



## Jerry Jeff Jazz Liner Notes

Jerry Jeff Walker has worn a lot of hats since he rode his thumb out of upstate New York almost half a century ago. He's been a Greenwich Village folkie, a New Orleans street busker, a ground-breaking country-rocker, a near self-parody of rock-star excess, a thoughtful and reflective balladeer, and an articulate chronicler of a life spent mostly hop-scotching from one spotlight to another.

But until now, he has never harkened back to some of his earliest—and, it would seem, his most influential influences. *Jerry Jeff Jazz*, the Austin, Texas-based singer-songwriter's 32nd album, finds Walker revisiting some of the songs and artists who inhabit the Great American Songbook. The album includes selections from some of the greatest architects of the American song canon: George Gershwin, Sammy Cahn, Rodgers & Hart, Hoagy Carmichael, Jimmy Van Heusen, and more. Some of the songs—"How Long Has This Been Going On," "In the Wee Small Hours," "Time After Time," "There Will Never Be Another You," "I Get Along Without You Very Well," and "My Funny Valentine," have achieved a sort of free-floating, cross-generational enduring popularity. They are part of our shared musical vocabulary.

Some of the songs on *Jerry Jeff Jazz* have been variously recorded by pop singers (Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Nat "King" Cole, Julie London, Linda Ronstadt) and jazz singers (Chet Baker, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Nancy Wilson) alike. Walker finds himself in very good company.

One of Jerry Jeff's recording hallmarks has always been making his records "live," to preserve the interplay and intimacy of the creative process, and *Jerry Jeff Jazz* is no exception. The album tracks were recorded in the time-honored fashion that found everyone in a circle and performing live. The album was recorded over two days at Two Coves Studio in Walker's adopted hometown of Austin. Accompanying him on the album is an acclaimed quartet featuring guitarists Mitch Watkins and Tommy Nash, bassist Spencer Starnes, and drummer Steve Meador. Jerry Jeff remarked, "It's the first

album where I only had to concentrate on singing. No playing, or worrying about the lyrics."

He added that the seeds for *Jerry Jeff Jazz* were planted when he and his wife Susan bought a second home on the northern edge of New Orleans' French Quarter in 1998.

"I bought a bunch of CDs to play while were loading furniture into the house," Walker recalled. "I went out and got some Chet Baker and Nina Simone and Louis Armstrong, Mose Allison... Then I really started buying more stuff, like Ella Fitzgerald, the Mills Brothers—basically, a lot of stuff from the Forties and Fifties."

Those songs and artists—basically the soundtrack of American popular music before the advent of rock 'n' roll—filled the airwaves when Jerry Jeff was growing up on East End Ave. in Oneonta, NY.

"I grew up surrounded by music," he recounted in his 1999 autobiography, *Gypsy Songman*. "Mel and Alma (his parents) had been local dance champs, 1939. Alma and Aunt Norma and a friend had a singing group...the Three Queens of Melody...Grandma Jessie had played the piano as a child. She could not pass a piano without stopping to caress the keys 'to see what they have to say....I spent hours listening to my mom's and dad's records..."

Years later he added, "I came from a family that had a hi-fi, the kind where you lift up the lid, stack six or seven albums on a post, and they dropped down, one after another," he remembered. "But I didn't have records of my own, so I would go through my parents' records and pick stuff I'd like to hear."

He recalled times when Big Apple jazz musicians like Jimmy Rushing, Kirby Walker and "Fez" Roundtree would come to "the country" around Oneonta to chill out and shake some big city grit off their shoes. They were guests of a local club owner, Jerry Monzer. "I was a staple at every jam session...I even got to sing a couple of songs," Jerry Jeff recalled.

Musically, Jerry Jeff recalled, it was another place in time. "At that point, Elvis was coming,



but Chet Baker (the West Coast "cool jazz" trumpeter and vocalist) was king in 1954 and '55. If you weren't mainstream, like Perry Como and Eddie Fisher, and you didn't live in the South, where there were rhythm and blues stations, the only alternative was listening to jazz—three or four piece combos that played swing, bebop, and that sort of stuff."

