

# FROM THE COVER

an inside look at northeast oregon's  
arts and entertainment scene

## Montana artist John Lowell touring new album

### Songs are 'steeped in tradition of storytelling'

By Lisa Britton  
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — John Lowell traces his love of music back to childhood when he received a trumpet as a gift.

"But I never liked it," he said.

Fortunately, he didn't give up — and discovered the guitar at age 12 thanks to his sister.

"I started sneaking into her room when she wasn't around and plinking on it," he said. "I haven't put it down since."

Lowell lives in Montana but this month will arrive in Baker City to play at Churchill Dancehall on Jan. 28.

Doors open at 6 p.m. Tuesday and the show starts at 6:30 p.m. Churchill is located at 3451 Broadway St. (entrance is through the parking lot off 16th Street).

Tickets are \$8 in advance at Sweet Wife Baking, MC Taco Bus,

and [www.churchillbaker.com/](http://www.churchillbaker.com/) events. Admission at the door is \$10.

During the concert, food will be available for purchase from MC Taco Bus, and beverages will be served by Copper Belt Winery and Barley Brown's.

Lowell and his wife, Joanne, live in Livingston, Montana, where they run a music production company.

Once a year they organize a free concert called the Livingston Hoot.

"One year we had Vince Gill," he said. "It's become the defining event of the town."

In his musical life, Lowell is touring his new album titled "This Long Stretch of Gravel." He said it features a mix of genres, including a style he discovered in high school.

"In high school I met a banjo player and got hooked on bluegrass," he said.

Lowell said he's mostly self-

taught.

"Just playing with people," he said of learning music. "This kind of music is so social."

As for a mentor, Lowell mentions Peter McLaughlin of Tucson, Arizona.

"I'd stop him in the middle of the tune and say, 'That was cool, show me that,'" he said.

Lowell mainly plays guitar. When he wants to play bluegrass, he gathers a variety of musicians.

"Just one person can't play bluegrass," he said. "You have to have a band."

His new record features 18 guest artists.

"It got a little out of control," Lowell said with a laugh. "I got to thinking a saxophone would sound great, maybe a piano... I'm really pleased with how it turned out."

All tracks are at least duets, with Missy Raines featured on every song. There are two bluegrass



Submitted photo

John Lowell, who is touring his new album, "This Long Stretch of Gravel," will play Tuesday at Churchill Dancehall in Baker City.

songs, plus swing and ballads.

This will be his first time playing in Baker City. His solo concert will feature mostly original songs.

Lowell started writing songs about 30 years ago.

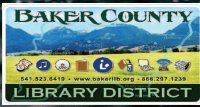
"It's poetry — but you have to come up with a melody. And subject matter," he said.

His style is described like this: "The

musical terrain he occupies, whether his songs or others, is steeped in the tradition of storytelling."

He tours in the U.S., and overseas on occasion. He's going to Germany this year, and in 2021 will be a guest teacher at the Sore Fingers music school in England.

To learn more about the artist, visit [www.johnlowell.com](http://www.johnlowell.com).



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