

Jon Brooks: 450 Word 1 Page Bio 2010

Upon his return from a 1997 visit to war ruined Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jon Brooks traded guitar for pen, claiming his faith in popular music as a source of healing had been challenged. In 2005 - after 8 years of neither writing music nor performing - Brooks conceded the opposing view to be equally true: that "only the art of song carries within itself the means toward greater social justice and community survival."

Though Jon's music is filled with grey and *morally* ambiguous characters living on the outskirts of approval, his mandate is unequivocal: "I'm not interested in 'happy songs' – I've chosen to write *healing songs* and, for that reason, I'm obliged to reveal a wound or two now and then. I'm even less interested in writing *unhappy* songs: I want to write *hopeful* songs, *inspiring* songs and I expect I owe today's listener some *hopeful* argument – some legitimate reason - as to why we *should* believe our present world *could* be improved, or healed. The highest aim of song is to invoke empathy - to offer that rare sight of ourselves *in others*. In this sense, the folk singer is simply trying to politicize love, hence, my contention that today's songwriter should be a lobbyist for compassion to be our principle representative in government office."

In 2006 he released *No Mean City*, a weighty and conceptual exposition of the modern urban soul's homelessness and moral fatigue. 2007 afforded Brooks only superlative acclaim with the release of *Ours And The Shepherds*, a CD of Canadian war stories inspired by James Loney, Senator Romeo Dallaire, Sgt. Tommy Prince, and John McRae among others. The collection earned Brooks a *Best Songwriter* nomination at the *2007 Canadian Folk Music Awards*. *Penguin Eggs* deemed it "a thoroughly wonderful and truly important addition to the canon of Canadian folk music." *Ours And The Shepherds* is now among the collections of *The Canadian War Museum* and *The John McRae Society*.

Jon is also a published essayist with Guernica Editions' *Barry Callaghan Essays On His Works* (2007) with contributions by Margaret Atwood, William Kennedy, Joyce Carol Oates, and others.

His 2009 CD, *Moth Nor Rust*, looked inward to all that neither *moth nor rust* can touch: love, hope, trust, memory, inspiration, justice, and faith. More than a celebration of the inner life, *Moth Nor Rust* reminds us how *the song* is a necessary and moral means toward lifting humanity in the 21st century.

Moth Nor Rust earned Jon his second Canadian Folk Music Award nomination for *Best Songwriter* and its lyrics were published by Canada's esteemed literary quarterly, *Exile Editions*.

Jon also made The Toronto Star's annual list of *Top 10 Artists To Watch In 2010*.