

JOHN PIZZARELLI

Biography

John Pizzarelli, the world-renowned jazz guitarist and singer, was called “Hip with a wink” by *Town & Country*, “madly creative” by the *Los Angeles Times* and “the genial genius of the guitar” by *The Toronto Star*. When he performs with his wife, singer/actress Jessica Molaskey, and his father, guitar legend Bucky Pizzarelli, they were labeled “the First Family of Cool” by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and “the von Trapps on Martinis” by *The New Yorker*. According to *The New York Times*, “the Pizzarelli-Molaskey duo are as good as it gets in any entertainment medium.”

After his recent smash success with the Boston Pops, he was hailed by the *Boston Globe* for “reinvigorating the Great American Songbook and re-popularizing jazz.” And the *Seattle Times* called him “a tour de force” and “a rare entertainer of the old school.” Before a recent show in the northwest, the local paper quipped “John Pizzarelli is so impossibly cool, he shouldn’t be legally allowed to enter Oregon.”

Using performers like Nat “King” Cole, Frank Sinatra and Joao Gilberto and the songs of composers from Richard Rodgers, George Gershwin to James Taylor, Antonio Carlos Jobim and Lennon & McCartney as touchstones, John Pizzarelli has established himself as one of the prime interpreters of the Great American Songbook and beyond, bringing to his work the cool jazz flavor of his brilliant guitar playing and singing.

Pizzarelli started playing guitar at age six, following in the tradition of his father. After playing in pickup groups and garage bands through high school he began exploring jazz with his father as a teenager, and was able to perform with a number of great jazz musicians who would be a major influence on his work, including Benny Goodman, Les Paul, Zoot Sims, Clark Terry and Slam Stewart. John went out on his own after recording *My Blue Heaven* for Chesky Records in 1990, then toured extensively, playing clubs and concert halls, opening for such greats as Dave Brubeck, Ramsey Lewis and Rosemary Clooney. In 1993, he was honored to open for Frank Sinatra’s international tour and then joined in the celebration for his 80th birthday at Carnegie Hall bringing down the house singing “I Don’t Know Why I Love You Like I Do” with his father accompanying him.

For Pizzarelli though, his hero and foundation was Nat “King” Cole and the comparison to his iconic trio is the highest of compliments. “I’ve always said in my concerts that Nat ‘King’ Cole is why I do what I do.” But Pizzarelli adds, “We aren’t trying to copy him. His sound was singular and inspired. I’ve always said we’re an extension, a 21st century version of what that group was.” In fact, Pizzarelli devoted his RCA albums *Dear Mr. Cole* and *P.S. Mr. Cole* to music made famous by the beloved song stylist. Pizzarelli’s catalog of albums also includes a touching cycle of torch ballads (*After Hours*), a collection of classic swing and bold originals (*Our Love is Here to Stay*), and a charming holiday disc (*Let’s Share Christmas*). On one of his last projects for RCA, *John Pizzarelli Meets the Beatles*, he brought classic Beatles songs into the worlds of swing and smoky balladry.

A popular TV commercial for Foxwoods Casino has made Pizzarelli a recognizable face. “In the Northeast, I can see people staring at me on the street. ‘The Wonder Of It All’ is a great tune,” he enthuses of the Don Sebesky-arranged number. “And people are calling the casino to ask ‘who’s that guy singing?’ If I’m going to be associated with a jingle, I’m happy that at least it’s something I like.” In 1997, Pizzarelli made his Broadway debut in the musical *Dream*, a revue of Johnny Mercer songs.

Pizzarelli signed with the GRAMMY® Award winning label Telarc International in 1999 recording a string of successful CDs starting with *Kisses In The Rain*, a diverse set of standards and original tunes that showcases the spontaneity of his live performances within a studio setting, followed by *Let There Be Love*.

On his 2002 album, *The Rare Delight of You*, Pizzarelli teamed up with veteran pianist George Shearing. In the tradition of classic quintet-and-vocalist recordings, they lay down great standards (including “Be Careful, It’s My Heart,” “If Dreams Come True” and “Lost April”) as well as a couple originals, all with vibrant arrangements. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the John Pizzarelli Trio along with pianist Ray Kennedy and bassist/brother Martin Pizzarelli, *Live at Birdland* was released in April 2003. This two CD set seamlessly James Taylor folk with Gershwin and Van Heusen standards, in addition to original Pizzarelli compositions. After listening to the CD, a *JazzTimes* critic raved “Spend five minutes with Pizzarelli and you’ll fully appreciate his inimitable warmth, humor and munificence of spirit.”

