

## Mp3 David Johnston - Rock: Roots Rock



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"incorporates elements of swamp/delta blues, memphis soul, reggae, raga, psychedelic and melodic rock into a strong personal statement on this debut release". 9 MP3 Songs ROCK: Roots Rock, BLUES: Guitar Blues Details: BOSTON: David Johnston has released his debut CD on the local Gibraltar label. Johnston is known by some for his guitar work with Cambridge cult favorites "One Thin Dime", a band that also included singer/ songwriter/ rhythm guitarist Tim Hughes, drummer John Sands (Aimee Mann), saxophonist Dana Colley (Morphine) and bassist Rob Jefferies (Jon Butcher Axis, Barrance Whitfield and the Savages). "OTD" played almost exclusively at the Mass Ave pub, "The Plough the Stars" for most of the '90s, releasing only one CD. (The "Plough" is a Cambridge institution that was a hangout for people like Bonnie Raitt and Spider John Koerner in the late sixties and early seventies). After the devastating loss of their beloved friend and bassist Rob Jefferies in '97, Hughes decided to take some time off. For Johnston this was another blow, " I didn't want the band to stop playing, but in retrospect, it forced me to confront myself ". Johnston took over the monthly Saturday slot at the Plough along with Sands on drums and David Schlichting on bass. They also started doing monthly gigs at "Toad", in Porter Square. "The last thing I wanted to do was take time off ", says Johnston, "I needed to keep busy, although I respect Tim's decision, people deal with things in different ways. A lot of painful things happened within a two year period and the thing that got me through it was playing music". During that time he also started performing as a street musician, "busking" in Harvard Square and later in the subway, honing his songwriting and singing skills and rediscovering the fingerstyle guitar of his teen years. It was at a Plough gig that Johnston met George Wyckoff who asked the band to record for his Gibraltar Record label. The music was recorded and mixed at Rear Window in Brookline, with Sean Carberry engineering and co-producing with Wyckoff and Johnston. Saxman Paul Ahlstrand joined the trio on the tune "Lovething".

Hughes contributed backup vocals on two songs, one being the gospel flavored "To the Well". And Johnston overdubbed Hammond B3 organ on two tracks, Wurlitzer electric piano on one and harmonica on another. The nine song CD incorporates elements of swamp/delta blues, memphis soul, reggae, raga, psychedelic and melodic rock into a strong, and personal statement. "I'm proud of this record", says Johnston, "and grateful to the people who helped me make it. I know we've created something special here"..... To the well, indeed! ----- BOSTON GLOBE CD REVIEW David Johnston: David Johnston By Alan Lewis, Globe Correspondent, 11/29/2002 David Johnston started performing in the popular Cambridge band One Thin Dime in the '90s. He also served as a Harvard Square street musician and subway singer. The music on this fine, self-titled debut album mixes swamp-rock, guitar blues, acoustic singer-songwriter stylings, and a kind of Rhino Records' "Nuggets"-era garage-punk. The technical quality varies, though it sounds gritty in just the right places. The album's most striking feature may be its ultra-spare lyrics. Johnston's few words are emphasized by the emotional intensity of the performances. In "To the Well" (with the line, "Fetch a bucket, fetch a pail, 'cause we're goin' to the well"), the blues groove is the thing. The romantic "Across the River" is opened and closed with an instrumental theme that hearkens back beautifully to the early alt-folk of Mimi and Richard Farina. Quite different is the brooding, menacing "Holier Than Thou." When Johnston is most bluesy, as on "Ten Miles of Bad Road," his music shares a spirit with the much-admired '80s band Treat Her Right. Another favorite is the guitar/organ reggae of "Is That All You Got," about a looming breakup. Although the material is diverse, Johnston's style is mature and recognizable. And this debut promises a bright future. Johnston is at Matt Murphy's tomorrow and Toad on Monday.

----- NOISE MAGAZINE DECEMBER 2002 DAVID JOHNSTON Gibraltar Records David Johnston 9-song CD Somewhere between a back-alley troubadour and a world weary flower child, David Johnston is the man for whom they invented the word soulful, and his genuine grit and grizzle infuse every track on his nine song debut. The key to the appeal of Johnston's style is, though he defiantly shifts from brooding and rootsy ("You Outdid Yourself") to swamp-tinged and sexy ("Ten Miles of Bad Road"), to gospel-inspired ("To The Well"), that he manages to keep a certain core consistency. David Johnston became best known among Boston rock circles for his guitar work with One Thin Dime, a band that also included drummer John Sands (Aimee Mann), sax guru Dana Colley (Morphine), bassist Rob Jefferies (Barrance Whitfield the Savages) and singer/guitarist Tim Hughes.

