

Boulder, Colorado's John McVey: **MUSICIAN WITH A MESSAGE**

Award-winning musician John McVey knows the rigors of the vagabond lifestyle. His career once included 150 to 200 performances each year and carried him across the nation and around the globe. Then a funny thing happened on the way up the rock-star ladder. McVey fell in love with the Rocky Mountains and decided to settle down in the West. He now lives in Boulder, Colorado where his work as a producer and engineer at Coupe Studios affords plenty of time to enjoy a phenomenal lifestyle that still includes making music. He typically spends evenings in the studio, days in the great outdoors and recently released his third CD aptly titled *Unpredictable*. As he prepares to launch a promotional tour, McVey shares his thoughts on travel, music and why he's just as interested in raising awareness about feeding hungry school kids as he is in promoting his work.

Q. How do you define this album?

A. Well, it's a genre-hopper. There's a range of things happening on it. It's hard to fit what I do into one category. I guess it's just safe to say that it's acoustic-guitar based. I guess it could be compared to Shawn Colvin or Jonatha Brooke.

Q. You are donating \$2 from the sale of each CD to Kids Food Basket in Grand Rapids, Michigan. How did that happen? Is Grand Rapids your hometown?

A. No. I was born in Princeton, New Jersey, but from 1998 to 2003 I was part of a tremendous fundraising effort started by Grand Rapids philanthropist John Wheeler. He'd pay for the artists to come in and put on a show, then every bit of money that came in the door went straight to the charity Kids Food Basket. He could have just written a check directly to the charity. That would have been easy. Putting on events is a lot of work, but those concerts did more than raise money. They raised awareness. That's what I'm trying to do, too."

Q. What's the most important point you want to make about this charity?

A. That the need is great and it's not limited to Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 2008, in America, 16.7-million children lived in poverty. I can't imagine that things got better in 2009. Grand Rapids is particularly hard hit. There's one school where 80% of the kids are below the poverty line. This organization is so well run and so effective. There are

3,000 volunteers working to help kids and their families get food. If a kid shows up at school or the park in summer, they get a lunch for themselves and whoever else in their family needs one. It's brilliant. I think if it can work so well in Grand Rapids, it can work in other communities, too. I'm hoping it will spread.

Q. Any specific travel advice?

A. I get to airports early. I like to walk around and I like to be unfettered. That's why I check my bag. That said, it is a good idea to loosen the guitar's strings. The pressure in the baggage area can put undue pressure on the strings. Once I've done that I just relax about everything. I've never had anything bad happen. I guess I just keep trusting that will continue.

Q. You live in Boulder where the nearest airport is in Denver. Is that a problem?

A. No, not really. I kind of love DIA (Denver International Airport). I've never had a problem there, never ever had a problem sending guitars into baggage compartments. I'm pretty good at packing. I use one bag for everything and I always check my bag. I don't like it when people try to over stuff the bins. It all seems so unnecessary. I'd just like to see everyone relax a bit. It's good for all of us.

HOMETOWN HINT:

When McVey squires out-of-towners around his adopted hometown, Matteo's restaurant in the historic Boulder Dam Hotel is high on his list of places to go. "It's kind of continental with a twist," he said. "They really know how to present and serve exceptional food, and the wine list is great."

In autumn he also enjoys showing off Colorado's landscape. "Boulder has done an exceptional job of maintaining open space. So there are great hikes and bike rides looking right up at the Flat Irons. Even going for a drive along the Peak-to-Peak Highway is incredible." ■



JOHN MCVAY: MARY LYNN GILLASPIE

To check out the new album visit www.johnmcvey.com.