

John Martyn – Bio

Born on 11th September 1948 in New Malden, Surrey, England, John Martyn's given name at birth was Iain David McGeachy. His parents, opera singers, divorced when the youngster was aged five years and he moved to Glasgow where he was brought up by his grandmother. In Glasgow, during his teen years Martyn attended Shawlands Academy. Martyn picked up the guitar at the age of fifteen and was tutored by legendary Scottish folk musician Hamish Imlach.

Based in the South of England, and fusing folk and blues, Martyn began performing music professionally at the age of seventeen. In 1967 he signed with Chris Blackwell's Island Records and the following year the imprint issued his debut "**London Conversation.**" Martyn's sophomore effort "**The Tumbler,**" produced by Al Stewart, saw him begin to enhance his guitar sound by way of a series of electronic effects, and it was followed by two albums featuring his, then, wife Beverley Martyn nee Kutner [the female voice heard on the Paul Simon song "Fakin' It"]. The couple were divorced in the late 1970's. An ongoing musical partnership with upright bassist Danny Thompson began with "**Bless The Weather,**" while the title track to "**Solid Air,**" one of Martyn's best known albums, was a tribute to his friend and labelmate, Nick Drake, who passed the following year. When Island declined to release the 'in concert' album "**Live At Leeds**" [1975], John self-released the disc as a limited edition run of 10,000 copies which quickly sold out. Martyn then took time off from his performing/recording career and travelled to Jamaica, and during his visit became acquainted with and collaborated with the singer/producer/songwriter Lee 'Scratch' Perry.

"**One World**" included "Big Muff," co-written with Perry, while the emotional and darkly hued "**Grace And Danger**" was completed a year before it was released. Disturbed at the album's lyrical content, Blackwell initially held up its release – it was the last album Martyn made for Island – for a short time at least. The support players on the latter album included Phil Collins [drums, vocals], who went on to produce Martyn's Warner Bros. debut "**Glorious Fool.**" Following "**Well Kept Secret,**" "**Sapphire**" saw John return to Island for three more albums. Martyn's subsequent recording career has been marked by much revisiting of old material, particularly on a seemingly endless stream of live albums and compilations. In the past two decades John has had albums released by Permanent, Artful, Go Discs, Voiceprint, Eagle, Mooncrest, Pinnacle, Independiente, Universal/Spectrum and more.

In recent times Martyn has resided in Ireland. In 2001 John contributed to the Faithless track "Deliver Me." The July 2006 BBC4 documentary "**Johnny Too Bad,**" referenced his recovery following the amputation of John's right leg below the knee – due to a burst cyst - as well as focusing on the writing and recording of the album "**On The Cobbles.**" A deluxe, expanded version of "**Solid Air**" was released in 2000, "**One World**" followed in 2004, "**London Conversation,**" "**Stormbringer!,**" "**The Road To Ruin,**" "**Bless The Weather,**" "**Inside Out**" and "**Sunday's Child**" in 2005, and in 2007 "**Grace And Danger**" was similarly upgraded.

Discography :

with Beverley Martyn - "**Stormbringer!**" [1970] ; "**The Road To Ruin**" [1970] :

Solo - "**London Conversation**" [1967] ; "**The Tumbler**" [1968] ; "**Bless The Weather**" [1971] ; "**Solid Air**" [1973] ; "**Inside Out**" [1973] ; "**Sunday's Child**" [1975] ; "**Live At Leeds**" [1975] ; "**One World**" [1977] ; "**So Far So Good**" compilation [1977] ; "**Grace And Danger**" [1980] ; "**Glorious Fool**" [1981] ; "**Well Kept Secret**" [1982] ; "**The Electric John Martyn**" compilation [1982] ; "**Philentropy**" live initially self-released [1983] ; "**Sapphire**" [1984] ; "**Piece By Piece**" [1986] ; "**Foundations**" live [1987] ; "**The Apprentice**" [1990] ; "**Cooltide**" [1991] ; "**BBC Radio 1 In Concert**" [1992] ; "**Couldn't Love You More**" re-recorded versions of early Martyn compositions [1992] ; "**No Little Boy**" [1993] ; "**Sweet Little Mysteries: The Island Anthology**" [1994] ; "**Live [At The Shaw Theatre, London, 31st March 1990]**" [1995] ; "**The Hidden Years**" compilation [1996] ; "**And**" [1996] ; "**The Very Best Of John Martyn**" [1997] ; "**The Church With One Bell**" covers album [1998] ; "**The Rest Of The Best**" compilation [1998] ; "**Live At Bristol 1991**" [1998] ; "**Serendipity - An Introduction To John Martyn**" [1998] ; "**Classics**" compilation [2000] ; "**Glasgow Walker**" [2000] ; "**Live '91**" [2000] ; "**The New York Session**" live [2000] ; "**Patterns In The Rain**" compilation [2001] ; "**Germany 1986**" live [2001] ; "**The Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal 1986**" live [2001] ; "**Live At The Town And Country Club 1986**" [2001] ; "**Sweet Certain Surprise**" live [2001] ; "**Live At The Bottom Line 1983**" [2001] ; "**Live In Milan 1979**" [2002] ; "**Solid Air - Classics Revisited**" compilation [2002] ; "**And Live**" [2003] ; "**Live At The Cambridge Folk Festival 1985**" [2003] ; "**On The Cobbles**" [2004] ; "**Late Night John**" compilation

[2004] ; **“Mad Dog Days”** 2CD/1DVD live [2004] ; **“Live In Nottingham 1976”** [2005] ; **“Live At Leeds And More”** live compilation [2006] ; **“On Air”** [2006] ; **“The John Martyn Story”** compilation [2006] ; **“In Session”** [2006] ; **“Sixty Minutes With”** compilation [2006] ; **“Live At the Roundhouse”** [2007] ; **“BBC Live In Concert”** [2007] ; **“The Battle Of Medway: July 17 1973”** live [2007] ; **“Anthology”** compilation [2007] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 01/08.

[515 words]