

hammond organ. But as he wrote parts for his new songs, he found himself sketching out alternative arrangements for each song, emphasizing acoustic instruments. "I was going for a 'rootsier' feeling," he said, "experimenting with traditional flavors; more organic."

So, in addition to his blues/rock arrangements, he crafted versions featuring gospel, Celtic and Americana overtones. He presented these demos to a select group of northeast Ohio's finest musicians (Tim Longfellow, Tommy Dobeck, Jon Mosey, Morgan Phelps, Bill Watson, Joe Lang, Cathy Miller-Grady and others) and asked them to enhance his parts based on their own creative responses and talents. Thus, a project initially conceived as a one disc collection of fourteen songs turned into a two disc collection of fourteen songs done in two distinct styles/flavors.

Ballard's personal favorites include the title track, *Seven Trains*, *The Center Holds* (a tribute to his wife Georgann) and his achingly beautiful remembrance of childhood days, *Bells of St. Marys*. Also, in keeping with his passion for running, the set includes *I'm Gonna Run*, an anthem Ballard wrote in response to the deadly bombing incident at 2013's Boston Marathon. (A video of the song, featuring more than a hundred volunteers and filmed in downtown Akron, can be viewed on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqGKFwFNxVo>).

The release of *Ask John Steinbeck* finds Ballard already at work on his next batch of songs for a future release indicating, like a marathon, Ballard is committed to his music career for the long run.

Ask John Steinbeck is available as a digital download or can be purchased in a traditional CD format at www.jimballardmusic.net. Ballard's previous albums are also available for purchase/download as well.

Jim Ballard will be appearing in concert at the GAR Hall on Sunday, October 29th to perform *Ask John Steinbeck* in its entirety. Jim will be joined by many of the musicians heard on the recording. Tickets can be purchased at <http://www.peninsulahistory.org/voices-in-the-valley/> and will go on sale in early October.