at his cabin at Woods Lake. John, with a little help from Kris O'Connor, cleaned and cooked all the fish and served them. He even did the dishes afterwards. What a guy.



What do you recall about your final conversation with John?

My last words to John were most likely on the side of the stage at the Jones Hall for the Performing Arts in Houston, Texas, on Sept. 28, 1997, prior to the show.

John was usually not real talkative before his shows, since he was mentally preparing to give all he had to give that particular evening for the performance. Usually just a quick "Hi" or "Have a good show" kind of thing. As far as I can remember, our last show together seemed pretty much like most any other show that we performed together.

[Author's Note: Denver played three shows supported by his band and the Houston Symphony Orchestra between Sept. 26 and 28. A few days later the pioneering environmentalist embarked upon a solo acoustic tour that notched three further shows in Texas. The Selena Auditorium in Corpus Christi served as Denver's ultimate performance on Oct. 5, 1997. According to Friends of John Denver Facebook group owner Christine Moon, "I was at that concert in Houston that Chris mentions as the last time he spoke with John. There are two memories that stand out. John sang 'The Foxfire Suite,' first released on 1991's Different Directions. There was a perspex screen between John's band and the Houston Symphony. During the orchestral break, John turned towards the orchestra and I could see his reflection in the perspex. The look on his face was of ecstasy. At the end of the song John looked toward conductor Richard Kaufman and said, 'Perfect.' I believe that was John's final performance of 'The Foxfire Suite,' because his remaining three concerts were solo ones. And of course I'll never forget John's performance of his new song, 'Yellowstone.' As Chris said, most of John's concerts were recorded. I wish someone could find and release a recording of one of the five concerts at which he sang 'Yellowstone' in the days leading up to his passing".]

Where you were when you received the devastating news of John's sudden passing?

On Oct. 13, the day following John's crash, I was awakened around 6 a.m. in the morning by a fellow musician friend of mine. He had just heard the news of John's death and called me right away. I immediately turned on the TV and saw the headlines. It seemed very unreal to me as I watched the reports come in.

I put a call into Kris O'Connor, our tour manager and longtime friend of John's. I could not reach him right away because he was working with the officials in Monterey, California, investigating the accident and such. The next day I got a call back from Kris. He filled me in on the details that were known at that point.

Later the touring band went out to Denver and Aspen for John's two services. Some of us performed at his memorial in Aspen. We were all pretty numb for a long time.

How would you describe John's sense of humor?

John was like most of the rest of us. We all have our up days and not so up days. When John was having a good day, he would be very jovial. He had a witty and clever sense of humor. He was very competitive with games and such. John's laughter—when he was having an especially funny moment—was quite boisterous. I've seen him come to tears with laughter a few times.

Looking back over the past 20-odd years, how did working with John impact your life?

I would have to say the biggest effect that John has had on my life is all the wonderful people I have met through his musical legacy. After 20 years, I am still performing in many shows that pay tribute to the man and his timeless music. I'm also doing sessions for, and producing, a lot of recording artists that were influenced by John Denver.

Also, we are in the planning stages of a 20th anniversary show to be held in Aspen at the Wheeler Opera House on Oct. 12, 13 and 14, 2017. More details to come may be found on my website, www.ChrisNole.com.

John changed my outlook on music—music has so many facets. John taught me more about the subtle colors and dynamics of music. I learned from a master.

<https://festivalpeak.com/chris-nole-applauds-masterful-troubadour-john-denver-20-years-after-his-death-463d003fbdf3#.164wu052z>

John Denver and Folk Music Festival

Hi fellow JD and folk music fans: The supporting acts are all in place for the upcoming John Denver and Folk Music Festival (JDFF) this coming June 24th, in Keenesburg, Colorado.

A few things you might be interested in.

-Friday, the 23rd, will be an arrival day for those who wish to camp out on our 5 acres, and/or who wish to park their RVs, and have a room there:

-There is a TEENY 'lil motel in the town of Keenesburg, if you want to bunk there. It's only 5 miles to the west.

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/zo3zpye>

- The world-famous Wild Animal Sanctuary is just 7 miles to the West, and is a must-see!

<http://www.wildanimalsanctuary.org/>

-Keenesburg, "Home of 500 Happy People, and A Few Soreheads!" has an embarrassment of old timey country antique stores....

