

John Hiatt Fanzine - Issue 14



Slow Turning with the Times

Howdy, fellow Hiatt-fans. It's been two-and-a-half years since our last issue. So, there's lots to cover...Because of the tragedy of COVID-19, the first Zoom Hiatt concerts occurred on August 24 and 31, 2020 from **Topeka Live**. The "experience" had John in front of giant screens showing some of his fans cheering along, doing our best to keep supporting live music from our living rooms.

The world said goodbye to yahoo groups, and with it the **Shot-of-Rhythm** list serv in October 2020. It was a sad happening for yours truly fanzine girl as I still enjoyed getting e-mails of random lyric analysis, memories of concerts, and random thoughts from Hiatt fans around the world, though we still have facebook groups and Twitter.

Going back a little further, in October 2019, New West released **Only the Song Survives**, a vinyl box set of this century's John Hiatt albums. His daughter Lilly wrote in the accompanying booklet: "I realized ... that what made his music so special, so keen and quick witted, was his deep appreciation and astute observation of the world around him. I could see that he had never lost his awe or wonder in life, and never would. And the fans lit him up!" We sure did.

If that collection was a little out of your budget, you may have picked up the special **Record Store Day** singles that Lilly Hiatt and John released on April 13, 2019. John recorded Lilly's "All Kinds of People." Lilly explained her pick to *Rolling Stone:* "I chose 'You Must Go' from his album Walk On, which is a special album to me, from a special time in my life, 1995. It has our first dog, Lila, on the cover. I recorded it in my boyfriend's studio, and it's a song that my boyfriend used to listen to with his dad."

Lilly has also continued to record and tour (pre-pandemic). Her fourth album, *Walking Proof*, was released in 2019 to glowing reviews. *Rolling Stone's* Joseph's Hudak wrote: "At once electrifying and dreamy, the follow-up to Hiatt's breakout 'Trinity Lane' cements her as a vital voice."

Hudak also reported on a special event when John received the 3rd *BMI Troubadour Award* in September 2019. We can only wish to have been in attendance as music industry folks showered John with much deserved praise. The evening was described: "an eclectic lineup of artists playing Hiatt's songs. Elvis Costello sang 'Take Off Your Uniform,' off 1979's Slug Line; Lyle Lovett offered 2011's 'Train to Birmingham;' and Delbert McClinton delivered a yearning rendition of the Hiatt signature 'Have a Little Faith in Me,' providing his own harmonica accompaniment." Talk about a who's who of Americana genius!

We also heard news that in 2019, John sold and moved from his home in Franklin, which was pictured on the beautiful liner notes of both his album *Walk On* as Lilly described. The house was incorporated into an *Air BnB called Fork Inn* which was renting rooms named "The Hiatt." A great excuse to visit the beautiful state of Tennessee. For those more adventurous travelers, there is an *African Music Safari* from April 28 to May 2, 2022, featuring John and other artists. This event has sold out! We'll just hope that we can find some friends to share pictures of this adventure.

If you enjoy the little tidbits that Slow Turning as collected over the years, you are sure to be as thrilled as we are that *Have a Little Faith: the John Hiatt Story by Mike Elliott* will be released on September 14, 2021. The book is based on interviews with John and other research by a DJ and writer who has published in many of our favorite sources for information about John and other music. We've quoted from *No Depression* and *PopMatters* and are really looking forward to Elliot's book. Be sure to buy a copy for yourself and all your friends, including those who have never caught on to Hiatt's music, because as we know his story is inspiring on its own and is sure to convert others into fans.

As noted, this fanzine relies on information published in various sources. Believe it or not, we have only cherry picked some of our favorite quotes and there is much more, so we encourage you to seek out and read the full interviews and reviews. In particular, Americana-UK's Martin Johnson shared two great interviews. He also shared the very good news that John and his wife received the *Moderna COVID-19 vaccine* in May 2021. We all hope all the Hiatt fans around the world are also doing what they feel is best to stay safe and healthy so we can all get back together for live music again soon. *RAVE ON!*

Rave On!

