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Small Town Dance Live: The Cd Release Concert

By **LYLE GLIDDEN**,
Special to the All Arts Council
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Engineer/producer and "really good sound guy" Lyle Glidden wanders around reviewing new CDs and new venues. Here is his report on the John Gibbons concert.

John Gibbons and his extremely talented group of friends and fellow musicians wowed the near capacity crowd of family, friends and fans at Champlain College on Saturday evening [November 21]. The concert kicked off with "Small Town Dance's" opening song, "Silence or Tears." John's beautiful light tenor voice soared above the instrumental mix. Karen McFeeters and Craig Anderson's harmony vocals were stronger and even more impressive than on the CD itself and remained that way through out the evening. It was a CD release event; Joel Snyder's concert sound was true and faithful to the sonic structure of the CD.

John told of his inspiration for "220." A field trip with his son's class set the pen to paper and a few years down the line, "220" was completed to satisfaction. CD producer and multi-instrumentalist, Colin McCaffrey added the low harmony along with Karen. The blend was pure magic, making "220" an even more enduring favorite of mine.

Next in line, an elderly couple in a restaurant inspired "Pick your Place Anne Marie."

"Roll Away" featured outstanding finger picking accompaniment by Craig Anderson. John and Craig executed octave harmonies and unison through the use of capo-ed and open string tuning.

Next up was the first of many "friends showcase" songs from members of the ensemble. Karen McFeeters took the solo spot with her lovely "Ellen's Song" written for her 2 year old niece. This joyful, exuberant song was delivered with poise and a twinkling eye. The three-part harmony chorus simulates laughter and the trio of John, Craig and



Photo by Lyle Glidden

John Gibbons

Karen were dead on in pitch and execution.

Craig Anderson, local luthier, and outstanding acoustic guitarist took a solo in the spotlight with a complex original instrumental. Craig chose to mike his hand made acoustic for this song to show off the wonderful timbre of his work as a guitar craftsman and artist. The CA acoustic is as beautiful to the ear as it is to the eye.

Andy Green, who covered all banjo parts on John's CD songs stepped up next with a gorgeous rendition of John Starling's "He Rode All The Way To Texas." Andy has an expressive voice and his guitar playing was the perfect backdrop for it.

Next the entire ensemble came back to the stage for my second favorite song on the CD, "The Kenworth of My Dreams." Colin McCaffrey's Rigel Mandolin solo was outstanding. Rigel's are made in Jeffersonville area by Pete Langdell. It was a special part of the show knowing that not only Vermont musicians were being featured but also, acoustic guitars and mandolins by some of the Green Mountains best artisans were played exclusively.

"The Wall That Moves" the Viet Nam Memorial song received a standing ovation. The live delivery was extremely moving and powerful with a perfect performance and mix.

Set 1 ended with the hysterical "Oh Well, AOL." The song tells of

the laments of a husband who succumbs to life with a new computer and the near widow status he gets from his Internet addicted wife.

Set 2 opened with "Lulu Wall." Allen Grant was added to the group for this Bluegrass rouser.

Carol Hausner, First Place winner of the Merle Fest Bluegrass Song writing competition, performed her winning entry "Love Gone By" in her solo spot. The song was co-written by Colin McCaffrey who sang harmonies and played fiddle on the number. Carol remained at the mike and added her CD harmonies to "The Cowboy I Know," a song John wrote from a girl's perspective. Andre Maquera of West Street Digital Recorders provided tasty B-Bender guitar simulating a pedal steel on this gentle country tune.

Colin McCaffrey was featured on a solo number, the bluesy "Boys I'm Tired of Town."

"Hard Water," a wonderful song about young love, break-up, and its scars was a second set highlight.

John and Craig next were featured on the classic instrumental "Windy and Warm." Once again, these two accomplished guitarists impressed the audience with their execution.

"Season Song," a Craig Anderson composition from "Small Town Dance," was beautifully performed by the trio of Gibbons, Anderson and McFeeters.

The CD closer, "Another Shot of Rye Whiskey," rocked out the crowd for the final song of the second set. Andre Maquera had a blast recreating his CD crunch tone solos and CD electric bass player Justin Olds joined the band for this number. All other upright bass tracks for the concert were handled by John's neighbor, Neal Brown, who provided a strong sonic underpinning for the concert.

I hope John Gibbons will consider taking the "Small Town Dance" concert on tour as more events are certainly in order for such a fine show. I was truly moved and blessed by my evening in his presence.