

# From folks songs to felony to farce

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Singer-songwriter John McCutcheon will appear at Riverwood on Feb. 10. COURTESY PHOTO / IRENE YOUNG

## Folksinger John McCutcheon

Like most singer-songwriters, John McCutcheon is a storyteller at heart.

“But the Muse is fickle,” Mr. McCutcheon said.

This comment might surprise Mr. McCutcheon’s followers. With his 39th album set to be released, don’t fully formed songs practically come to him in his sleep?

It's not quite that easy, even at a time when Mr. McCutcheon admits there's "a lot of low-hanging fruit out there in terms of things to write about.

"I want to move the conversation forward. My goal is to present issues in an interesting, thoughtful and provocative way."

Mr. McCutcheon's music often celebrates people who take a stand against the ugliness of today's world. His song "Streets of Sarajevo," about musician Vedran Smailovic, is a case in point.

In 1992, a bombing killed 22 people standing on a breadline at a Sarajevo bakery. On the 22 days following the bombing, Mr. Smailovic honored the dead by putting on his tux, sitting down on a folding chair at the bombsite and performing Tomaso Albinoni's "Adagio in G Minor." Mr. Smailovic became known as the "Cellist of Sarajevo."

At a recent songwriting camp, Mr. McCutcheon suggested his students emulate the commitment shown by Mr. Smailovic and write for 22 consecutive days.

Mr. McCutcheon decided to join his students on their journey.

"Muse, hit me!" he exhorted.

He found himself randomly thinking, "Billy didn't come home last night." But who's Billy, and why didn't he come home? Following these "breadcrumbs" led to "Dark Side of This Town," a song about a young man who succumbs to addiction. It can be found on his new album "Ghost Light."

Mr. McCutcheon's Feb. 10 concert at Riverwood will be his third at the venue in as many years. He has plenty of material to ensure the audience a new and exciting musical experience.

But he won't arrive with a prepared set list in hand. Instead, he will use his advance time to take the pulse of our area.

"People don't block life out when they walk into a performance hall," he said. And so he'll "spy" on our community to determine which songs will appeal to this audience. He'll read the local paper. He'll talk to the sound people to find out what issues are on people's minds. It will be interesting to see which songs make his playlist.

Proceeds from the concert will benefit the Rotary Club of Murdock.

**What:** John McCutcheon in Concert

**When:** 7 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 10

**Where:** Riverwood Activity Center,  
4250 Riverwood Drive, Port Charlotte

**Cost:** \$25 general admission; \$35 reserved seating

**Info:** [murdockrotary.org/fundraiser](http://murdockrotary.org/fundraiser) or 941-456-1862