<http://www.keenesburgco.org/>

-Friday evening, we will spark up the "Raining Fire bonfire, so make sure to bring weenies, marshmallows, and the fixin's for S'mores!

-Saturday, the 24th: the supporting acts will begin at 3 pm, so make sure to be here before then to get a good seat. It's all on relatively flat ground, so bring a blanket and low chairs to sit on. Shade is in VERY short supply, so make sure to bring umbrellas to protect yourself. At concert time, all sun coverings must be taken down, within the



audience area, but you can set up popup tents behind if you wish!

-At 7 pm, the headliners, my band, "Nearly There!", will take the stage! Remember, this will be an EXTRA special concert: we will be joined by internationally-known fiddler, Pixie Jenkins! He is not to be missed!

<https://pixiejenkins.com/>

If I can convince her, maybe Renee Armand might join us, too!

Contact me here (Harry Wiggleson), or at paul@nearlythere.CO (.CO, for Colorado!) to get on our "Nearheadz Newz" mailing list, or for more information.

Hope to see lotsa ya there!

NOTE: Pixie Jenkins is a celebrated Australian fiddle player, well known in Tamworth. Please check out his website for more information about him.

The Road – My Life with John Denver

People's Light to Present THE ROAD: MY LIFE WITH JOHN DENVER (November 8, 2016)

Sing along with the greatest hits of a legendary folk musician in the regional premiere of The Road: My Life with John Denver, an intimate, insider's portrait of life on tour.

Perennial favorite David Lutken (Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash and Woody Sez: The Life and Music of Woody Guthrie) joins other multi-talented performers to tell the tale of a professional musician whose personal highs and lows mirror those of Denver. Catch a rare glimpse of the man who created "Take Me Home, Country Roads," "Rocky Mountain High," and "Leaving on a Jet Plane" through the funny, poignant stories told by a fellow performer who toured the country with him.

The Road runs on the Steinbright Stage from December 3, 2016 to January 15, 2017. People's Light is located at 39 Conestoga Road, Malvern, PA 19355. For tickets, call 610.644.3500 or visit peopleslight.org.

Dan Wheatman, co-author and musical arranger of The Road: My Life with John Denver, not only lived near the singer in Aspen, Colorado, but played in his band for eight years. Wheatman based this melodic and moving play on his observations of the inspirations and aspirations of an artist gone too soon: Denver died in a 1997 plane crash at the age of 53.

Wheatman co-authored the play with long-time collaborator Randal Myler, who directs this production. The two have created original music theatre together since 1985, including

Appalachian Strings, Fire on the Mountain: The Music of the Coal Mines, Mama Hated Diesels, and Low Down Dirty Blues. Their work It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues played at Lincoln Center in 1999, and earned Tony Award nominations for Best Musical and Best Book of a Musical, as well

as a Drama Desk nomination for Best Musical Revue.

Producing Director Zak Berkman saw the sold-out production of The Road: My Life with John Denver at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre last fall. "I was struck by how much fun everyone there had," he says. "They sang along to Denver's hit songs, and leaned in to this intimate, honest story about the challenges of marriage, of creative collaboration, and of growing up."

"Given the recent success at People's Light of Woody Sez, The Devil's Music, and Ring of Fire," says Berkman, "The Road felt like the perfect next musical experience to, well, fill up our senses." The cast features frequent guest artist David M. Lutken (Woody Sez, Ring of Fire), who plays "Dan" until December 18 and also serves as Music Director. After that date, returning guest Sam Sherwood (Ring of Fire) assumes the role of "Dan". Singer-actor Katie Deal joins them as "Penny" in her People's Light debut.

Co-author Randal Myler comes to People's Light for the first time to direct the production. Resident Director of Design James F. Pyne, Jr., creates the set. Returning guest artist Lily Fossner (Arthur and the Tale of the Red Dragon, Row after Row) designs lights, while Jason Pizzi (Richard III) stage manages.

The Road: My Life with John Denver runs approximately 2 hours including a 15-minute intermission, and would be best enjoyed by ages 12 and up.

CONNECT, ENGAGE, INTERACT AT PEOPLE'S LIGHT

Whoop It Up at the Hootenanny on Thursday, December 15. People's Light invites all local musicians to join the cast of The Road for a hootenanny directly after the performance. Bring your instrument and jam with the cast! We also invite audiences who attend the 7:30pm performance that night to stay and enjoy this extra musical treat.

