



# JOHN MCKONE

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# PROFILE

OF JOHN MCKONE

02

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PEOPLE TRY HARD TO DESCRIBE JOHN MCKONE, BUT HE'S A TOUGH GUY TO NAIL DOWN. AFTER ALL, WHAT'S THE BEST WORD FOR A GUY WHO:

WROTE, RECORDED AND PRODUCED ALL OF THE MUSIC ON HIS DEBUT ACOUSTIC ALBUM, *HERE IT IS*?

CONSTRUCTED HIS OWN GUITAR?

IS A CLASSICALLY-TRAINED COMPOSER AND TROMBONIST WHO HAS WRITTEN SCORES FOR FILMS AND FOR ROCK BANDS, JAZZ AND CLASSICAL ENSEMBLES?

WOULD YOU CALL HIM A RENAISSANCE MAN? MULTI-TALENTED? A GENIUS? OR JUST BORED?

MAYBE THE BEST ANSWER IS "ALL OF THE ABOVE."

FROM HIS START IN AN IOWA ROCK BAND, JOHN MCKONE HAS ACHIEVED A SOLID REPUTATION AS AN ACCOMPLISHED COMPOSER, ARRANGER AND PERFORMER. JOHN RECEIVED ADVANCED MUSIC DEGREES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA AND HAS FOR THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS LEFT AN INDELIBLE MARK ON THE MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL MUSIC SCENE.

AS A COMPOSER/ARRANGER, JOHN HAS SCORED LOCALLY-PRODUCED INDEPENDENT FILMS AND COMPUTER GAMES. HIS WORK WITH JAZZ AND CLASSICAL ENSEMBLES HAVE RESULTED IN WELL-RECEIVED PUBLIC PERFORMANCES.

AS AN ACCOMPLISHED MUSICIAN ON BOTH THE TROMBONE AND GUITAR, JOHN HAS PERFORMED AND RECORDED WITH MYRIAD GROUPS, INCLUDING SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS, ROCK AND R&B BANDS, JAZZ GROUPS AND CLASSICAL ENSEMBLES.

FOR JOHN'S DEBUT ALBUM, *HERE IT IS*, HE COMBINED HIS LOVE OF COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE TO CREATE A SOLO ACOUSTIC WORK THAT IS MELODIC AND ACCESSIBLE WHILE FULL OF COMPOSITIONAL DEPTH AND PERFORMANCE SAVVY. HIS SKILLS AS A CRAFTSMAN ARE ALSO EVIDENT ON THIS RECORDING -- HE RECORDED THE ALBUM USING A HAND-CRAFTED GUITAR THAT HE BUILT HIMSELF.

TWO OF THE COMPOSITIONS ON *HERE IT IS* WERE FINALISTS IN THE MUSICIAN'S ATLAST ANNUAL INDEPENDENT MUSIC AWARDS. THE ALBUM HAS SEEN AIRPLAY AROUND THE WORLD. JOHN HAS BEEN A FEATURED PERFORMER ON GOOD DAY MINNESOTA, NEWSNIGHT MINNESOTA AND MINNESOTA'S THE TODAY SHOW.

# CRITICAL REVIEWS

03

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INSTRUMENTAL WEEKLY, APRIL 2002

WITH A GUITAR HE BUILT HIMSELF, MINNESOTA'S JOHN MCKONE RECENTLY SENT ME A COPY OF HIS FIRST ALBUM ENTITLED *HERE IT IS*. BEING A LIFELONG MIDWESTERNER MYSELF, IT'S GREAT TO SEE "LOCAL" ARTISTS PUTTING OUT QUALITY WORTHWHILE MUSIC TO SHARE WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD. JOHN'S GUITAR PLAYING IS STRAIGHTFORWARD, PASSIONATE, AND FULL OF LIFE, AND THOUGH SHORT, THIS ALBUM WILL DEFINITELY LEAVE YOU WANTING MORE.

