

Contact Details:

Janette Frawley
PO Box 8155
Camberwell North VIC 3124
Australia

jfrawley@highergroundaustralia.com

Higher Ground Australia



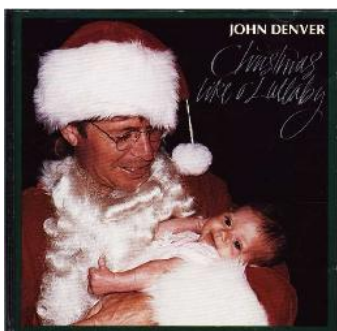
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Volume 2 – Edition 12

HIGHER GROUND NEWSLETTER – December 2005

Merry Christmas

This is our last newsletter for 2005 and I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and happy new year. It always fascinates me to read about how people celebrate Christmas across the world. Each country has their own unique customs, foods, celebrations and of course, music. Christmas takes on different meanings when you are away from home and from familiar customs. When John wrote **Christmas Like a Lullaby**, he was spending Christmas in Sydney – half a world apart from his beloved Rocky Mountains. Later in this newsletter, there are some references to Christmas and how John has had an impact on people during the Christmas season.



Happy Hanukkah

Hanukkah starts on 26th December. Happy Hanukkah to all of our Jewish friends

New Members

This month has been rather busy, updating our records with a number of new members asking to join us. Welcome to you all. If you have anything to share, do not hesitate to let me know

Happy Birthday Anna Kate

Happy Birthday to you, Anna Kate. We wish you every happiness for your birthday and for the coming year.

Love and best wishes,

From all of us at Higher Ground Australia.



Deepest Condolences...

Please keep Margaret O'Dea in your thoughts and prayers over Christmas. Her nephew, Matthew, passed away recently. On behalf of us all at HGA, we express our deepest sympathy to your entire family.

The Gift You Are!

Congratulations to Barb of Connecticut, USA on the early Christmas gift of her first grandchild, Victoria. We wish you all the best of luck as you influence Victoria's future taste in music.

Congratulations also to Victoria's parents, Sean and Lynda

'Spirit'

David Burnett of Birdland has contacted me and sent me some photos of Spirit. These are wonderful and we thank David for taking the time to send us the photos. We appreciate the interaction between our two groups. We are also very interested in seeing how 'our' eagle is progressing.

The photos are wonderful, and Lynn has included the Birdland story on the HGA website.

<http://www.highergroundaustralia2.com/Spiriteagle.html>

For our friends in Melbourne, Australia, on Sunday, 4th December there was a wonderful pictorial view of a wedge-tailed eagle's progression from the egg to its first flight. This was a particularly lovely article and we are going to include it on the website as well.



Photo appears here with permission from David Burnett



More Eagle News

The remainder of the cookbook funds were 'spent' last week. Alf and Liz Bodem of Australian Animal Native Care in Brisbane had ordered some cages for transporting the birds when they are being moved or released. The cookbook fundraiser was a great success and we will be planning on reprinting it in 2006, again using the funds raised to donate to an eagle rehabilitation facility somewhere in Australia.

There are a large number of small facilities that are doing great work in nursing sick animals and birds back to health and releasing them into the wild. Many of these organisations rely heavily on the donated dollar as funding is not forthcoming. Please check out where these places are located in your area.

Here are some links to some smaller facilities that you might like to look at:

Victoria: <http://www.eagle-hawk.org.au/>
<http://www.ausraptor.org.au>

WA: <http://www.earthwings.iinet.net.au>

Jim Salestrom's Colorado Christmas

December 16th, 2005

7.30pm

Wheeler Opera House

Adults - \$25/Children under 16 - \$15

Colorado's own Jim Salestrom will bring his new holiday concert program, "A Colorado Christmas," to the Wheeler accompanied by local favorites Eric Moon on keyboards and accordion and Rich Lamb on upright bass, plus the possibility of some special guest performers. "Jim has been a staple of the Colorado music scene for over 25 years, and we're always glad to have him back at the Wheeler. His spirit and music are infectious and a great way to get in the mood for that last rush into Christmas Day. I'm sure Jim and friends are going to give Aspen one of those wonderful 'big living room' nights here that the Wheeler was so long known for – and will be again!" Gram Slaton, Wheeler Director



John Denver Christmas

At this time of the year we bring out our Christmas CDs and watch our Christmas movies. Now is the time to blow off the cobwebs and put them to good use. John did some wonderful Christmas Specials that were made for TV from his home town of Aspen, but these are not commercially available, however, here are some of the Christmas CDs and DVDs that may still be available to purchase.