The reviews are in and... they are as glowing as ever. We here at *Slow Turning* still get a giddy grin from reading the latest words of praise, as we're sure you will, too:

"Hiatt's 25th studio album lands squarely among his absolute best. All milestone John Hiatt albums feature not only incredible songs, but a band a cut or three above, playing them.... Everything clicked, and the music is hot indeed. John Hiatt & the Jerry Douglas Band are a match made in heaven." – Tom CLARKE, TAHOE ON STAGE

"Hiatt remains at the top of his game at age 68, his unvarnished tenor still a fount of wit and wisdom, while Douglas and his crack combo elevate the already charming melodies and buttress the rustic grooves." – STEVEN WINE, ASSOCIATED PRESS

"Above all, it succeeds in eliciting emotion, which is, by definition, the standard upon which most memorable music is judged...both revealing and resilient indeed." – LEE ZIMMERMAN, AMERICAN SONGWRITER

"The combination neither smooths out the John Hiatt edginess nor turns the Jerry Douglas sound harsher. Instead, the Douglas string breaks and accompaniments veer toward the audible comic irony that's long been a basic part of the Hiatt vocal attack, with twisting, swooping runs..." – BARRY MAZOR, DOW JONES INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

"Hiatt's ballads that dominate the proceedings are some of his finest in years, helped enormously by Douglas' alternately sweet and salty work balancing the singer's gruff yet often tender vocals.... one of Hiatt's finest efforts which, considering his extensive catalog, is saying plenty." – HAL HOROWITZ, HOLLER COUNTRY

"...Hiatt is one of the best songwriters of our lifetime...The Douglas-Hiatt pairing doesn't just work – it excels brilliantly." – JIM HYNES, GLIDE MAGAZINE

"Part introspection, part character studies, Hiatt taps a vein of deep, rich emotion on Leftover Feelings. The stories are compelling, and the tone is always right. This is some of the strongest work of Hiatt's career, and that's saying a lot." — MARK ENGLESON, LYRIC MAGAZINE

"...capturing those evanescent moments when superior material inspires comparable playing and vice versa. ...a quick succession of lightning flashes captured in the proverbial bottle." – DOUG COLLETTE, ALL ABOUT JAZZ

"the work of a masterful tunesmith with faultless instincts about how to deliver his material...a solid and rewarding set of songs that sounds a bit different than usual, but finds him working with some excellent and simpatico musicians who understand his craft and play into the feel of Hiatt's material." – MARK DEMING, ALLMUSIC.COM

"... proves even to surpass that promise. As Hiatt reflects on memory, loss, and desire, the band's marvelous playing leads to one of the best albums of the year." – JUSTIN COBER-LAKE, POPMATTERS

"Hiatt's in strong form throughout, both as a storytelling lyricist and as an emotional singer, ... a compelling collection of songs that bespeak the longings that define the human condition, providing the musical spark, the needed encouragement to carry on." - BRIAN Q. NEWCOMB, THE FIRENOTE.COM

"At 68, Hiatt is producing some of the best work of his career, mapping his inner life with an eloquence that most can only aspire to." – Rob Hughes, Uncut

"Playing with John Hiatt that was like, musical boot camp, and that's sort of when I learned how to be a real musician. I don't know if I'd be the same musician that I am now if I hadn't had that experience."