In 2004, Pizzarelli introduced a new generation to the distinctive Latin rhythms of *Bossa Nova*. Produced by Russ Titleman, the critically-acclaimed disc features several Brazilian musicians including drummer Paulo Braga, pianist Cesar Camargo Mariano and vocalist Daniel Jobim. According to *Billboard*, “His performance throughout, as both vocalist and guitarist, is exceptional.” *Knowing You*, Pizzarelli’s 2005 release, pays homage to the many talented musicians and songwriters he’s met throughout his career. The disc features material from noted pop and Broadway songwriters Jimmy McHugh, Sammy Cahn, Alan and Marilyn Bergman, Johnny Mandel and Brian Wilson among others. The *Associated Press* called the disc “A classy, urbane session. The rich colors make this among the best of Pizzarelli’s albums.”

In 2006, Telarc introduced *Dear Mr. Sinatra*, John’s tribute CD to “Ol’ Blue Eyes,” featuring the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. The CD features John Clayton’s clever reworking of classic standards like “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” and “You Make Me Feel So Young,” as well as songs written Sinatra for like “Ring A Ding Ding,” “Nice And Easy” and “The Last Dance.” *The New York Times* praised the recording for “exploding with enthusiasm and excitement.”

His 2008 recording, the GRAMMY® Award nominated *With A Song In My Heart*, celebrates the music of legendary composer Richard Rodgers. The CD includes swinging Rodgers & Hart jazz standards like “The Lady Is A Tramp,” “Mountain Greenery” and “Johnny One Note,” in addition to theater songs from *South Pacific* and *The King and I*. The disc also featuring rare songs like “Nobody’s Heart” and “I Like To Recognize The Tune.”

Scheduled for release in February 2010, *Rockin’ In Rhythm*, the singer-guitarist’s first ever Duke Ellington recording, features 12 classic tracks that prove Pizzarelli – like Ellington – knows how to show off the strengths of the musicians in his band. In addition to a cut for solo guitar, four songs highlight the quartet (with pianist Larry Fuller, bassist Martin Pizzarelli and drummer Tony Tedesco) and seven include the Swing Seven horns with arrangements by Don Sebesky.

In addition to being a bandleader and solo performer, John has been a special guest on recordings for major pop names such as James Taylor, Natalie Cole, Kristin Chenoweth, Tom Wopat, Rickie Lee Jones and Dave Von Ronk, as well as leading jazz artists like Rosemary Clooney, Ruby Braff, Johnny Frigo, Buddy DeFranco, Harry Allen and, of course, Bucky Pizzarelli. He was featured opposite Donna Summer, Jon Secada and Roberta Flack on the Grammy Award winning CD, *Songs From The Neighborhood: The Music of Mr. Rogers* in 2005.

A veteran radio personality, Pizzarelli hosted “New York Tonight” on WNEW from 1984 to 1988. John has also successfully launched “Radio Deluxe with John Pizzarelli,” his nationally syndicated radio program, co-hosted with his wife, Broadway star Jessica Molaskey. Bringing warmth, humor and that long-lost “live” feel back to radio, the show takes place in their “deluxe living room high atop Lexington Avenue” and the conversations are relaxed, candid, and off-the-cuff as is the music. He has interviewed a wide range of guests from Liza Minnelli, Mitch

Albom and Regis Philbin to Kurt Elling, Annie Ross and Keely Smith. The show is available globally as a podcast at www.johnpizzarelli.com and via iTunes.

John has performed on the country's most popular national television shows such as "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "The Late Show with David Letterman," "Live With Regis & Kelly," "The Tony Danza Show," "The CBS Early Show," Fox News Channel, the Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

He led a 40-member live orchestra at Radio City Music Hall in *Sinatra: His Voice, His World, His Way*. His instructional DVD *Exploring Jazz Guitar* – filled with demonstrations, lessons and anecdotes – is available from Hal Leonard. Pizzarelli received the 2009 Ella Fitzgerald Award from the Montreal International Jazz Festival, joining a select group of past winners including Aretha Franklin, Tony Bennett and Harry Connick, Jr.

Pizzarelli performs annual engagements at the Café Carlyle with Jessica Molaskey and at Birdland with his jazz combo. He continues to tour throughout the United States, Europe, South America and Japan, performing classic pop, jazz and swing, while setting the standard for stylish modern jazz. Please visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.johnpizzarelli.com/"](http://www.johnpizzarelli.com/) \o "http://www.johnpizzarelli.com/" www.johnpizzarelli.com for tour schedule, discography, radio guests and much more.

Telarc Discography

Kisses in the Rain (2000) CD-83491
Let There Be Love (2000) CD-83518
The Rare Delight of You (with the George Shearing Quintet) (2002) CD-83546
Live at Birdland (2003) CD-83577
Bossa Nova (2004) CD-83591
Knowing You (2005) CD-83615
Dear Mr. Sinatra (2006) CD-83638
With a Song in My Heart: John Pizzarelli Sings the Music of Richard Rodgers (2008) CD-83676
Rockin' In Rhythm: A Duke Ellington Tribute (2010) TEL-31921-02