Rocky Mountain Christmas (audio CD)

Christmas Like a Lullaby (audio CD)

A Christmas Together (with Muppets – audio CD)

Christmas in Concert (audio CD – listen for the best Jingle Bells ever)

Christmas Celebration Concert (audio CD – cut-down version of the one above)

Montana Christmas Skies (DVD/Video)

John Denver and the Muppets – Rocky Mountain Holiday (DVD – hard to find)

The Christmas Gift (Video – hard to find)

Alfie the Christmas Tree (Picture Story Book – hard to find)

Some of the 'hard to find' items listed above are available through Amazon's associated sellers. Due to their rarity, they tend to be a little more expensive – however, for that someone special, they might be worth ordering.

CD Universe www.cduniverse.com is a good place to shop for CDs. Their range is large and their service is excellent. You might also find some of these items on Ebay. If you are using Ebay, please bear in mind that many sellers do not have a 'return' policy.

JD Bullfrog: I am not sure of the significance of them, but Kmart are selling 'Santa Bullfrogs' that sing 'Thank God I'm a Country Boy'. Complete with fiddle and Santa hat, these singing frogs are cute, if nothing else.

Read Any Good Books Lately?

Bronx to Broadway – A Life in Show Business
Harold Thau with Arthur Tobier

I was expecting something exciting – something larger perhaps with a few good stories about a number of celebrities that Hal had managed, but I was sorely disappointed. The book itself is easy to read, has some really nice parts about John, which were worth reading. All in all, there was nothing in it that would make it an unforgettable autobiography.





Heard Any Good CDs Lately?

This is the month for the Christmas CD. Personally, I love John's Christmas in Concert CD. As this is a live concert, it is really special. Being Australian, any CD that includes **Christmas Like a Lullaby** is great.

If anyone missed the last newsletter, Col Joye's CD would make a nice addition to your Christmas collection. It is a lovely CD with some well-known and not so well-known songs. Col (Kevin Jacobsen's brother) was a good friend of John's, but best of all, he has a great voice and is an Aussie icon. Col's CD is \$17.99 at JB Hi Fi and \$19.99 at the ABC shop.

December Video Clip from a Dutch Site

Each month Michiel ten Brug places a video clip on his website. This month it is from A Christmas Together. Here is the link. <http://home.wanadoo.nl/mtenbrug/denver> then click this link [new videoclip from "A Christmas Together"](#)

From Lima, Ohio

John Denver an example for all of us

By JEANNINE JORDAN-SQUIRE
12/06/2005

This Christmas, I am coming out of the closet. I am proclaiming my secret passion far and wide: my favorite Christmas album is "John Denver and the Muppets: A Christmas Together." I'm a purist, though. Some of the recent rereleases of the CD are missing a key song, Denver and Rowlf's version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." Denver and Rowlf are really something special together. It's a travesty to cut that song.

I know some stores have been playing Christmas music since they shelved their Halloween decorations, but I waited until the day after Thanksgiving. Then, after digging through the dusty shelves where I'd stashed my holiday movies and music, I found it, Denver's smiling face surrounded by all his Muppet friends. Let the Holidays begin!

I like John Denver's music. I sing along when I flip his CD on. I know all the words. I had a very pleasant drive to school today listening to Denver and Miss Piggy warble their way through the "Twelve Days of Christmas," and it reminded me of a few important truths I had forgotten, or at least misplaced.

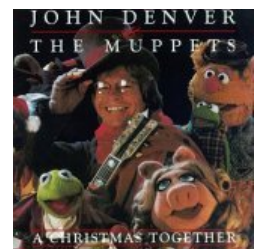
John Denver looked like a Muppet. He sounded like a Muppet. When he performed with the Muppets, it was like a family reunion. I admit all that, and know that even his songs deserve some of the criticism they get. But only some of it.

Our society has lost something important if we are too jaded and cynical to believe in magic. Christmas is all about believing that the impossible not only could occur, but did happen — and continues to. Regardless whether we're considering the magic of Santa making his epic journey around the world, or the sublime story of the Nativity, we are celebrating the illogical and impossible. John Denver and the Muppets blissfully rejoice in all the paradoxes and quandaries of the season, and that sense of play permeates my CD.

Has our society lost all sense of joy and hope? We need to believe in Oz and Tinkerbell, in Santa's elves and the Tooth Fairy — at least sometimes. Few of us really live in a world where gansta rap reflects "reality" — but for some reason, society chooses to believe that rap shows "real life," while John Denver is sugary. Maybe so, but I'd rather live in the world Denver writes about than the one Tupac Shakur populated. When Henry David Thoreau wrote about animals beings our brothers and flowers having consciousness, he became a classic; when Denver did the same thing, he became a joke.

