

Press Release (A)

About John McCutcheon

John McCutcheon wasn't supposed to become a folksinger. He was headed for a lucrative career as a social worker in migrant labor camps. But Woody Guthrie got there first. He heard the songs of the Dust Bowl refugees, the Grapes of Wrath stories that crackled on the airwaves of early 1960s radio and knew something else was going on. While still a college student, the oldest of a large Irish Catholic family, John took up the banjo "to help keep myself sane" and went off the deep end. He heard recordings of Roscoe Holcomb and Clarence Ashley, walked out to the end of the college road, stuck out his thumb and never looked back.

He ended up roaming the Appalachians, trading a university classroom for the front porches, picket lines, union halls, churches, and square dance barns of his adopted home. Under the tutelage of some of the greats of traditional Southern music he quickly mastered seven different instruments, became an insightful and powerful singer of traditional songs, and honed an ear for a good story. Songwriting, storytelling, social activism all met and finally made sense.

From this series of chance beginnings John McCutcheon has become what one Australian paper called "the most overwhelming folk performer in the English language." His mastery of American folk music and instruments, complemented by "storytelling that has the richness of fine literature" (Washington Post) weave intimate, insightful and often hilarious canvases on which McCutcheon draws his vision of Americana. His songwriting, rich in detail and broad in scope, have created a catalog of hundreds of songs covered by performers throughout the world. His classic Christmas in the Trenches has been repeatedly cited as "the greatest anti-war song ever written" and is the subject of an annual, coast-to-coast special on CBC.

His concerts are international sold-out hits from Russia ... where Pravda noted "McCutcheon ... is the most versatile and compelling performer this reviewer has ever seen"... to Dallas ... "calling John McCutcheon a 'folksinger' is like saying Deion Sanders is just a football player ..." Dallas Morning News. Critics reserve their most lavish praise for his mastery of the rare and beautiful hammer dulcimer, an instrument on which he is an undisputed world master.

Find out what all the fuss is about when John McCutcheon performs in
on _____ . The concert is slated for _____ .

Equally at home in the recording studio, John has produced over twenty-five albums in as many years. He has garnered an amazing five consecutive Grammy nominations, been awarded every imaginable award in the independent record industry, been featured on public radio throughout the world, and brought joy to millions of listeners from Seattle to Sydney. Additionally he has produced documentary and educational recordings, written for numerous publications, authored children's books, chaired literacy campaigns, championed grassroots organizations throughout the world, promoted international musicians, and is even currently the president of the most innovative and fastest growing local in the musicians union.

This is all in his spare time. His "real job" is father to two teenage sons, both of whom are musicians and who even, unbelievably, think that a lot of what Dad does is "pretty cool." John lives with his family in Charlottesville, VA.

The concert is sponsored by _____ For ticket information contact _____

Press Release (B)

About John McCutcheon

In the past twenty years, ask anyone in the music world who is the most influential hammer dulcimer player in America and one name comes up: John McCutcheon. Ask anyone who has written, produced, and released the most folk music albums during that span: same answer. Who has been in the forefront of redefining children's music with five back-to-back Grammy nominations, making it truly "adult-friendly"? Same guy. Who has championed grass-roots community organizing, helped reshape the musician's union, promoted international musicians, written articles for numerous publications, chaired literacy campaigns, and, in his spare time toured the world filling concert halls on four continents? Guess who. The real question about John is not what he does best, but how he does it all so darn well.

John McCutcheon, "Virginia's rustic renaissance man" (Washington Post) will be featured in a concert on _____ at _____. Raised in Wisconsin, he hitchhiked the Appalachians armed with a backpack, a banjo, and a healthy measure of youthful curiosity. In the process he discovered a new home, both musically and geographically. Learning at the knees of some of the great traditional masters, McCutcheon mastered the banjo, guitar, fiddle, autoharp, mountain dulcimer, and jaw harp. He became a knowledgeable and powerful singer of traditional material, with a wry wit and ear for a good story. But his real mastery was in his uncanny ability to see the meaning in the mundane, to lay out the horizons in one's own backyard. "The Wendell Berry of folk music" is how one writer described him. The praise for his song writing—rich in detail and still broad in scope—has put him in the forefront of contemporary singer-song writing. But his determined inclusion of traditional material in his performances is what truly sets him apart. "No one is able to blend traditional music and original material with the ease, grace, and power of John McCutcheon."

Critics reserve their most lavish praise for McCutcheon's mastery of the hammer dulcimer, an instrument on which he is widely recognized as a world master. He has pushed the bounds of the instrument, exposing it to country, rock, and jazz audiences. His recent successes showcasing the dulcimer in symphonic settings have brought this ancient instrument ... the inspiration for the invention of the piano ... full circle back to classical audiences.

Equally at home in the recording studio, John has recorded twenty-five albums, all meeting with both critical and popular acclaim.

McCutcheon's concert audiences join together professionals and factory hands, folk music veterans and novices, children and grandparents alike, who find his blend of song and story, humor and pathos, contemporary and traditional an exhilarating celebration of Americana. "The pithy insight of Will Rogers, the understated delivery of Garrison Keillor, the song leading ability of Pete Seeger, and the virtuosity of an orchestra ... John McCutcheon is a national folk treasure!" exclaims a Bay Area newspaper. "Little feats of magic," declared a Midwest concert reviewer. "The most overwhelming folk performer in the English language," lauded an Australian reviewer.

Whether singing for an auditorium of children, playing as a featured artist with a symphony, leading a festival crowd in song, or entrancing a concert hall with a story about small town life, John's sense of his audience, where they are and where they can go is unparalleled. And where those audiences tend to go is back to whatever concert hall John McCutcheon appears in.

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