

Artist Bio: John Stano

Singer songwriter John Stano's sound is a distinctive blend of acoustic and slide guitar, stellar rack harmonica, expressive vocals and insightful songwriting developed over many years of performance and study. He sometimes adds a little mandolin or cigar box guitar to the mix as well. His style can be described as a combination of Folk, Americana and Blues. Initially self-taught, John went on to study American fingerstyle guitar at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music and harmonica with national blues legend, Jim Liban. John received a B.A. in English and creative writing from U.W. Madison and a skillful use of language adds an original spark to his lyrics. 'Green Man Review' compared John's music to early Bob Dylan while 'Dirty Linen' was reminded of Country Joe McDonald. John also performs his own arrangements of folk and Americana artists such as Bob Dylan, Steve Earle, John Prine, Gillian Welch and Tom Waits; and country blues classics by artists including Robert Johnson, Mississippi John Hurt and Bukka White. John is a flexible and engaging performer who works regularly at a variety of indoor and outdoor venues. John has released four recordings of original music.

"His vocal resemblance to John Prine may be a plus for some, but Stano's songwriting voice is his own, apt for the folksinger's task of chronicling the local while relating it to the universal." The Shepherd Express

"His guitar just sings-the tone is lovely and his technique is outstanding." Bay View Compass

Career Highlights

- Nominated for a 2025 and 2024 WAMI Award for Americana Artist of the Year; a 2023 WAMI Singer Songwriter of the Year Award, a 2019 and 2016 WAMI Folk Artist of the Year award and the 2015 WAMI Singer Songwriter of the Year award.
- 2025, 2023 and 2020 Great American Song contest Finalist.
- Honorary Director of the 2024 Shawano Folk Music Festival and Main Stage performer. John received this surprise honor after performing there in 2023.
- 2018 Great River Folk Festival Songwriting Contest Finalist performer.
- 2012 Wisconsin Singer Songwriters Series Songwriter of the Year Award.
- 2012 John represented Wisconsin in the International Blues Challenge in Memphis on historic Beale Street in the solo/duo category after winning the regional competition.
- 2010 'Big Top Chautauqua Songwriter of the Year National Finalist and performer under the Big Top.
- John wrote and performed the soundtrack for a locally produced documentary film called 'Wisconsin's and the Civil War' that aired on Wisconsin Public Television in 2011
- His songs 'From A Rusty Cadillac' and 'Pontiac's No More' were featured on NPR's 'Car Talk.' His song, 'Caribou Bar & Grill' was featured on NPR on Michael Feldman's 'Whadya Know?' radio program.
- His song 'Dinosaur Bones' appears on a CD compilation called, 'A Celebration of Music/Volume 2.' Series contributors included Les Paul and The Bo Deans.
- His poetry was published in the 'Cream City Review,' where he was awarded 1st prize for poetry, the 'Wisconsin Poet's Calendar' the 'Shepherd Express' and in 2024's 'Unwashed' 53207.
- He has been a featured guest on several radio programs including; WUWM's 'Lake Effect,' Wisconsin Public Radio's 'Simply Folk' and Riverwest Radio's 'Sessions with Sandy' programs.
- John has performed at many regional clubs including; The Cafe Carpe, The Coffee House, Anodyne and The Two Way Street Coffee House. Other appearances include The Ellisville Opera House, Three Lakes Center for the Arts, Bastille Days, the Paramount Blues Festival, The Shawano Folk Music Festival, Steel Bridge Songfest and Milwaukee's Summerfest. John also enjoys playing house concerts such as the Cotter Creek and Turtle Pond concert series.
- John has showcased his music at many Folk Alliance International events including 2025 FAI in Montreal, 2022 FAI in Kansas City, every FARM since 2017 and also virtual FARM and NERFA
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