However, that's not my main defense of John Denver. Here's the biggie: he loved what he did, and worked hard to do it as well and as joyfully as he could. He knew he was the punchline of every would-be comic and cynic — and he sometimes laughed with them. He marched to a different drummer, to continue the Thoreau allusion — or more appropriately, jiggled to a different mandolin! How many of us are strong enough to follow our bliss, wherever it may lead? How many of us are even aware of what our bliss is? To those who are, there's only one appropriate cheer: Far Out!

So I drive down the road singing along with Kermit and Fozzie Bear and their human friend, John Denver, wondering if this will be the Christmas that just for an evening — just for a moment — we can all watch and wait and believe.



<http://www.limaohio.com/story.php?IDnum=20237>

In response to the article above...

Barbara wrote...

After reading this article, I had to write and share our family Christmas morning with you. Of course, it is from days long gone by when we had children at home, but we continue to this day. On Christmas morning we had a rule that NO ONE could come to the Christmas tree until John Denver and the Muppets, A Christmas Together,





was playing loudly on the stereo. It began the Christmas following the year we saw the special on television and the album was released. It makes me so very happy that our two sons have continued that tradition with their children; at least that is what they do when we are with them on Christmas morning. I made sure that when they married, they had a copy of the CD so they could listen to it on Christmas morning with their families. One year they were visiting, and we had only one grandchild, when John Denver and the Muppets was played, our little granddaughter proclaimed, "John Denver! I love John Denver!" Do you think my heart nearly pounded right out of my body? Maybe you could share my story, although not written as eloquently as Jeannie Jordan-Squire, hopefully she will enjoy reading it and appreciate knowing that there are others who think and agree "Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas "without John Denver and the Muppets!

Also, I keep watching for the DVD of the special to be released. Do you have any idea if there are plans to release it?

Christmas Pages on Sweet Dreams Place

Visit Linda's pages of Christmas collages on...
<http://www.freewebs.com/sweetdreamsplace/jdchristmas.html>

You will love these images.

Another article – Aspen Times

John Denver Revisited

By Paul Anderson December 5, 2005

A drama critic for the New York Times was less than pleased by the musical about John Denver, "Almost Heaven," which debuted recently in New York City. He panned the production as "a pale imitation of a biographical musical" and a "lightweight, exploitative show."

A musical tribute to a talented singer/songwriter could only fail if it lacks authenticity and intimacy, which was the critic's chief complaint. By blending 30 of Denver's songs with scattered dialogue, "Almost Heaven" muddies the clarity of Denver's tenor with uncertain biography.

"Perhaps some will be pleased with the way the production has 'rediscovered and reinvented' Denver's songs," the critic suggests. "Just as many, though, are likely to blanch at what is being done to some of their old favorites."

Reinventing John Denver's memorable songs is futile because the new versions are bound to fall short of the originals. Remakes never capture the spirit of an original recording; they are like secondhand smoke at a Grateful Dead concert - a fleeting high that doesn't last.

It wasn't a musical that helped me rediscover John Denver. Ten years ago I picked up a cassette tape for \$1 at a Carbondale shop that was going out of business. There was a box of John Denver tapes on the counter with a hand-scrawled FOR SALE sign: \$1.

I bought one just for grins, popped it into the tape player, and listened to it twice while driving home. Denver's voice hit me with its purity, range and sincerity. But it was more than the voice.

The songs he sang were warm, heartfelt and caring, and the tunes were melodic and captivating. They played in my head for days afterward. But it was more than the songs. Denver's folksy sentiments carried me back to places I hadn't been for a long, long time.

One tune in particular - "Starwood in Aspen" - took me back to Germany in January 1972. I was a vagabond hitchhiking through the Moselle River Valley when I got a ride with a young German man who played the tape for my benefit.

That song has stuck for more than 30 years and will forever link me to a time and place when I was footloose and free, a young man with long hair hanging over the collar of a cheap, woolen sport coat. I can see myself standing on the side of the road with a canvas rucksack, thumb raised, going nowhere in particular - but with the future as an open door.

John Denver's clarion voice is an emotional time machine. Play one of his songs and drift wistfully to a place and time that no longer exists, except in the imagination. Denver's songs pictured imagined, idealized places as universal havens, whether a country road, West Virginia, or Starwood in Aspen. No wonder that during John Denver's prime thousands flocked to Colorado in the thrall of such sentiments.

His songs and his persona became the biggest draws to the Rocky Mountains since gold was discovered in Cherry Creek. Denver reached people hungry for the beauty, peace and tranquility of nature, and for the ephemeral enchantment of romantic love.