Walker's challenge in recording *Jerry Jeff Jazz* was to find a way to make the music his own.

"The songs I picked are the best of the best, with really pretty melodies and stories," he said. "I didn't want to go with a piano and trumpet when we recorded—if I'd done that I might have wanted to go with a Dixieland style...I had to find the (song) keys first, and then pick a tempo in which I wanted to do them. And then we just kind of went where it was comfortable. I can't think of another album where these songs have been done with just two guitars, bass and drums."

Both the songs and the singer have proven unusually durable. In his seventh decade, Walker still entertains beer-drinking, honky-tonk audiences with standards of his own, like "L.A. Freeway," "Mr. Bojangles" and "Up Against the Wall (Redneck Mother)." But after the hoo-raing crowds have departed, when the applause has died down and the lights have dimmed, it is the music of *Jerry Jeff's Jazz* that resounds most strongly with him, as he convincingly sings, "...in the wee small hours of the morning."

## LETTER FROM SUSAN

This year's birthday was another great success – big thanks to all the fans who attended!

We are still actively pursuing the realization of the vocational school for popular music, hopefully here in Austin, TX. We are receiving continuous support and encouragement from the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, our sister school in England, and its executive director, Mark Featherstone-Witty, who has joined our board of directors.

We did briefly hire a development director last year, but soon learned we had moved too quickly. We have more organizational work to do before that post is cost-effective. We are back to building our board and fundraising, while targeting foundations geared towards education/arts in the first phase of a capital campaign.

Most of our money continues to come from contributions guided to us from our fans! We received

a call last fall from Steve Sellery of the Golf Channel, who wanted to make the school the beneficiary of a Pro-Am tournament the channel was bringing to Austin, in exchange for putting together a Pickin' Party for the final night. With the help of our talented friends in Austin: Steve Fromholz, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Ray Benson, Turk Pipkin, Harry Anderson, Pat Green, and of course Jerry Jeff and Django – we knocked them out with great music and lots of laughs. All this fun while raising \$50,000 for the school – not to mention all the great exposure on the Golf Channel. Hopefully, this relationship will continue and we can look forward to more great times and exposure for the school.

I would also like to acknowledge Vinson & Elkins law firm, who has taken our Foundation as pro bono work, and continues to steer us on the straight and narrow. Also, many thanks to Danny

Powell at Powell, Ebert & Smolik for donating time to the school, keeping us on the up and up with the IRS and our 501(c) 3 status.

We raised another \$13,000 for the Tried & True Foundation at this year's silent auction, and we thank those who contributed to our event. With those funds, we have \$163,000 in the Tried & True Foundation – all earmarked for the school.

Thank you all so much for your ongoing support, and please keep us in mind when you hear of fundraising possibilities. As I mentioned, our fans have been the driving force for donations, even sending us matching grant information from their companies, and realizing the great cause and need we have. Times are tough out there now and it is certainly going to take more time than I originally thought to make this school a reality, but we remain dedicated.





# JERRY JEFF WALKER ON THE ROAD

All dates with the Gonzo Compadres unless otherwise noted.

All dates subject to change. Check with local venue for confirmation.

For schedule updates, check our website: [www.jerryjeff.com](http://www.jerryjeff.com), or call our office at 512-477-0036.

## APRIL

|    |                     |              |
|----|---------------------|--------------|
| 25 | The Bowery Ballroom | New York, NY |
| 26 | Private Party       | New York, NY |
| 28 | Private Party       | Austin, TX   |

## MAY

|    |                            |                 |
|----|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1  | Dixie Dance Hall           | Beaumont, TX    |
| 3  | Walter Hall Park           | League City, TX |
| 9  | Castine Center             | Mandeville, LA  |
| 13 | Private Party              | Austin, TX      |
| 17 | Centennial Park            | Midland, TX     |
| 22 | Palace Theater             | Corsicana, TX   |
| 23 | Terminix Stage - Riverfest | Little Rock, AR |
| 24 | Tom Lee Park               | Memphis, TN     |
| 28 | Variety Playhouse          | Atlanta, GA     |
| 30 | Neighborhood Theater       | Charlotte, NC   |
| 31 | Rock Bottom                | Richmond, VA    |