WITH A BACKGROUND FEATURING CLASSICAL COMPOSITIONS [ALTHOUGH AFTER READING JOHN'S BIO INFO THAT CAME WITH THE CD, YOU HAVE TO WONDER WHAT A PIECE OF MUSIC FEATURING BRICKED PIANO, BRASS AND CHILDREN'S PLASTIC POOL WITH WATERING CAN WOULD SOUND LIKE], JOHN MCKONE HAS A CLEAR AND CONCISE PLAYING STYLE THAT REALLY LETS YOU EXPERIENCE THE MUSIC, ALMOST AS IF YOU COULD REACH OUT AND TOUCH THE STRINGS. WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF PRETENSION, *HERE IT IS* SEEMS TO SAY "THIS IS WHAT I AM...TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT". SUCH AN UNSELFCONSCIOUS PERFORMANCE AS HEARD HERE IS REALLY A REFRESHING CHANGE FROM THE ORDINARY DAY TO DAY STUFF THAT SO OFTEN MAKES IT ONTO CD. GENRE GREAT BILLY McLAUGHLIN HAS EVEN COMMENTED ON JOHN'S PLAYING, PRAISING HIS SPIRITED AND UPBEAT PLAYING STYLE.

*HERE IT IS* IS DEFINITELY ONE OF THE SHORTER ALBUMS I'VE COME ACROSS LATELY, CLOCKING IN AT JUST OVER 40 MINUTES. DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH YOU LISTEN TO ALBUMS BASED ON ACOUSTIC GUITAR, IT'S INCREDIBLE HOW QUICKLY TIME FLIES WHEN LISTENING TO THIS RECORDING. IT'S LIKE AN EDUCATION IN SOUND, AND AT TIMES IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT JUST ONE GUITAR IS CAPABLE OF MAKING ALL THESE VIBRATIONS THROUGH THE AIR.

SOME OF MY FAVORITE HIGHLIGHTS FROM *HERE IT IS* INCLUDE THE LIVELY "SWINGING ON KINGS BRIDGE", THE COMFORTING "IT'LL BE ALRIGHT" AND "MINNESOTA NICE MEETS FILM NOIR", A TITLE WHICH REALLY MADE ME SMILE [MAYBE YOU HAVE TO LIVE NORTH OF CHICAGO TO APPRECIATE IT]. EACH TRACK ON THIS ALBUM HAS A DECIDEDLY DISTINCT PERSONALITY, BUT THERE IS THAT SUBTLE CERTAIN-SOMETHING THAT TIES EVERYTHING TOGETHER. THAT ALONE IS WORTH THE PRICE OF ADMISSION WHEN AN ARTIST CAN BRING TOGETHER A WIDE RANGE OF IDEAS, AND BUNDLE THEM TOGETHER WITH A FAMILIAR SOUND THROUGHOUT.

IN THE PAST, RELEASES FROM ARTISTS SUCH AS ROBERT FRIPP, SCOTT HUCKABAY, AND BUCKETHEAD HAVE ALWAYS PIQUED MY INTEREST. THERE IS JUST SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT A SINGLE

# CRITICAL REVIEWS

04

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INSTRUMENTAL WEEKLY, APRIL 2002 - CONTINUED

PERSON AND A SINGLE GUITAR AND THE INCREDIBLE WORLD OF SOUND THE TWO CAN CREATE. JOHN MCKONE HAS BURST ONTO THE SCENE WITH *HERE IT IS*, AND I THINK IT WOULD BE WORTH YOUR TIME TO TRACK DOWN AND TREASURE. I HAVE NO DOUBT WE'LL BE HEARING MORE GREAT THINGS FROM JOHN VERY SOON.

