

# JOHN HIATT

## Career Biography

Over thirty-five years after the release of his debut album, John Hiatt remains one of America's most respected and influential singer-songwriters. As the *Los Angeles Times* once wrote, "(Hiatt) writes the funniest sad songs – and the saddest funny songs – of just about anybody alive."

John Hiatt's songs have been covered by artists as diverse as Bob Dylan, Bonnie Raitt ("Thing Called Love"), Buddy Guy, Emmylou Harris, Ronnie Milsap, Iggy Pop, the Neville Brothers, Rosanne Cash (the #1 country hit, "The Way We Make A Broken Heart"), the Jeff Healey Band ("Angel Eyes"), Willie Nelson, Steve Earle, Linda Ronstadt, and even the cartoon bear band of Disney's 2002 film, *The Country Bears*. He earned a Grammy nomination for his 2000 album, *Crossing Muddy Waters*, and B.B. King and Eric Clapton shared a Grammy for their album *Riding With The King*, the title track from which was a Hiatt composition. On Sunday, April 22, 2007, John Hiatt was honored with his own star on Nashville's Walk of Fame. His legacy was even further cemented with a pair of accolades in the fall of 2008: the Americana Music Association's Lifetime Achievement Award for Songwriting in September, and his October induction into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, John Hiatt cut his musical teeth in a garage rock youth. After graduating high school, he moved to Nashville and immediately landed a job writing for a music publishing company. Three Dog Night cut his song, "Sure As I'm Sittin' Here," which went to the Top 20 in 1974. Epic Records then signed Hiatt to his own recording deal and released his debut, *Hangin' Around The Observatory*, later that year. Following 1975's *Overcoats*, he exited the label and moved to California. He released two albums on MCA (1979's *Slug Line*, and 1980's *Two Bit Monsters*) before a three-album stint on Geffen (1982's *All Of A Sudden*, 1983's *Riding With The King*, and 1985's *Warming Up To The Ice Age*).

With seven solo albums already under his belt, Hiatt's A&M debut, *Bring The Family* (1987), was his breakthrough. His rootsy, rock-country-blues fusion – performed with guitarist Ry Cooder, bassist Nick Lowe, and drummer Jim Keltner – was Hiatt's first charted effort, and he was subsequently named Best Male Vocalist in *Rolling Stone's* annual Critics Poll. Bonnie Raitt would later cover the album's "Thing Called Love" on her multiplatinum smash, *Nick Of Time*, and fan favorites "Memphis In The Meantime" and "Have A Little Faith In Me" have been covered by artists from Joe Cocker and Delbert McClinton to Jewel.

*Slow Turning* (1988), the first album recorded with his touring band, the Goners, and *Stolen Moments* (1990) continued to draw praise. After the *Bring The Family* line-up reunited in 1992 for an album and tour as "Little Village", a solo Hiatt returned for *Perfectly Good Guitar* (1993). The next year, he released his first live album, the tongue-in-cheek titled, *Hiatt Comes Alive At Budokan?*, before relocating to Capitol Records for *Walk On* (1995) and *Little Head* (1997). His albums recorded since then have been independently released: 2000's *Crossing Muddy Waters*, 2001's *The Tiki Bar Is Open* (which reunited him with the Goners after nearly 10 years apart), 2003's *Beneath This Gruff Exterior* (the first album credited to "John Hiatt and the Goners") and 2005's *Master Of Disaster*, on which Hiatt is backed by roots-rockers, the North Mississippi Allstars. In 2003, his seventh U.S.-issued retrospective, *The Best Of John Hiatt*, was released, as well as the third multi-artist tribute album to his work, *It'll Come To You: The Songs Of John Hiatt*.

In 2008, Hiatt explored his softer side, with the release of *Same Old Man*. The album is a reflection on life, through the lens of a rough-hewn troubadour, who has gained wisdom and found redemption through the recollections of often troubled, but teachable experiences. With honest conviction, he makes peace with his life's experiences in song, while offering a humble and sincere appreciation for the patience and understanding of his beloved wife.

His latest release, 2010's *The Open Road*, hearkens back to Hiatt's classic, rootsy formula – the narrative of a reluctant bluesman that has made his life traveling the world to share his musical take on life. Throughout the album, he shows an understanding of the commitment that the road requires, and the impact that it has on love and relationships, however he is not quite ready to leave the only life that he knows. He also explores themes of conscience, such as the realization that some things are obtained at the price of others (“Homeland”), while still reminding the listener that he is ever-unapologetic for being himself (“What Kind Of Man”).

Today, John Hiatt resides on a 100-acre farm outside of Nashville; his list of classic songs – including “Tennessee Plates,” “Lipstick Sunset,” “She Loves The Jerk”, “Drive South”, and others already mentioned – continues to grow. A dedicated following hails each new album and tour, even as fellow artists continue to mine Hiatt's catalog of some of the most astute, wry, and powerful songs in American popular music.