## JUNE

|    |                             |                   |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1  | The Birchmere               | Alexandria, VA    |
| 2  | The Birchmere               | Alexandria, VA    |
| 3  | The Ram's Head              | Annapolis, MD     |
| 5  | Saratoga Music Hall         | Saratoga, NY      |
| 7  | Private Party               | Waterville, ME    |
| 14 | Private Party               | Tyler, TX         |
| 22 | Riverfest (w/ Doobie Bros.) | Little Rock, AR   |
| 27 | Sam Houston Race Park       | Houston, TX       |
| 28 | River Road Ice House        | New Braunfels, TX |

## JULY

|    |                        |                  |
|----|------------------------|------------------|
| 2  | Summerfest             | Milwaukee, WI    |
| 4  | Bicentennial Park      | Baytown, TX      |
| 6  | Possum Hollow          | Graham, TX       |
| 10 | Solo @ The Bottom Line | New York, NY     |
| 14 | Solo @ The Talkhouse   | Amagansett, NY   |
| 15 | Solo @ The Talkhouse   | Amagansett, NY   |
| 17 | Solo @ The Ironhorse   | Northampton, MA  |
| 18 | Solo @ The Ironhorse   | Northampton, MA  |
| 30 | Solo @ The Belly Up    | Solana Beach, CA |

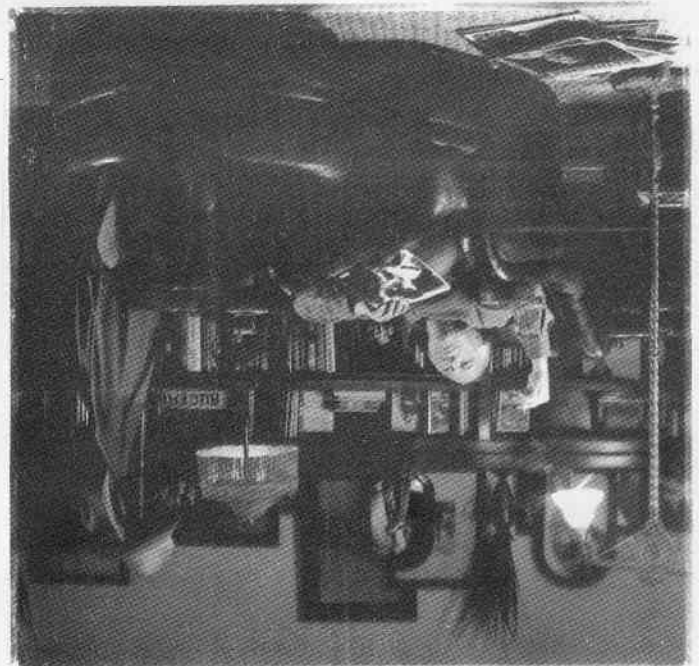
## AUGUST

|    |                             |                         |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2  | Solo @ Coach House          | San Juan Capistrano, CA |
| 6  | Solo @ Great American MH    | San Francisco, CA       |
| 7  | Solo @ Great American MH    | San Francisco, CA       |
| 8  | Solo @ State Theater        | Modesto, CA             |
| 10 | Solo TBA (tentative)        | Chico, CA               |
| 13 | Solo @ The Alladin Theater  | Portland, OR            |
| 15 | Memorial Field              | Sandpoint, ID           |
| 22 | Private Party               | Dallas, TX              |
| 23 | Billy Bob's                 | Fort Worth, TX          |
| 28 | Solo @ Sedona Cultural Park | Sedona, AZ              |
| 29 | Solo @ Marquee Theater      | Phoenix, AZ             |

*\*After August 29, watch the website for Colorado Plays*

## SEPTEMBER

|   |             |                   |
|---|-------------|-------------------|
| 5 | Gruene Hall | New Braunfels, TX |
| 6 | Gruene Hall | New Braunfels, TX |



Liner Notes inside  
Jerry Jeff Jazz

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