- DAVID IMMERGLUCK, "LET THERE BE TALK" PODCAST WITH DEAN DEL RAY

"I mean I can sit down and play all day, but I can't sit down and write words over something that I've played. I don't have a mental picture of what this song is about. I think he matches up personal experiences, maybe current events, could be anything that pops into his head. And he's able to entwine a tune and wrap it with this beautiful sentiment and words. He's a great songwriter." – JERRY DOUGLAS, ON COUNTY MUSIC HALL OF FAME, LIVE AT THE HALL

Leftover Feelings

Every album has its own story and is a snapshot in time for the artist's journey, as well as a letter to us, the fans. John has blessed us with yet another. Read on about how this work of art was inspired and crafted:

MISSISSIPPI PHONE BOOTH: "This poor pitiful guy is calling home and trying to say, don't give up on me yet, don't hang up on me this time. And that was kind of chronicling that. ...the age I've hit, which is sixty-eight, and spending a year at home off the road, it was a time for reflecting over my life and how far I've come and how far I need to go. ...that was a huge change for me when I got sober in 1984. It was really the beginning of my life as I subsequently came to know it." –JH to LESLIE MICHELE DERROUGH, GLIDE.COM

Music is Hot: "I was kind of imagining a Southern woman, a single mother, and by the second verse you know she's listening to WSM on the radio. And I kind of tried to imagine country music in it's heyday in the 50's and 60's when all these great records were being made at Studio B. I tried to imagine someone that was hearing them and how that influenced her life. It's just kind of a sweet 'day in the life' kind of song." – JH TO STEPHEN KALLAO, NPR

ALL THE LILACS IN OHIO: "Jerry informed me after we cut this, which was the first thing we cut, he said 'You know, I'm from Ohio, and I don't recall any lilacs being in Ohio.' I thought, 'Oh, well, hell!'" – JH TO STEPHEN KALLAO, NPR

I mean he's driving away and he knows that he's making a mistake. He's leaving her and he knows it's a stupid thing to do, and he can't stop himself. I've certainly lived some of these tales. Shooting myself in the foot is one of my specialties"

LIGHT OF THE BURNING SUN: "...Thank goodness for all the awareness now that surrounds people taking their own lives, and of course suicide prevention hotlines across the country are so valuable. Looking for the signs, there's a whole list of things that you can make yourself aware of to look for. People give signs before they unleash such a final conclusion. We're much more aware of them than we were in 1963." -JH TO STEVE HARKINS, TALKSHOPLIVE

" The thing about a traumatic event in one's life is, it sort of packs its bags and moves into your psyche and your body and everything else. And so, once you can sort of open that up and ... feel it, make your peace with it -- it takes time sometimes." –JH TO ANGELA STEFANO, THEBOOT.COM

"It's like my mother used to tell me: The hard times have value, otherwise it would just be a cruel joke...To finally put it down in a song, that was a tremendous release for me. I needed to write it." –**JH to Chuck Armstrong, No Depression** "...I realized the seriousness in it and decided that we would just paint around it, especially in one spot. There's a lyric about when his father learned the news and then his mother hears the news from a policeman. And Mike Seal played this really low, ominous chord. And it just permeated the track and accentuated what John was saying, you know, and you could visualize what was happening. To me, that brought it all into view." –**JERRY DOUGLAS TO JAYNE CLAYSON, WBUR**

LITTLE GOODNIGHT: "...the oldest song on the record. Our youngest child, who is now thirty-three for goodness sakes, I wrote it a couple months after her being born and she was, as they used to call them, a colicky baby....We ran through it once or twice and that's how the guys played it and we were having so much fun playing it. It's sort of the rockingest track on a record that doesn't have a drummer. But I do remember having to change up my rhythm guitar part. I had a different acoustic and it just wasn't making the song pump along. And then I started playing it, I think, the second or third time we did a take, I played it different, sort of reversed the patterns somehow and made it sort of get along a little better."

"She smiles and turns beet red. She's 33 now, but she delights in it."

– JH TO STEPHEN KALLAO, NPR

BUDDY BOY: I'm talking to just about every guy I've ever known and I'm talking to myself. Why do you keep doing the same things, stupid?" –JH TO STEVE HARKINS, TALKSHOPLIVE

CHANGES IN MY MIND: "Always looking for a different way to say I love you. How do you keep writing corny and lift it just above corny? Because ...love is the hardest thing to write about." –JH TO STEVE HARKINS, TALKSHOPLIVE

SWEET DREAMS: "It chronicles a trip that I took when I was seventeen to upstate New York. Our keyboard player had moved up and he said, come on up and we'll get our band back together, and we'll get jobs. I went up there and it lasted two weeks, living in the basement of his house. It culminated in dropping multiple does of LSD. ... But, anyway, hitchhiking home from there...I did get picked up by a shoesalesman. He hadn't been on the 'old road' since they built the 'new road.' It comes from my Gullivers Travels as a 17 year old."

