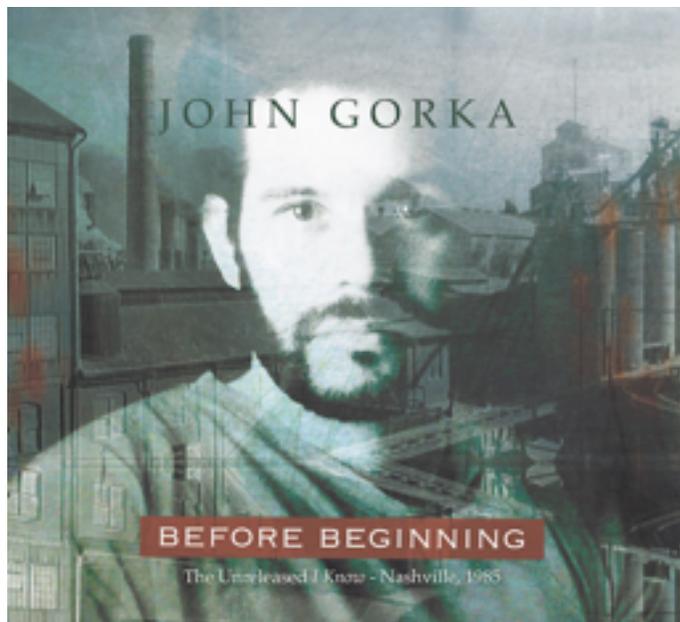


RED HOUSE RECORDS

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JOHN GORKA BEFORE BEGINNING THE UNRELEASED I KNOW - NASHVILLE, 1985

PRODUCED BY JIM ROONEY
FEATURING SHAWN COLVIN
AND LUCY KAPLANSKY
(JULY 22, 2016; RHR-CD291)

Since his 1987 Red House release, *I Know*, introduced renowned artist **John Gorka** to the public, the Minnesota-via-New Jersey guitarist and songwriter's wit and honesty has made him one of the most respected, beloved songwriters currently carrying on the folk tradition. With the insight that

comes with hindsight, John has decided to share his very first studio sessions, a collection of songs recorded in Nashville, TN at **Cowboy Jack Clements'** in 1985 with producer **Jim Rooney** (at the recommendation of Nanci Griffith) and a stable of top studio musicians. Still finding his way, John decided to go a different direction and the sessions were never released. ***Before Beginning, The Unreleased I Know***, brings these never-before-heard, studio versions of John's earliest material to the public after three decades. It will be available on **July 22, 2016** digitally and on CD through Red House Records and features nine of the 12 songs that would be on *I Know*, as well as "**Geza's Wailing Ways**," a track released in 1983 on a Fast Folk compilation.

Recorded spontaneously with John and a full band — recorded and mixed in five days — these sessions provide a fascinating look into the road not taken, an alternate musical direction this now well-known artist chose to forego.

Featuring extensive liner notes and reminiscences by the artist, we see the seasoned songwriter, now 13 critically acclaimed albums into his career, revisiting his first foray into a professional studio as an aspiring 25-year-old. "Even though it is an older recording it is a fresh take on the songs." With only a few tracks on compilations at that point, this would be his introduction to the world.

John says of the experience, "I can only say that I was finding my way. I had played solo live almost exclusively and I had not made an album or ever done a studio recording with other players. I guess I just didn't know what I wanted to hear. I know now that there is more than one right way to present a song. In that way songs are bigger than any one recording of a song. It was good. It just wasn't the good I wanted at the time."

It would be two more years and two more versions, both recorded in his home state of New Jersey, before *I Know* would be released on Red House Records.

Over the years, the multitrack tapes of the original recordings went from Nashville to Easton to New York City to Bethlehem, on to Ann Arbor and finally arrived at John's home in Minnesota a few years ago. In the fall of 2014, he took them out of storage to see if they would still play.

