

JOHN PRINE

the Singing MAILMAN Delivers

Some four decades since his remarkable debut, John Prine has stayed at the top of his game, both as a performer and songwriter. Recently honored at the Library of Congress by US Poet Laureate Ted Kooser, he's been elevated from the annals of songwriters into the realm of bonafide American treasures.

Long considered a "songwriter's songwriter," John Prine is a rare talent who writes the songs other songwriters would sell their souls for. Evidence of this is the long list of songwriters who have recorded gems from his extensive catalog, including Johnny Cash, Bonnie Raitt, the Everly Brothers, John Denver, Kris Kristofferson, Carly Simon, Ben Harper, Joan Baez, and many others.

"He's so good, we're gonna have to break his fingers," Kris Kristofferson once said after being justifiably stunned by a Prine performance. Bob Dylan remarked, "Beautiful songs... Nobody but Prine could write like that."

But long before these awards and accolades, all the concerts and many, many albums, John Prine trudged through snow in the cold Chicago winters, delivering mail across Maywood, his childhood suburb. "I always likened the mail route to a library with no books," says John Prine. "I passed the time each day making up these little ditties."

On October 25th, 2011, Oh Boy Records will release *The Singing Mailman Delivers*. This two-disc archival release features the earliest studio and live recordings from Prine dating back to 1970, one year before that prolific debut album.

In August 1970, John Prine went to Chicago's WFMT Studios to be interviewed by Studs Terkel. "I asked after the show if it were possible to stick around and tape all the songs I had written up until then," Prine continues. These studio recordings were simply and sincerely recorded with Prine's trademark guitar finger-picking and early vocal style. The disc closes with the unreleased track titled "A Star, A Jewel, And A Hoax," a brief and whimsical look into an often-overlooked cranny of everyday life.

The live performance was recorded at the Fifth Peg in Chicago in November 1970, where Prine would play three nights a week, while still delivering mail during the day. Prine says, "I still maintain that Chicago winters and postman-hungry dogs finally drove me to songwriting."

With just his acoustic guitar, some audience banter and a friend on bass, 24-year old Prine takes the live audience through 12 of his classic tunes, a few of which already sound like crowd favorites. "I was just learning how to sing a full set of my songs and still manage to talk in between without getting shot or anything thrown at me," he admits.

These amateur recordings on *The Singing Mailman Delivers* truly show Prine as a poet whose consummate songs were refined since inception. Even the then-titled "Great Society Conflict Veteran's Blues," his studio and live versions of "Sam Stone," bestow the listener an intricate sense of understanding and compassion from a humble and unassuming songwriter who wrote such words to pass time on his mail route.

Words by Jon Nowak & Paul Zollo