 THE TITLE: "Jerry actually came up with that title, which is a lyric in one of those songs...He said 'well that's a great title

 for the record,' and I said 'sold!'"

 -JH TO STEPHEN KALLAO, NPR

THE BAND / JERRY DOUGLAS: "I was talking to the guy who's been responsible for me doing anything successfully over the last 25 years, Ken Levitan, and we were talking about my next project. I wanted to get together with Ry Cooder and make a record — which we're still planning — but it didn't quite come together. We kept talking, and Ken asked me if I ever wanted to play with Jerry. I said, 'Are you kidding? That'd be amazing. ... They're the level of the Little Village band, in my opinion, These guys are all schooled and trained, they all love music and they just play music. It was easy. It all fell together, like music should.'" – JH TO CHUCK ARMSTRONG, NO DEPRESSION

THE STUDIO: "I'd known the history of the place for years, but I'd never set foot in there. Studio B is the smaller one and is now generally set up more as a tourist attraction. They've maintained it as a functioning studio, but the doors weren't open for commercial recording. However, if you know somebody connected with the Country Music Foundation, you can get in in the evening and record, but you have to tear down your gear at the end of each night, because they had tours the next day from 9 to 5, showing the place off. We asked if we could get in for some time and leave our gear set up, and since there was a pandemic they were limiting the tours, so they offered us four days of round-the-clock recording. Obviously, we jumped at it. … it has a feel to it, even though we had to set up at some distance because of the pandemic. We were very considerate of each other's health, 10 feet apart, and the room's big enough to do that. They procured tall baffles with plexiglass see-through upper halves, so we could see each other. There was distance, but even then, it's so intimate in that room. The sound has just got a magic to it."

"I was immediately taken back to 1970, when I got to Nashville. You can't not be aware of the records that were made there...Elvis, the Everly Brothers, Waylon Jennings doing 'Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line'. But that history wasn't intimidating, because it's such a comfortable place to make music." –JH TO SCOTT BERNSTEIN, JAMBASE.COM

"You are kind of at the same time humbled by all the unbelievable music that has been made there over the years from the Everly Brothers to Chet Atkins producing, Elvis Presley for goodness sake, all the country acts in the 60's. ... We had to put ten feet between each of us in the room and we had to set up some portable baffles. Not to deaden the sound, but just to keep us apart, plexiglass windows that kind of thing. So, we were a little more, shall I say, apart than we wanted to be. But, we got as close as we could to get the vibe going. And we sat in a circle, which was beautiful."

– JH TO STEPHEN KALLAO, NPR

"Many, many ghosts but all friendly, with the possible exception of Chet Atkins, haha. ... How did we get in there? We have a friend, haha, who is on the Country Music Foundation board and you can get into record at night if you tear down your gear for the visitors the next day on the tours and what have you. That is very problematic because you can imagine once you get set up you have the sound and you don't want to move the microphone or what have you. Anyway, we spoke with them and because it was the pandemic and they had slowed down the tours they said we can give you four days, and we said sold."