"I brought them to Rob Genadek at The Brewhouse Recording Studio in Minneapolis to listen and we enjoyed what we heard. I thought that others might too, even those people who were familiar with *I Know*. It had different arrangements and a different energy as I was singing and playing live with the band — Kenny Malone on drums and percussion, Dave Pomeroy on bass and some backing vocals I think, Jay Patten on saxophone, Mike Dugan on electric guitar, Ralph Vitello or Biff Watson on keyboards and Stuart Duncan on fiddle and mandolin. Jim Rooney also played second acoustic guitar on several songs and Shawn Colvin and Lucy Kaplansky sang while we tracked, everyone in one room."

Genadek "baked" the tapes with a hair dryer so that magnetic particles would not flake off and they were able to transfer the analog tapes to the digital world.

Since then, John Gorka has been a pillar of the folk music community, with 13 albums to his credit and appearances on *Austin City Limits*, *Mountain Stage*, *eTown*, CNN and more. Many artists have recorded and/or performed his songs, including **Mary Chapin Carpenter**, **Nanci Griffith**, **Eliza Gilkyson**, **Mary Black** and **Maura O'Connell**.

John Gorka – *Before Beginning* – *The Unreleased I Know* – Nashville, 1985

1. Down in the Milltown 3:57
2. Love is Our Cross to Bear 4:18
3. Geza's Wailing Ways 3:48
4. I Know 3:04
5. Out of My Mind 2:39
6. Downtown Tonight 2:49
7. Blues Palace 3:30
8. Winter Cows 2:16
9. Branching Out 2:43
10. I Saw a Stranger with Your Hair 3:37

For tour dates and info go to www.johngorka.com.

BIOGRAPHY

From New Jersey, **John Gorka** is a world-renowned singer-songwriter who got his start at a neighborhood coffeehouse in eastern Pennsylvania. Though small, **Godfrey Daniels** was and is one of the oldest and most venerable music institutions and has long been a hangout for music lovers and aspiring musicians. In the late 1970's, John was one of these aspiring musicians. Although his academic coursework at Moravian College lay in Philosophy and History, music began to offer paramount enticements. Soon he found himself living in the club's basement and acting as resident MC and sound man, encountering legendary folk troubadours like Canadian singer-songwriter Stan Rogers, Eric Andersen, Tom Paxton and Claudia Schmidt. Their brand of folk-inspired acoustic music inspired him, and before long he was performing his own songs - mostly as an opener for visiting acts. Soon he started traveling to New York City, where Jack Hardy's legendary **Fast Folk** circle (a breeding ground for many a major singer-songwriter) became a powerful source of education and encouragement. Folk meccas like Texas' **Kerrville Folk Festival** (where he won the **New Folk Award in 1984**) and Boston followed, and his stunningly soulful baritone voice and original songwriting began turning heads. Those who had at one time inspired him - Suzanne Vega, Bill Morrissey, Nanci Griffith, Christine Lavin, Shawn Colvin - had become his peers.

In 1987, the young Minnesota-based **Red House Records** caught wind of John's talents and released his first album, ***I Know***, to popular and critical acclaim. With unusual drive and focus, John hit the ground running and, when an offer came from Windham Hill's Will Ackerman in 1989, he signed with that label's imprint, High Street Records. He proceeded to record five albums with High Street over the next seven years: *Land of the Bottom Line*, *Jack's Crows*, *Temporary Road*, *Out of the Valley* and *Between Five and Seven*. His albums and his touring (over 150 nights a year at times) brought new accolades for his craft. His rich multi-faceted songs full of depth, beauty and emotion gained increasing attention from critics and audiences across the country, as well as in Europe where his tours led him through Italy, Belgium, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Switzerland and Germany. He also started sharing tours with many notable friends—**Nanci Griffith** and **Mary Chapin Carpenter** among them. All this brought his music to an ever-widening audience. His video for the single "When She Kisses Me" found a long-term rotation on **VH-1's "Current Country,"** as well as on **CMT** and the **Nashville Network**.