Enjoy prix fixe Dinner and A Show packages for \$79 (Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday matinee, Sunday evening) and \$88 (Friday, Saturday evening, Sunday matinee) at The Farmhouse Bistro. That's a savings of up to 15% off the single ticket price. Call the Box Office at 610.644.3500. Located next to the Bistro is a full service catering venue, The Farmhouse at People's Light, perfect for weddings, corporate events, and special celebrations. Contact Brad Williams, General Manager & Director of Sales, at 610.647.1631 x156 or email williams@peopleslight.org.

The Road: My Life with John Denver previews on Saturday, December 3 at 8pm and Sunday, December 4 at 2 & 7pm. The play opens on Tuesday, December 6 and runs through Sunday, January 15.



Standard single tickets start at \$41. Community Night tickets are \$28 for the performances on December 7, 8, and 9. For tickets, call the Box Office at 610.644.3500. Special discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. For more information or to purchase group tickets, call 610.647.1900 x111 or email benedict@peopleslight.org.

Pick packages are available for the 2016-2017 season and start at \$99. Productions include The Road: My Life with John Denver (December 3, 2016-January 15, 2017), Loudon Wainwright III's Surviving Twin (January 21-February 5, 2017), The Matchmaker (February 15-March 12, 2017), I and You (March 29- April 23, 2017), The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane (April 29-June 4, 2017), Project Dawn (June 7- July 9, 2017), and Moon Over Buffalo (July 19-August 13, 2017). Visit peopleslight.org or call 610-644- 3500 to order.

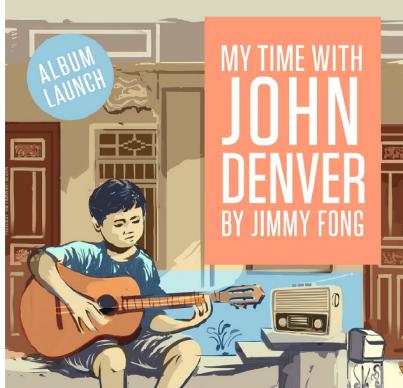
<http://www.broadwayworld.com/philly/article/People's-Light-to-Present-THE-ROAD-MY-LIFE-WITH-JOHN-DENVER-20161108>

MTWJD CDs available for sale

www.hgavic.com

If you are looking for ideas for Christmas presents, I could not recommend Jimmy's CDs more highly. They make perfect stocking fillers and are great gifts for those people who 'have everything'. We are selling Jimmy Fong's CDs through the HGA website.

Please check out Jimmy's story and photos, including his personal photos of the time he met and performed with John Denver in Malaysia in 1994. We have included some sample tracks for you to listen to. CDs are AUD\$25.00 each, including postage and handling. The CDs are also available to US purchasers. Until I set up the online store on the new website, please contact me for details hga.vic@gmail.com. Transactions are securely handled by PayPal.



Christmas Concerts

Mark Cormican

11th December at 7pm
at Nissi's Entertainment Centre located at 2675

Northpark Drive, Lafayette Colorado! Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$14 at the door. Come on out and join us for some big-time Christmas fun! PH: (303) 665-2767

Jim Curry

10th December at 7:30pm
'A Christmas Together' with Lee Holdridge and The Kingston Trio at the Highly Centre for the Performing Arts 4132 E Pecos Road, Gilbert AZ.
Click for ticket details

<https://highlycenter.ticketforce.com/eventperformances.asp?evt=180>

13th December at 7:30pm
"A Rocky Mountain Christmas" at Lily Peter Auditorium 1000 Campus Drive Helena AR
Click for tickets

<http://www.warfieldconcerts.com/concerts/>

18th December at 2:00pm
'A Rocky Mountain Christmas' at El Portal Theatre 5269 Lankershim Blvd North Hollywood CA
<http://www.elportaltheatre.com/rockymountainchristmas.html>

For details of Jim's forthcoming concerts and schedule for next year, please check out his website. <http://www.jimcurrymusic.com/john-denver-tribute-concert/>

Jim and Anne Curry also release an excellent newsletter and blog regularly. Check their website for details and to sign up for the newsletter.