When One Thin Dime was driven into hiatus (sadly, devastated by the death of bassist Rob Jeffries) Johnston continued to play in Cambridge clubs, and in the streets and subways, either with various musicians or by himself with just his battered Gibson. On this CD, John Sands plays drums and percussion, Tim Hughes contributes background vocals, and longtime friend and collaborator David Schlichting plays bass. Pick up this CD (CD Baby has it), and catch this guy in the Harvard Square T stop, Toad, or the Plough; I promise, feelin' good is easy when David Johnston sings the blues. (Lexi)

----- Weekly Dig (Boston) January 2003 To the Well with David Johnston A True Story by The Captain Email this Article to a Friend David Johnston is no rock roll punk. He is a man of rock roll. Johnston has been offering a definitive style of songwriting, as well as contributing his distinctive guitar playing and sound to many veteran and aspiring Boston musicians. Johnston is best known for his guitar work and songwriting efforts with the Cambridge cult group One Thin Dime, which also featured singer/songwriter Tim Hughes, saxophonist Dana Colley of Morphine, drummer John Sands (Aimee Mann) and bassist Rob Jeffries (Barrance Whitfield and the Savages). In 1997, tragedy struck when Rob Jeffries' young life was taken, leaving the future of OTD in doubt. Determined to keep his music alive, Johnston, along with close friends Sands and bassist David Schlichting, continued to play the venues that were once inhabited by OTD: Central Square's Plough and Stars, and Toad in Porter Square. David Johnston's determination to keep the music going was an important element in helping him deal with the loss of his friend. With words and music haunting his mind, Johnston took to his guitar and began writing songs more prolifically than ever. From the diverse crowds of Harvard Square, where he spends his summer afternoons, to the soon-to-be "no smoking" Cambridge pubs where drunken intellectuals and artists pack in elbow to elbow, a loyal following has come to embrace Johnston's music. I met up with David Johnston at our favorite local, the Toad, to discuss his debut album. David and I ordered some rounds of IPA and talked about music, from his love of Jimi Hendrix to my love of Neil Sedaka. We spoke about the advantages of playing small pubs over big rock clubs. More importantly, we discussed songs from his debut album. Johnston's admiration of delta blues, Memphis soul, '60s psychedelia, American folk and reggae is expressed through his work, which, at its base, it just rock roll. Songs such as "To the Well" display Johnston's appreciation for soul music. The way it is written and produced is reminiscent of Al Green's Get Next To You LP. With a Hammond B3 organ, Johnston takes to a sturdy gospel groove backed by drummer Sands, bassist Schlichting and the

backing vocals of Tim Hughes. On other tracks, such as "Across the River," the reggae-inspired "Is That All You Got?" and the sonic synthesis of "Ten Miles of Bad Road," Johnston grits his teeth, drinks his whiskey and offers a cynical yet clever approach to his musical and lyrical rock roll reckonings. As far as being a "street performer," David explains that playing in the Square is his personal time. It helps him to get exposure and enables him to work on new material and new arrangements, as well as meet people. "I don't know, man, I just find it an ideal place to practice my songs and be around many different types of people." The only problem, I suggested to Johnston, with playing for the frumpy general public, is having to swallow your pride every time some white-suburban catalog catcher asks, "Do you know 'Brown-Eyed Girl' by Van Halen?" "Eh, what are you going to do? You'll always attract them. They were raised on radio, they want to hear the hits," he says with compassion. Go to [cdbaby](#) to listen to and buy David Johnston's music. Also check out the Toad's January music schedule for upcoming performances, 617.497.4950. ----- alternativereview 2002 David Johnston

Cambridge, Massachusetts busker extraordinaire David Johnston has taken a break from the streets and subways to record his debut album; rife with genuine soul and grit and grizzle, this self-titled disc was many years in the making but well worth the wait. The nine songs are pure gold and every bit as real as the man himself. David Johnston became best known among Boston rock circles for his guitar work with One Thin Dime. When that band was driven into hiatus (sadly, devastated by the death of bassist Rob Jefferies), Johnston continued to play in Cambridge clubs, and in the streets and subways, either with various musicians or by himself with just his battered Gibson. On this album, John Sands plays drums and percussion. The key to the appeal of Johnston's songwriting style is, though he defiantly shifts from brooding and rootsy ("You Outdid Yourself") to swamp-tinged and sexy ("Ten Miles of Bad Road"), to gospel-inspired ("To The Well"), he manages to keep a certain core consistency, enhanced by Tim Hughes' background vocals, and the bass lines of longtime collaborator David Schlichting. Much like a Cambridge version of Tom "Can Do No Wrong" Waits, a David Johnston record sounds just like a David Johnston record should; he's a back-alley troubadour who's seen a lot of suns going down, and he'd like to tell you about it. --- Lexi ----- BOSTON GLOBE, FRIDAY

