

John Sebastian – Bio

John B. Sebastian was born in New York City, on March 17th 1944 [St. Patrick's Day] and was raised in Greenwich Village. John's father was a classical harmonica player, while his mother wrote scripts for radio shows. Raised in a home where the arts were actively pursued, visitors included Burl Ives and Woody Guthrie. In local clubs, the teenager got to hear the music of Lightnin' Hopkins and Mississippi John Hurt. In the early sixties, Sebastian was invited to join The Even Dozen Jug Band, and the line-up included Maria Muldaur and Steve Katz [Blood Sweat and Tears]. A year on the band members went their separate ways, by which time Sebastian had met the late Zalman Yanovsky [d. 2002], and had sat in with his group. A Canadian by birth, Yanovsky's band, The Mugwumps, featured future *Mama* – Cass Elliott and *Papa* – Denny Doherty, plus Jim Hendricks [*]. When the Mugwumps disintegrated in late 1964, Sebastian and Yanovsky teamed up with Steve Boone [bass] and Joe Butler [drums] to form the Lovin' Spoonful. According to legend, Fritz Richmond, currently a member of Sebastian's J-Band named the band after a Mississippi John Hurt song.

Signed initially to Elektra Records, the band contributed four tracks to the compilation **"What's Shakin'"** [1966] [#]. Cast adrift by Elektra, the Spoonful signed with Buddah Records and their debut album **"Do You Believe In Magic"** appeared in November 1965. Four months later, **"Daydream"** was in record stores, and by the close of 1966 **"Hums Of The Lovin' Spoonful"** had been released. Yanovsky left the band at this point and was replaced by Jerry Yester [Modern Folk Quartet]. The quartet's fourth album **"Everything Playing"** finally surfaced in late 1967. In a period of just over two years, the Spoonful had singles chart hits with "Do You Believe in Magic" [# 9], "You Didn't Have To Be So Nice" [# 10], "Daydream" [# 2], "Did You Ever Have To Make Up Your Mind" [# 2], "Summer In the City" [# 1], "Rain On The Roof" [# 10], "Nashville Cats" [# 8], "Full Measure" [# 87], "Six O'Clock" [# 18], "She Is Still A Mystery" [# 27] and "Money" [# 48]. The band also provided the music to two movie soundtracks. Francis Ford Coppola's film **"You're A Big Boy Now"** [1966] and Woody Allen's **"What's Up Tiger Lily"** [1966], in which the band also appeared. The band reprised their contribution to motion pictures, fourteen years later, with a cameo appearance in Paul Simon's **"One Trick Pony."**

In the summer of 1969, Sebastian made an appearance, unscheduled, at the Woodstock Festival, and at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival performed for nearly two hours as one of the bands had failed to arrive. Signed as a solo act to Reprise Records, his debut **"John B. Sebastian"** arrived in 1970 and was quickly followed by the live album **"Cheapo-Cheapo Productions Presents The Real Live John Sebastian."** An *unofficial* live album that had been released by MGM was then withdrawn. **"The Four Of Us"** [1971] featured the Side 2, four part [!!], song cycle "The Four of Us," while **"The Tarzana Kid"** [1974] found Sebastian collaborating with the Lowell George [d. 1979]. The title track of **"Welcome Back"** [1976] gave Sebastian a US # 1 single. The song had been written as the theme for the tv series, **"Welcome Back, Kotter."** Although Sebastian continued working *in concert* as a solo performer in the intervening years, he didn't record another album till 1993 when Shanachie issued **"Tar Beach."** The Lovin' Spoonful were elected to the Rock'N'Roll Hall of Fame in Y2K.

Illustrated by Garth Williams, John wrote the children's book **"J. B.'s Harmonica"** [1993] [published by Harcourt, ISBN: 0152400915, currently out of print] and also contributed music to the **"Care Bears"** series. **"Die Hard with A Vengeance"** [1995], the third film in Bruce Willis' **"Die Hard"** series, heavily featured Sebastian's "Summer in the City." In the mid nineteen nineties, Sebastian and long time acquaintance/musical co-conspirator, Fritz Richmond, formed the J-Band, along with Jimmy Vivino, James Wormworth, Paul Rishell and Annie Raines. Their debut album on Music Masters was titled **"I Want My Roots"** [1996]. The band's sophomore disc **"Chasin' Gus' Ghost"** followed three years later. Recent years have seen the appearance of the *solo live* discs **"King Biscuit Hour Flower Presents John Sebastian"** [1998] and **"One Guy, One Guitar"** [2003]. The latter collection, recorded by the BBC, featured Sebastian's Cambridge Folk Festival appearances of 1981 and 1984. In addition, titled **"Faithful Virtue : The Reprise Recordings,"** Rhino Handmade issued a 3000 copy, 3CD limited edition collection of his solo recordings in 2001.

Note.

[*] – Hendricks and Elliott were married for a time, supposedly for Hendricks to avoid the draft.

[#] – The album also featured contributions from the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and Eric Clapton and The Powerhouse. Powerhouse included Steve Winwood and Jack Bruce.

Discography :

Albums :

Solo : **“John B. Sebastian”** [1970] ; **“Cheapo-Cheapo Productions Presents The Real Live John Sebastian”** [1971] ; **“The Four Of Us”** [1971] ; **“The Tarzana Kid”** [1974] ; **“Welcome Back”** [1976] ; **“Best Of John Sebastian”** [1989] ; **“Tar Beach”** [1993] ; **“King Biscuit Hour Flower Presents John Sebastian”** [1998] ; **“Faithful Virtue : The Reprise Recordings”** 3CD limited edition collection [2001] ; **“One Guy, One Guitar”** [2003] :

with the Lovin Spoonful : **“Do You Believe In Magic”** [1965] ; **“What’s Shakin”** Elektra compilation [1966] ; **“Daydream”** [1966] ; **“Hums Of The Lovin Spoonful”** [1966] ; **“Everything Playing”** [1967] :

with the J-Band : **“I Want My Roots”** [1996] ; **“Chasin’ Gus’ Ghost”** [1999] :

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