

## Mp3 John Chowning - Life Should Be Easy



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A singersongwriter who carelessly mixes folk, country, rock and blues to tell stories and make observations about everyday people and places. 10 MP3 Songs in this album (31:43) ! Related styles: FOLK: Modern Folk, COUNTRY: Americana Details: About John Chowning By Lauren LaRocca News-Post Staff April 10, 2009 Brunswick Gravel roads, railroads, old roads, new roads -- they've been a theme throughout the life of singer-songwriter John Chowning, so it's no wonder they appear in his music -- and on his latest album cover, which depicts a scene of the Brunswick railroad station. Chowning moved to Brunswick two years ago from the Gaithersburg area and rides a train each morning into Washington, D.C., for his job at the Department of Labor at Job Corps. His song "Blue Ridge Express" is about the train he rides home every night from work. The train has a party car where people are sometimes sharing a lot of booze," he said. "It's very loud." His father was a railroad worker, and, maybe because of that, Chowning has been interested in trains throughout his life. Chowning grew up in Oakland City, Ind., a small mining and farming town that resembles Brunswick . His first album, which he wrote about 12 years ago, is about the street where he lived as a boy. After he finished the CD, he mailed copies to the new kids who live in his old neighborhood. Four albums later, Chowning typically gives away each one to friends, neighbors, co-workers and family, though some copies are available for purchase at Beans in the Belfry. His songwriting, performing and recording is a hobby and nothing more, he said during a recent interview, but people seem to like it. From a musical family, he's always enjoyed listening to and playing music. "When I was younger, I tried to write commercial stuff," he said. He quickly lost interest. "Most people writing songs 100 years ago weren't writing them for commercial use," he said. Instead, he taught himself guitar and began writing about his own life experiences, which he found much more gratifying. In Indiana, Chowning's parents rented five or six rooms of their house at a time to

students because they lived near a college. Chowning was introduced to good rock and roll music early on. "I got into that music way before my time," he said, naming bands like the Kingston Trio, Buddy Holly, and later Pete Seeger -- whom Chowning played with in January in what he called a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. "I was terrified," he admitted. He was invited to go to New York City to play and record a song he performed at an Intercounty Connector protest. The proposed ICC will cut through the neighborhood where Chowning lived before moving to Brunswick, tearing through wetlands and cutting down forests along the way -- "acres and acres and acres of land," Chowning said, "encouraging sprawl and all that stuff." The invitation to play his song fell through, but he was still invited to come up, so he did, and the session in a community center was videotaped he said. "I got to sing with everybody," Chowning said. Seeger "even showed me a few chords, which is really pretty cool." On Saturday, he'll play at Beans in the Belfry, where he performs regularly because he lives nearby. "I love it. Beans is fun," he said. "I sit there and play for 2 1/2 hours." He plays mostly originals but mixes in a few old songs, like Bob Dylan and the Beatles, music he grew up with. Chowning's long and winding road has brought him both local success and pleasure in being able to perform his songs and share his music. It was his devotion to his longtime hobby -- music -- that allowed him to meet his boyhood idol, Pete Seeger. "I am the ultimate happy amateur," he states in his MySpace bio. "I'm too old to be a rock and roller, so I call myself a folk singer."

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