"I mean, I came up in the bluegrass world where it's 'Here's \$5,000, go make a great record -- or a double album. So that was easy." –Jerry Douglas to Angela Stefano, TheBoot.com

"We had the studio in October. All tested, face masks on when we went to the bathroom, ... how happy we were. We had all been sitting at home for months and almost forgot what it was like to make music together. Just playing as a band, that makes you feel so blissful. I think you hear that pleasure on the record. Not all songs are upbeat, but I think you can hear a kind of optimism or even euphoria in everything." –JH TO GIJSBERT KAMER, THE VOLKSKRANT

Songwriting

Wouldn't you love to know how John manages to write such amazing songs? Well, you are not alone. Hundreds of other musicians who have covered John's tunes, and journalists love to ask him how he works his magic. Here's some of the latest insights:

Starting Out: "I picked up a guitar when I was 11, I took lessons for about two months, and I quit the lessons because the lovely lady guitar teacher was trying to teach me music and I just wasn't interested, I just wanted to learn some chords and play some rock'n'roll... I talked my mother into giving me \$32 to buy a little plywood Stella acoustic and I bought a Mel Bay Chord book, learnt three chords and wrote my first song." – **JH to MARTIN JOHNSON, AMERICANA UK**

Going Pro: "I went to work at an insurance company and saved enough to move when I was 18. I found a 1963 Corvair and bought it for \$35 in 1970. It had no floorboards; they'd been eaten through with rust, and it burned oil by the quart, but it was enough to get me and a buddy here. We spent our first night in Parthenon Park in central Nashville, sleeping underneath a picnic table. I started visiting publishing companies with a tape I'd made, thinking I was Stevie Wonder and playing all the instruments on my songs. I was getting nowhere and saved Tree Publishing 'til last. I figured the tape wasn't working, so I came in and played three or four songs and they said: what are you looking for? I said \$25 a week, and they agreed. I set my goal and achieved it."

Keeping It Going: "I have that mantra, and that's just my father. Do a good job, so when you go to bed at night you can rest easy. I do the best I can on a given day and with a given group of players. The opportunity to make magic, well, you feel like a magician. It makes you feel like you've come from some other world for a minute. It's been so exciting." –JH TO CRAIG HAVIGHURST, WMOT.ORG

Songs in Mind "I was just reading there is a brain study been done at McGill University up in Montreal, and it was a fascinating story about how we hear music and it is not that we have a compartment on the left side or the right side of our brain that takes a song and the lyrics in, it's an interplay between the left and the right side of the brain...So the entire brain is engaged in the act of listening to music and it is part of our survival to do that. I have been trying to put into words how much music means and I think they just figured it out." – JH TO MARTIN JOHNSON, AMERICANA UK

Working the Process: "The only real discipline that I've maintained is that I pick up the guitar every day and play for a minimum of a half hour, more often a couple. If a song is going to come, it comes out of that. You know a couple of chords thrown together and then I start singing some melody. If it's going to strike, you just reach a point where it's time to tell a story, or you sing some nonsense and something that's not nonsense pops out as you are singing 'scrambled eggs' to mention what Paul McCartney said about 'Yesterday.' You're singing things and maybe an idea will come out and you'll actually sing an intelligible and line and it's like, okay, there's the story, it's appeared. Then it's time to sit -JH ON THE ADAM CAROLLA SHOW

"You know, I have that mantra, and that's just my father. Do a good job, so when you go to bed at night you can rest easy. I do the best I can on a given day and with a given group of players. The opportunity to make magic, well, you feel like a magician. It makes you feel like you've come from some other world for a minute. It's been so exciting." – JH TO CRAIG HAVIGHURST, THE STRING WMOT.ORG

"Start by stealing everything you can, and as your own voice begins to emerge you can start to let go of some of what you stole. It's like being a cat burglar — just don't get caught." – JH то Michael Muckian, Isthmus

"Songwriting is a bit slower than it used to be, but I've been doing that for over fifty years, so then the source may well dry up. There's still enough fire and energy in me to keep playing a long time. I'm even more excited than ever, but that's going to apply to any musician. We've been at home for over a year. We're really not made for that."

-JH TO GIJSBERT KAMER, THE VOLKSKRANT

2020 (and other) Hindsight

Some years are longer than others, especially a year without live, in-person music. But, even in the dark days of COVID, John was there for us, whether it be performing with Lilly over zoom for the first time, or working on his next album. Here's some thoughts about recent and further past.