John Denver died in a plane crash in 1997, but his muse is immortal. It lives in his tapes and CDs. It lives in a recent film documentary artfully done by Aspenite Greg Poschman. It lives, perhaps regrettably, in the musical "Almost Heaven."

Denver had his critics, but his fans outnumber them. That's because of the lasting quality of Denver's delivery ... sincere, resonant, and magically personal. The New York Times critic disparaged the musical, but, like millions of people everywhere, he likes John Denver:

"For a John Denver fan, 'Almost Heaven' might be worth seeing for the curiosity value," the critic





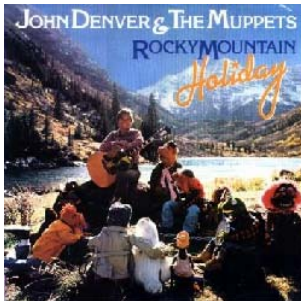
opined, "but mostly it ends up being a sort of backhanded compliment: the reason his best songs were great is because John Denver sang them."

Paul Andersen still has his \$1 tape and all the memories. His column appears on Mondays

John Denver Ultimate Discography

I am delighted to present to you this website that has been compiled by Luigi of Italy. The **John Denver Complete Discography Project**. Luigi has spent ages putting together these albums – every one that has been released in the world. For a wonderful review of John's albums and to see how they look from all parts of the world, please go and visit this site:

<http://www.denveredintorni.com/johndenver/jdisco.htm>



Turkey Stuffing!

As we are only a little more than a week away from Christmas, I am going to share with you my recipe for stuffing. My husband is Irish, so the praties must feature in our Christmas dinner...

1. Boil about 6 – 8 peeled potatoes in a large saucepan (if you have too many, it does not matter as it will all be eaten)
2. When cooked, mash with butter (no milk), add a couple of finely chopped onions, finely chopped ham, mixed herbs, pepper to taste.
3. Wash out the inside of the turkey. If the neck is in there, you might like to leave it there, but bear in mind that less stuffing can fit if it is sharing the space with the neck.
4. Crumple a piece of aluminium foil and place it in one cavity.
5. Stuff your turkey with the potato mixture, making sure that it is firmly packed.
6. Crumple another piece of foil and place it in the opening. (This removes the need to stitch up the turkey so the stuffing does not come out).
7. Cook your turkey for the recommended time, using your normal methods. I use a huge foil tray and plenty of foil under him. Place some

of the ham rind (if you have a leg ham in your fridge) or bacon if you have it) on the top of the turkey and place layers of foil on top to prevent any uneven burning). I also cook the turkey in the BBQ – on the gas with the hood closed.

8. Place all leftover stuffing in a casserole dish and cover. This can be cooked in a moderate oven for about one hour, covered, so it can be placed in the oven at the same time as the roast potatoes, pumpkin and any other roasted vegies that you are going to cook.
9. At the same time, remember that there is absolutely no reason to hang onto the ham for much longer, so cut it into rough slices, place it in a baking dish and cover with foil.
10. Place the ham into the oven at the same time as the stuffing (it will take about an hour or so to cook).

If you still would like to use the bread stuffing, but would also like to try the potato one, you can stuff your turkey (providing it is big enough) half with the bread stuffing and half with potato, making sure that you have plenty of both on hand in the oven for 'seconds'. **Enjoy!**

From all of us to all of you!

First, please recycle all your Christmas paper by putting it in the appropriate recycle bin. Planet Ark will have the collection points for Christmas cards outside Coles Supermarkets (in Australia), so please remember to put them aside after Christmas. If your council recycles real Christmas trees, please make sure that all wire, ornaments and tinsel have been removed before placing the tree in the designated place for collection.

Please also remember those people who are ill and those who cannot celebrate with their families this year.

If you are passing by a wishing tree, please try to place a small gift for someone less fortunate than us. Don't forget that mums, dads and grandparents might also need a gift. You should be able to find an appropriate gift tag on your local tree.

Last but not least, we wish you all a very **Merry Christmas** and a **Happy New Year**. May you be safe, warm and happy wherever you are in the world. We will be back in full force from the end of January, so please look out for the first newsletter of 2006. Don't forget to drop in on our website www.highergroundaustralia.com





Christmas Like a Lullaby

*Christmas like a lullaby steals across the land
A breeze upon the waters, rainfall on 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 in the mountains that I always hate to leave*

*But here I am down under with a brand new family
Christmas bells are ringing
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 your fervent prayer
And i can feel 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 waters, rainfall on the sand
We celebrate a baby born from spirit into man
And Christmas like a lullaby steals across the land
(John Denver)*

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