**JOHN PIZZARELLI**

**Biography**

**John Pizzarelli**, the world-renowned guitarist and singer, was hailed by the *Boston Globe* for “reinvigorating the Great American Songbook and re-popularizing jazz.” The *Toronto Star* pegged him as “the genial genius of the guitar.” And the *Seattle Times* saluted him as “a rare entertainer of the old school.”

Established as one of the prime contemporary interpreters of the Great American Songbook, Pizzarelli has expanded that repertoire by including the music of Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Tom Waits, Antônio Carlos Jobim and Lennon-McCartney. His themed shows, often performed with his wife Jessica Molaskey, suggest there is no limit to Pizzarelli’s imagination or talent.

“The ability to infuse pop and jazz with a Chekhovian wisdom about life’s ups and downs is the special gift of John Pizzarelli and Jessica Molaskey, long-married musical partners whose work gets deeper each year,” *The New York Times* raved about the show “Grownup Songs” at New York’s Café Carlyle.

The next step is introducing the solo work of Paul McCartney to his audience through his September 11, 2015 release on Concord Records, ***Midnight McCartney***, and on stages around the world. The challenge, Pizzarelli says, is lining up the lesser-known McCartney songs alongside the works of Gershwin, Berlin and Rodgers.

“It’s not out of the realm to say, ‘Here are some excellent songs. What you just enjoyed and maybe thought was Johnny Mercer, is really Paul McCartney.’ I think they can all stand next to each other.”

Pizzarelli started playing guitar at age six, following in the tradition of his father. He turned to jazz in his late teens after playing in rock bands, and he received an education playing with his father Bucky Pizzarelli and many jazz greats who would influence his work: Benny Goodman, Les Paul, Zoot Sims, Clark Terry and Slam Stewart, among others.

His solo recording career started in 1990 with *My Blue Heaven* on Chesky Records. He played clubs and concert halls on the jazz circuit, 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.

Pizzarelli’s hero and foundation over the last 25 years has been Nat “King” Cole, to whom he has devoted two albums, *Dear Mr. Cole* and *P.S. Mr. Cole. S*ince 2013, Pizzarelli and pianist Ramsey Lewis have toured a Cole tribute show.

“His sound was singular and inspired,” Pizzarelli says. “I’ve always said we’re an extension, a 21st-century version of what that group was.”

After recording albums for RCA devoted to torch ballads (*After Hours*), classic swing and bold originals (*Our Love Is Here to Stay*), holiday songs (*Let’s Share Christmas*) and the Fab Four (*John Pizzarelli Meets the Beatles)*, Pizzarelli signed with the GRAMMY® Award-winning label Telarc International, a division of Concord Music Group. His string of successful albums started in 2000 with *Kisses In the Rain*, a diverse set of standards and original tunes that showcase 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-dsic set seamlessly blends James Taylor folk with Gershwin and Van Heusen standards, in addition to original Pizzarelli compositions. After listening to the recording, 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 Titelman, the acclaimed disc features several Brazilian musicians including drummer Paulo Braga, pianist César 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, among them Jimmy McHugh, Sammy Cahn, Alan and Marilyn Bergman, Johnny Mandel and Brian Wilson. 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 set to “Ol’ Blue Eyes,” featuring the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. The collection features John Clayton’s clever reworking of standards such as “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” and “You Make Me Feel So Young,” as well as songs written for Sinatra, “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 composer Richard Rodgers and includes swinging Rodgers & Hart standards like “The Lady Is a Tramp,” “Mountain Greenery” and “Johnny One Note” and theater songs from *South Pacific* and *The King and I*.

The singer-guitarist’s first-ever Duke Ellington recording, *Rockin’ in Rhythm*, was released in February 2010. For the dozen tracks, Pizzarelli took the tack of Ellington, noticeably displaying the strengths of the musicians in the 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.

Pizzarelli married songs from great pop songwriters of his own generation with traditional jazz arrangements and melodies. *Double Exposure*, released in 2012, united the Beatles and Lee Morgan, Tom Waits with Billy Strayhorn and the Allman Brothers Band with the style of Wes Montgomery.

As he told the *Wall Street Journal*, “I asked myself a couple of questions: ‘How can we take the style we do and communicate it to people who grew up on Gershwin and people who grew up on the Beatles? How do we communicate jazz to the non-jazz listeners?’”

*The Guardian* in the U.K. was among the many publications to praise the album: “The arrangements are sharp and witty, the singing deceptively easygoing, and the guitar playing just terrific. It’s a delight.”

Pizzarelli’s latest album, ***Midnight McCartney****,* has its origins in McCartney’s GRAMMY®-winning 2012 album, *Kisses on the Bottom.* Pizzarelli played guitar on 10 of the album’s 14 tracks and backed Sir Paul at an iTunes concert at Capitol Records Studios, the GRAMMY® Awards and the Recording Academy’s annual MusiCares Person of the Year Gala.

Fifteen months after those gigs, McCartney wrote to Pizzarelli to consider recording some of his lesser-known songs in a jazz style.

“It’s a take on songs within a style we’re comfortable with,” Pizzarelli says. “There’s a lot of thought given to them and they’re fun to play and challenging. We’ve always been McCartney fans and I feel that the audience we play for now grew up with Paul McCartney as well. These songs are as familiar as ‘Polka Dots and Moonbeams.’”

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 the Dave Van Ronk, as well as leading jazz artists like Rosemary Clooney, Ruby Braff, Johnny Frigo, Buddy DeFranco, Harry Allen and, of course, Bucky Pizzarelli.

A radio personality who got his start in the medium in 1984, Pizzarelli is co-host, alongside Jessica Molaskey, of *Radio Deluxe with John Pizzarelli*. Heard on more than 40 radio stations, the syndicated radio show brings 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. The show is also available globally as a podcast at [www.johnpizzarelli.com](http://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*, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, “*Late Show with David Letterman*, *Conan*, *Live with Regis & Kelly*, *The Tony Danza Show* and the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

In 1997, Pizzarelli made his Broadway debut in the musical *Dream*, a revue of Johnny Mercer songs. He led a 40-member live orchestra at Radio City Music Hall in *Sinatra: His Voice, His World, His Way* in 2003. 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 [www.johnpizzarelli.com](http://www.johnpizzarelli.com/) for tour schedule, discography, radio guests and much more.

### Concord 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 Tribute to Duke Ellington (2010) TEL-31921

Double Exposure (2012) TEL-33221

Midnight McCartney (2015) CRE-37634