On COVID: "As musicians, we were the first ones out, and we knew we'd be the last ones back in...Talk about gratitude for being able to do what we do. We weren't able to do it for a while, so it was pretty special. We all looked at each other, mentally pinching ourselves. Did that actually happen? Did we really just get in a room and play music together? It was fun and it sounded like we were having fun. We were thrilled." – JH TO CHUCK ARMSTRONG, NO DEPRESSION

"It's been a series of adjustments in pretty much every facet of life, as I'm sure it has been for most of us. We've been fortunate in my family. We haven't had any great illness as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, and we haven't lost anyone near and dear to us. In terms of being home for the year and not on the road as I usually am, it was quite an adjustment. My wife of 35 years and I were talking about it. We spent more of our marriage apart than we have together up until this past year. ... The hardest thing in our house was our adult kids wouldn't come and see us because my wife and I are both in the age group that are most likely to get most ill." – JH TO STEVE HARKINS, TALKSHOPLIVE

Looking Back at Nashville "I got here in 1970. I had met a guy the previous year I'd come through town trying to get to California with some friends. And we'd come to Nashville because we both wanted to see it. And I'd bought this record by some session musicians called Area Code 615...And I was stunned. They were playing like Beatles songs with a banjo and a pedal steel and I'd never heard anything like this before in my life. And I thought I gotta get down there and see what these hillbillies are up to. This is some wacky stuff!" – JH, TO CRAIG HAVIGHURST, THE STRING, WMOT

"You are telling what happened when I went back to Music Row, which I hadn't spent any time on since my youth, since my first five years in town.... Music Row in those days had little small houses, a third of them were boarding houses for songwriters, a third of them were recording studios and the other third were music publishers, and that was Music Row when I got here in 1970. Studio A and B were there in the RCA Complex and so it was like I was talking to that kid in Studio B going could you ever have dreamed this, no you could not, haha." – JH TO MARTIN JOHNSON, AMERICANA-UK

Touring: "Being at home more with my wife after 33 years of marriage and most of them spent apart. We just realized that over the last few years, in fact. I have slowed down from more than 120 shows a year to between 60 and 75. So I'm home more. It was great in one respect, it was like dating again. In another respect, it was like 'who the hell are you?' So we had to learn how to spend more time together. ... B.B. King, I think he said, you don't pay us for the two hours we play, you pay us for the other 22. That's the rub of being a troubadour. It's the travel that kills you, and breaks hearts and destroys relationships and gets you into all sorts of ancillary trouble, potentially, especially when you're young. At the end of the day, this is my life. This is what I signed up to do."

Going International: "The Netherlands was the country where I got real applause for the first time and my own audience. In the autumn of 1979, I played there in the pre-show of Southside Johnny. I had a radio hit with 'Radio Girl,' but only with you. When I played that, ... I have not been received anywhere as warmly as in the Netherlands. I played again in Ry Cooder's band a year later. I will never forget the applause I received in Carré when I sang a song by myself. But it all started in the Paradiso, you can say that."

Decades Old Investment: "I've written songs on [1954 Gibson LG2] almost exclusively since 1986. So, it's got a lot of songs in it still. I bought it off a guy who worked at Gruhn Guitars, the famous old instrument store here in Nashville. George Gruhn, who has been vintage guitar, dobro, mandolin, fiddle, bass dealer ever since I got here in 1970. … And George's guitars are very pricey and always have been, even by 1986 standards. So, as I was walking out, a young man working there said 'hey, you know I get it, these are pricey, but I got this little LG2.' And I said 'yeah, I love those little small box Gibsons.' And he said 'l'll sell it to you for \$800,' And I said, 'you know, I've got six hundred dollars.' And so, he needed \$600 and I needed that guitar, so there you go."

Crossword

Crank up Leftover Feelings and try your skills with our latest puzzle. All of the clues are from lyrics on the album. There is an interactive version at: https://crosswordlabs.com/view/hiatt-xword-slow-turning-14-3