AUGUST 29, 2003 David Johnston at the Independent: Johnston is an artful chameleon. He recently finished a Wednesday residency at the Independent in Somerville, where he played with a variety of musicians from week to week and adroitly changed styles from harder-edged rock to whispery folk

country to a starkly contemporary, Soul Coughing-like percussion sound. Johnston is one of the most underrated musicians in town. Steve Morse ----- Boston Herald

1/3/04 A pub and its crawlers get by, one gig at a time By Robin Vaughan/Places Saturday, January 3, 2004

"Save the wails," read the good-humored invitation to join David Johnston and his band (bassist Steve Mayone and drummer Mike Piehl) for what might have been the last night of their Tuesday residency at Tir na Nog. Business is down at the Union Square pub, and corners are going to have to be cut. That means that the Nogs' seven-night music schedule, alas, is not to continue into the New Year. But Tuesday is still in the budget, it turns out. After finishing a well-attended first set, Johnston announces his reprieve: "He'll be back next week, thanks to tonight's supportive showing. The cheers are sincere. Johnston is a natural fit in this tiny, brick-walled, bare-beamed pub room, with his dusky, intimate singing voice and subtly complex songwriting (an intuitive blend of roots, psychedelia and pop). The band's live sound is strong and assured but doesn't overpower the room, even when the beats pick up. As Johnston leads the trio through some beautiful instrumental pieces, a woozy young local in low-slung pants dances dreamily in front of the postage stamp-sized stage as if to a snake charmer. She and her quartet of friends take turns on the little dance floor, pausing to dig into cartons of Chinese take-out on their hightop table until the sole guy among them starts to nod and they remember that they have seven bottles of wine" at home. Another group of friends, smiling at their luck, slips into the prime stagefront vacancy. It doesn't look a bar in trouble, but when you're this small, every setback hurts. Since the Somerville smoking ban went into effect a couple of months ago, the Nogs' receipts have been down by at least a third," says co-owner Feargal O'Toole, speaking by phone this week. It seems to be hitting certain bars worse than others. A lot of people who come here are smokers. And it's not just that they're not coming out anymore - now a lot of customers are outside most of the time." Scheduling cutbacks are unavoidable, says O'Toole, but it's unlikely that his partner, musician/booker Robert Elliott (whose Irish roots-rock band plays here almost weekly), will abandon the bar's live-music profile entirely. That would be a shame, considering what he's accomplished - the pub's musical reputation is built on some of the best names in the local roots scene. O'Toole agrees that the 65-capacity pub is a lovely room for music, as tonight's fans readily attest. Singer-songwriter Natalie Flanagan says she's seen shows here by Jimmy Ryan and Dennis Brennan that were downright enchanting." Tim Thiel, an electrical engineer, regularly drives alone from Waltham to catch his favorite acts at the Nog (Johnston, Brennan, the Heygoods, Asa

Brebner) as well as at other cozy spots on the Cambridge/Somerville pub circuit (the Lizard Lounge, Toad and the Independent). I like seeing music in places where the bass player has to turn sideways when people want to get to the bathroom," he says. A friendly woman taps his shoulder to say hello and ask how he's been - followed by another a few minutes later and then a guy after that. He's met a lot of nice people at intimate shows like this and hardly ever finds reason anymore to face big crowds at places like the Orpheum. There's no judgment here, no in-crowd," says Johnston, during his break between sets. It's a good place to try new material and to invite friends to hear it over a few pints. It feels relaxed, like a party in somebody's basement." ----- BOSTON HERALD Will

sing for Project Bread By Herald Staff Wednesday, January 21, 2004 Dennis Brennan and more than a dozen members of Boston's thriving roots-rock scene will gather at Arlington's Regent Theatre on Sunday at 7 p.m. for a benefit concert for Project Bread, the anti-hunger organization. It's an album release event for "Get In Here and Eat," a compilation CD, also a Project Bread benefit project, that was recently released in conjunction with the Blue Ribbon Barbeque. In addition to rootsy singer-songwriter Brennan, the show's all-star backup band includes guitarists Duke Levine and Kevin Barry (both known for their work with Mary Chapin Carpenter) and ex-Fairport Convention drummer Dave Mattacks. Tim Gearan, Sean Staples, Ry Cavanaugh, Bourbon Princess, the Heygoods, Jake Brennan, Sarah Borges and David Johnston will all perform. Tickets: \$20-\$50. Call 781-646-4849 or go to regenttheatre.com. DANIEL GEWERTZ

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