In 1998, after five successful recordings and seven years at Windham Hill/High Street, John felt the need for a change and decided to return to his musical roots at Red House Records. The choice was driven, in part, by the artistic integrity that the label represents in an industry where the business of music too often takes precedence. The 1998 release *After Yesterday* marked a decidedly different attitude towards making music for John, and his next release *The Company You Keep* held fast to his tradition of fine songwriting, yet moved forward down new avenues. Its 14 songs displays John's creative use of lyrics and attention to detail. **Andy Stochansky** played drums and shared production credits with John and **Rob Genadek**. **Ani DiFranco**, **Mary Chapin Carpenter**, **Lucy Kaplansky** and **Patty Larkin** contributed stellar guitar work and vocals to this fan favorite. *Old Futures Gone* was informed by his life as husband and father of two young children and also contained the colorful experience of many hard years on the road. *Writing in the Margins* followed in 2006 and was an engaging collection of sweet and serious songs that spanned many musical genres—folk, pop, country and soul—and featured guest vocalists **Nanci Griffith**, **Lucy Kaplansky** and **Alice Peacock**. His 11th studio album, 2009's *So Dark You See*, found him returning to his early folks roots with a batch of originals as well as covers of songs by **Utah Phillips** and **Michael Smith** and a cover of the blues standard "Trouble in Mind." A live performance DVD, *John Gorka Live at Tales from the Tavern*, an interview and concert DVD filmed in 2013, is available now through Tales From the Tavern's website at www.talesfromthetavern.com. *Bright Side of Down*, released in 2014, features a catchy, timeless batch of folk-pop songs produced with **Rob Genadek** with guest vocals by his label mates **Lucy Kaplansky**, **Eliza Gilkyson**, **Claudia Schmidt** and **Michael Johnson**. John mines his own vaults for *Beyond Beginning*, revisiting the never-before-released studio versions of the songs that became his debut, *I Know*. This is set for a fall 2016 release.

In addition to his 13 critically acclaimed albums, John released a collector's edition box featuring a hi-definition DVD and companion CD called *The Gypsy Life*. Windham Hill also released a collection of John's greatest hits from the label called *Pure John Gorka*. In 2010, he also released an album with his friends and Red House label-mates **Lucy Kaplansky** and **Eliza Gilkyson** under the name **Red Horse**. Getting high praise from critics and fans alike, it landed on the **Billboard Folk Charts** and was one of the most played albums on folk radio.

His song "Where No Monuments Stand" is featured in the documentary *Every War Has Two Losers* about activist and **Oregon Poet Laureate William Stafford** (1914-1993).

John Gorka lives in Minnesota and when not on the road, he enjoys spending time with his wife and children. He continues to tour, playing festivals, theaters and clubs all over North America and Europe. For his concert dates, visit www.johngorka.com.

RED HOUSE DISCOGRAPHY:

Bright Side of Down (2014)
So Dark You See (2009)
Writing in the Margins (2006)
Old Futures Gone (2003)
The Company You Keep (2001)
After Yesterday (1998)
I Know (1987)

QUOTES

“A constant and steady hand at the tiller, Gorka’s BRIGHT SIDE OF DOWN words and melodies glisten.”
— *No Depression*

“Superb songwriting . . . warm, intimate, yet texturally intricate.” — *Vintage Guitar*

"Wry, slice-of-life observations reminiscent of Lyle Lovett and John Prine." - *Associated Press*

“Listening to John Gorka sing, one can get goosebumps all over. There are many reasons—fresh lyrics, a stunning, emotional baritone voice, his twisted humor—but to focus on one limits the experience.”
— *New York Times*

“a pleasure...modern folk with a touch of soul.” — *Billboard*

“the fact is, Gorka’s a superb songsmith”
— *Blurt*

“thoughtful lyrics nestled into well-crafted songs and simple arrangements that put the song first”
— *Exclaim!*

"The preeminent male singer-songwriter of the New Folk Movement." - *Rolling Stone*

“With his wide-eyed lyrical honesty, and wistful, nice-guy baritone, he offers gentle, sharply observed songs that refuse to cliché their way around life’s tangles.” — *Boston Globe*

“It’s all there: the smooth baritone voice and thoughtful lyrics....he always delivers.” — *Elmore*

"Mr. Gorka mesmerizes." - *New York Times*