John Adams

9th December at 7pm – John Adams
Tri-Lakes Centre for the Arts
304 Hwy 105 – Palmer Lake, CO
Tickets \$20 and \$22 in Advance
\$22 and \$24 at the door
Call 719-481-0475 for reservations
www.trilakesarts.org

Chris Westfall

10th December at 7:30pm "Merry Christmas Doylestown"

The Salem United Church, is located on 186 E. Court St. Doylestown, PA
Tickets are \$10 and may be purchased the night of the event. For more information, contact kurthhoner@msn.com

16th December at 7pm "Merry Christmas, Medford"

3 Sturbridge Ct. Medford, NJ
Join Chris for an intimate house concert in the beautiful home of Greg and Nancy Hannon. This will be an evening of carols, classics, standards, and you know Chris can't resist some holiday trivia! (Bring some of your own "seasonal fun facts" to stump him!) The event is a BYOB, and please bring a salad, casserole, or dessert to share. The cost is \$10 and reservations are required by emailing



cwhouseconcert@gmail.com. Feel free to use this email to ask any questions you might have.

17th December at 7.30pm "A Rocky Mountain Christmas"

Chris returns to the stage at Investor's Bank Theater in Succasunna, NJ for "A Rocky Mountain Christmas". Sponsored by the Roxbury Arts Alliance, Chris is thrilled to bring his music to this venue. While holiday tunes will be front and center, Chris will be singing a variety of songs with guitar and piano. Tickets are \$20 for general admission at www.roxburyartsalliance.tix.com. (Art Alliance members \$15). Tickets may also be purchased at the door. The theater is located at 72 Elyand Avenue, Succasunna, NJ. For more information, please connect with www.roxburyartsalliance.org or call 862-219-1379

31st December

"First Night Haddonfield". Chris loves entertaining at this town-wide family friendly event. Admission is accessed by purchasing a \$15 button which provides entrance into all shows and activities, and get yours soon as they do sell out. Chris will be performing 2 sets at Grace Episcopal Church with the times yet to be determined. Visit www.firstnighthaddonfield.org for more information and the exact times of Chris' shows.

Also, check out Chris' website for more details about forthcoming events www.chriswestfall.com

For more Christmas Concerts, please check the links on the Higher Ground Australia website; <http://www.hgavic.com/tribute-artists>
If you want to be included as a tribute artist on our page, please send me your details:
hga.vic@gmail.com

... And Lastly...

Merry Christmas and a happy and safe new year...

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.



Christmas Like a Lullaby

(John Denver)



Christmas like a lullaby steals across the land
A breeze upon the water, rainfall upon the sand
We celebrate a baby born from spirit into man
And Christmas like a lullaby steals across the land

It's morning in Australia; In fact it's Christmas day
And Colorado never seemed so very far away
Back where night has fallen and it's still Christmas Eve
And snow is on the mountains where I always hate to leave

Here I am down under with a brand new family
And Christmas bells are ringing
And there's presents 'neath the tree
I know that it's been said before and now I know it's true
That home is where the heart is
And Christmas lives there too
And on this morning Peace on Earth
Is still our fervent prayer
And I can hear it being
Whispered softly everywhere

And guns are called to silence
And anger called to still
And brotherhood and sisterhood
Surrounded by goodwill

Christmas like a lullaby steals across the land
A breeze upon the water, rainfall upon the sand
We celebrate a baby born from spirit into man
And Christmas like a lullaby steals across the land



Christmas for Cowboys

(Steve Weisberg)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZh2IM-FQms>

Tall in the saddle we spend Christmas Day
Drivin' the cattle on the snow covered-plains.
All of the good gifts given today,
Ours is the sky and the wide open range.

Back in the city they have diff'rent ways,
Football and eggnog and Christmas parades.
I'll take the blanket, I'll take the reins,
Christmas for cowboys and wide open plains.

A campfire for warmth as we stop for the night,
The stars overhead are the Christmas tree lights.
The wind sings a hymn as we bow down to pray,
It's Christmas for cowboys and wide open plains.

It's tall in the saddle we spend Christmas Day,
Drivin' the cattle on the snow-covered plains.
So many gifts have been opened today,
Ours is the sky and the wide open range.
It's Christmas for cowboys and wide open plains.

