

# GOING GREEN

John Jenkins' Smalltown Revival



John Jenkins and Jackson Baker lay down a cool tune.

Photo: Jan Kotyk

by Margaret Tessman

John Jenkins and his musical partner in Smalltown Revival, Jackson Baker, describe themselves as weekend warriors. Three-quarters of the way through mixing their new CD, *Green*, John (kick drum, snare, high hat, guitar and vocals—it's easy to understand how he played as a one-man band for two years) and Jackson (bass and vocals) have been playing live shows and prepping for their CD release party in Golden in early May. "We've turned into a power trio of two," says John. "We can perform in a variety of venues and we can fit into a Toyota Matrix!"

John went into the studio last fall with a vision for a new collaboration. "I was trying to get away from my usual country heartbreak tunes with some fun, danceable music," he says. Still wanting to maintain a representation of their live sound on *Green*, John realized that the sky's the limit in the studio. He added some session players, including Dave Stonehouse on banjo, producer Jordan Stringer on percussion and cajón, and 14-year-old Slade Coffman on guitar and vocals. Slade also co-wrote one of the songs for the CD with John, who is his guitar teacher. "He can really sing," says John. "When he heard the mix on playback, I wished I could have videoed his reaction."

*Green* was produced by Nanaimo-based Jordan at Bill Noble's Strawbale Studio in Golden. A huge part of the CD project involved looking for opportunities to add benefits to youth and community, key directions for the Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance (CKCA) grant that helped to finance the recording. John describes the studio sessions as "a massive mentoring process. Bill learned a lot from Jordan, and their relationship will continue."

Smalltown Revival also received support from Bill Usher, executive director of Kicking Horse Culture in Golden, which will help sponsor the CD release. "We'll be in the Civic Centre with the big stage and big lights," says John. "The scope and scale are important." John feels that applying for CKCA funding has taught him a lot. "It was an amazing process," he says. "It legitimizes my career and Kicking Horse Culture legitimizes my show. It's given me a reason to keep working on my music."

John says that the title track on *Green* is "the most politically forward song I've ever written." Inspired by the Peace River Valley and the Site C dam, the song lyrics include quotes from individuals that John met while his wife Rachel was working on her master's project on the valley. "I feel passionate about the area," he says. "I have some big ideas about how the song might help."

*Before another spark flies off of another chain*

*You better get down on your knees and pray for rain*

*The neighbours will rally to put out the fire*

*Can the neighbours rally to tame their desire??*

*I see families working hard to sustain themselves*

*I see neighbours working hard to put food on the shelves*

*The Peace River Valley is not for sale*

*May greed fail and common sense prevail*

— From "Green" by John Jenkins' Smalltown Revival

*Green* will be launched at the Civic Centre in Golden on Friday, May 6 (presented by Kicking Horse Culture); at Pynelogs in Invermere on Saturday, May 7 (presented by Columbia Valley Arts); and at Expressions in Nelson on Saturday, May 28. Tickets are \$20 for all shows, and include a copy of the CD.