

it's been in the works for a while. But I've been to Astoria before and I have visited the radio station a couple of times. Glad to be coming back; it's a very beautiful area. To be able to come back there is a nice benefit of this kind of work.

I'm very much looking forward to it. I remember the light. I think I stayed at a hotel right on the water there, right by the bridge, and it was very beautiful taking walks around there.

**CW: Is that the Cannery Pier, maybe? It's out on the pilings over the water.**

**JG:** Yeah, that's it.

***"When I started, there were record companies and lots of record stores. Every local paper had a record reviewer.***

John Gorka

**CW: You've been in the industry for about 40 years?**

**JG:** Let's see ... My first record came out in 1987. I probably started recording with the Fast Folk magazine around 1984. But my last job was in May of '86.

**CW: Your last day job?**

**JG:** Yeah.

**CW: And what was that?**

**JG:** I worked with Sing Out! magazine, the folk magazine. It had moved from New York City from where it had been since the beginning in the early '50s until the very early '80s. I guess the New York staff had kind of burned out and the only people who wanted to keep the magazine running were Pete Seeger and Mark Moss, who was mainly just a vol-



Folk musician John Gorka.

Joe del Tufo/Moonloop Photography

unteer, but he became the editor and kept it going until just recently.

**CW: How have you seen the business change for better or worse?**

**JG:** It had definitely changed. When I started, there were record companies and lots of record stores. Every local paper had a record reviewer. So there were ways to get the word out to a larger number of people at one time. Now, it's kind of fragmented. There's a lot you can do on your own. You can record at home, you can put stuff online, but the difficult thing is, how do

you become known? Especially now with so many people in the democratized process.

**CW: So moving on to your new record, True in Time, one thing I noticed over a few listens is there seems to be a sense of impermanence running through the record, but also, at the same time, a search for home or someplace or something permanent.**

**JG:** Yeah, and the fact of the looming past. The presence of the past is one of the themes there. Like this song, "Cry for Help," where the past just sort

of overwhelms the subject of the song. Time and the past are probably some themes that have popped up here and there. For me, "Nazarene Guitar" is kind of my personal origins mythology. I guess it's just acknowledging the past without being weighed down by it.

**CW: Speaking of "Nazarene Guitar" and "Tattooed" I noticed someone always seems to be going somewhere. Do you think your life as a touring musician influences this?**

**JG:** I guess that's possible. "Tattooed" is a song I wrote just about this time

two years ago this month. Also, like with the "Arroyo Seco" song, sometimes I feel like I'm in a place or a time that I just want to mark somehow, like I feel it's significant in some way, and I just try to capture the feeling of that moment and the time and the place. They don't have to be songs for all time and all people, but I want to get the feeling of the time and place as best I can.

**CW: Again, speaking of "Arroyo Seco" it feels like many of your songs are very rooted in place. What's your relationship with the Pacific**

**Northwest?**

**JG:** Oh, I have always enjoyed coming up that way. It's so beautiful. We had a family vacation where we visited Vancouver B.C. and the San Juan Islands. Some of those ferry rides were some of the best parts of those trips. We had perfect weather. I guess it was before the forest fire smoke.

**CW: Where did you record the new record?**

**JG:** We did it in Minneapolis. It was almost all recorded in three days. We were able to get some very good musicians together — all of whom I had worked with before, but it had been a while since we had recorded this way, where it's kind of everybody all together. There's only one guitar part that I added later and the background vocals were added afterwards, but everything else happened in one place and it was lots of fun. It felt very organic. We were able to get a lot done in a short amount of time because the players were only available for those times.

It worked out well. Unfortunately, I had cut my thumb with a saw two days before we were starting and I got nine stitches in my left thumb. Fortunately, the ER doc was a guitar player. He kind of put in some extra stitches, and I said, "Am I going to be able to play?" This was on a Saturday afternoon and the session was Monday morning. And he said, yeah, he thought so, but I had to reconfigure — I couldn't wrap my thumb around the bass strings like I normally do with my left hand. I had to just keep it on the back of the guitar neck so I wouldn't pop the stitches. But it worked out.

**CW: So you really suffered for this one?**

**JG:** Right, yeah. There wasn't any blood, at least not at the studio. **CW**