

JOHN GORKA - Biography

Godfrey Daniels is one of the oldest and most venerable music institutions in eastern Pennsylvania. A small neighborhood coffeehouse and listening room, it has long been a hangout for music lovers and aspiring musicians, and, in the late 1970s, one of these was a young Moravian College student named John Gorka. Though his academic course work lay in Philosophy and History, music began to offer paramount enticements. Soon he found himself living in the club's basement and acting as resident M.C. and soundman, encountering legendary folk troubadours like Canadian singer/songwriter Stan Rogers, Eric Andersen, Tom Paxton and Claudia Schmidt. Their brand of folk-inspired acoustic music inspired him, and before long he was performing his own songs - mostly as an opener for visiting acts. Soon he started traveling to New York City, where Jack Hardy's legendary Fast Folk circle (a breeding ground for many a major singer/songwriter) became a powerful source of education and encouragement. Folk meccas like Texas' Kerrville Folk Festival (where he won the New Folk Award in 1984) and Boston followed, and his stunningly soulful baritone voice and emerging songwriting began turning heads. Those who had at one time inspired him - Suzanne Vega, Bill Morrissey, Nanci Griffith, Christine Lavin, Shawn Colvin - had become his peers.

In 1987, the young Minnesota-based Red House Records caught wind of John's talents and released his first album, *I Know*, to popular and critical acclaim. With unusual drive and focus, John hit the ground running and, when an offer came from Windham Hill's Will Ackerman in 1989, he signed with that label's imprint, High Street Records. He proceeded to record five albums with High Street over the next seven years: *Land of the Bottom Line*, *Jack's Crows*, *Temporary Road*, *Out of the Valley* and *Between Five and Seven*. His albums and his touring (over 150 nights a year at times) brought new accolades for his craft. Rolling Stone called him "the preeminent male singer/songwriter of the new folk movement." His rich multi-faceted songs full of depth, beauty and emotion gained increasing attention from critics and audiences across the country, as well

as in Europe where his tours led him through Italy, Belgium, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Switzerland and Germany. Many well known artists have recorded and/or performed John Gorka songs, including Mary Chapin Carpenter, Nanci Griffith, Mary Black and Maura O'Connell. He also started sharing tours with many notable friends—Nanci Griffith and Mary Chapin Carpenter among them. All this has brought his music to an ever-widening audience. His video for the single “When She Kisses Me” found a long-term rotation on VH-1’s “Current Country,” as well as on CMT and the Nashville Network. John also graced the stage of Austin City Limits, appeared on CNN, and has been the subject of other national programming.

In 1998, after five successful recordings and seven years at Windham Hill/High Street, John felt the need for a change and decided to return to his musical roots at Red House Records. The choice was driven, in part, by the artistic integrity that the label represents in an industry where the business of music too often takes precedence. His 1998 release *After Yesterday* marked a decidedly different attitude towards making music for John, and his next release *The Company You Keep* held fast to John’s tradition of fine songwriting, yet moved forward down new avenues. Its fourteen songs displayed John’s creative use of lyrics and attention to detail. Andy Stochansky played drums and shared production credits with John and Rob Genadek. Ani DiFranco, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Lucy Kaplansky and Patty Larkin contributed stellar guitar work and vocals to this fan favorite. *Old Futures Gone* was informed by his life as husband and father of two young children and also contained the colorful experience of many hard years on the road. *Writing in the Margins* followed and was an engaging collection of sweet and serious songs that spanned many musical genres—folk, pop, country and soul— and featured guest vocalists Nanci Griffith, Lucy Kaplansky and Alice Peacock.

Now with this, his 11th studio album, he returns to his roots with *So Dark You See*, his most compelling and traditional album to date. It has been widely praised as some of John's finest work. In addition to his 11 critically acclaimed albums, John released a collector’s edition box featuring a hi-

definition DVD and companion CD called *The Gypsy Life*. Windham Hill has also recently released a collection of John's greatest hits from the label called *Pure John Gorka*. Many well known artists have recorded and/or performed John Gorka songs, including Mary Chapin Carpenter, Nanci Griffith, Mary Black and Maura O'Connell. John has graced the stage of Austin City Limits, Mountain Stage, etown and has appeared on CNN. His new song "Where No Monument Stands" is featured in the upcoming documentary *Every War Has Two Losers*, about activist Oregon Poet Laureate William Stafford (1914-1993).