MINOR 7TH MAGAZINE, JANUARY 2002

JOHN MCKONE IS A RENAISSANCE MAN. BEFORE MCKONE, I COULDN'T NAME ONE LUTHIER WHO WAS ALSO AN ACCOMPLISHED PERFORMER [EDITOR'S NOTE: PLEASE DON'T WRITE IN WITH ALL THOSE YOU CAN NAME]. MCKONE BUILT THE GUITAR ON WHICH THE INSTRUMENTAL SOLOS FROM "*HERE IT IS*" ARE PLAYED, BASED ON THE DESIGN OF A MARTIN HD-28. IT'S A LITTLE SURPRISING THAT THE LUTHIER/ARTIST COMBINATION ISN'T MORE COMMON SINCE ONE WOULD IMAGINE THAT LOVINGLY CONSTRUCTING AN INSTRUMENT AND NURTURING A SONG ALONG WOULD BOTH REQUIRE THE SKILLS THAT MCKONE SONICALLY BRANDISHES ON THIS DISC: CREATIVE INSPIRATION, PATIENCE, SENSITIVITY, ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND A WILLINGNESS TO GO OUT ON A LIMB FOR NO GUARANTEED RETURNS. HE HAS TO BE PROUD OF "*HERE IT IS*" IF ONLY FOR THE PERSONAL RETURNS, BUT IT'S LIKELY THAT PUBLIC VALIDATION OF HIS EFFORTS WILL SOON FOLLOW. IT'S ALREADY HAPPENING. BILLY McLAUGHLIN, WHO SPEAKS A SIMILAR SLAPSTYLE TO MCKONE, HAS SAID OF HIS PLAYING: "JOHN MCKONE PLAYS GUITAR LIKE CRAZY... SLAPPING, TAPPING, MELODIES EVERYWHERE... ALL WITH A GOOD SPIRITED VIBE". "*IT'LL BE ALRIGHT*" DEMONSTRATES MCKONE'S ABILITY TO PASTE TOGETHER PRETTY MELODIES. "*SNOW BELOW ZERO*" AND "*SWINGING ON KING'S BRIDGE*" ARE KOTTKE-ESQUE RAGS. "*HERE IT IS*" IS A SLAPSTYLE IN THE SPIRIT OF MICHAEL HEDGES. "*CUTTIN' A CHORD*" SHOWS HE CAN SMOKE ON FINGERSTYLE BLUES. LOOK FOR THIS RENAISSANCE MAN'S MUSIC TO RIPEN INTO A WORLD-CLASS GRADE. [REVIEW BY ALAN FARK]

PEER AND CRITICAL  
**ACCOLADES**

“JOHN MCKONE PLAYS GUITAR LIKE CRAZY...SLAPPING, TAPPING, MELODIES EVERYWHERE...ALL WITH A GOOD, SPIRITED VIBE.”

GUITARIST BILLY McLAUGHLIN

“I LOVE IT. [HERE IT IS] IS TECHNICALLY AMAZING, BUT ALSO VERY RAW IN A WAY. YOU CAN HEAR [McKONE’S] FINGERS HAMMERING THE FRETBOARD. IT’S NOT JUST SOME SONIC WASH OF NEW AGE SOUND. IT REALLY SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE PLAYING THE GUITAR.”

DEREK SIVERS  
PRESIDENT, CDBABY.COM

“I SELECTED ALL TRACKS [FOR AIRPLAY] BECAUSE EVERY SONG IS STRONG ENOUGH TO BE PLAYED AND HEARD. THANKS AGAIN FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY YOUR MUSIC ON MY SHOW!”

RAY ELLY, DJ  
RADIO MILO 103.1FM, BELGIUM

“ONE WOULD IMAGINE THAT LOVINGLY CONSTRUCTING AN INSTRUMENT AND NURTURING A SONG ALONG BOTH WOULD REQUIRE THE SKILLS THAT MCKONE SONICALLY BRANDISHES ON THE DISC: CREATIVE INSPIRATION, PATIENCE, SENSITIVITY, ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND A WILLINGNESS TO GO OUT ON A LIMB FOR NO GUARANTEED RETURNS. HE HAS TO BE PROUD OF HERE IT IS. LOOK FOR THIS RENAISSANCE MAN’S MUSIC TO RIPEN INTO A WORLD-CLASS GRADE.”

ALAN FARK  
MINOR 7TH MAGAZINE

“HERE IT IS IS ABSOLUTELY GORGEOUS, LUSH AND INSPIRED.”

ANN PETIT  
PETIT MUSIC

“WHAT A GREAT COMPOSER THIS GUY IS.”

NICK BUTCHCO  
WRVO RADIO OSWEGO, NEW YORK

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