

# Mp3 Johnny O'neal - One Step At A Time

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Americana music. Finally there's a great way to describe the music Johnny O'Neal has been putting out for years. Acoustic electric country folk rock with a percussive twist. This album is the life of a Louisiana man and the things he knows best. 12 MP3 Songs in this album (37:17) ! Related styles: COUNTRY: Americana, BLUES: Folk-Blues People who are interested in Tom Petty John Hiatt John Mellencamp should consider this download. Details: Johnny O'Neal is playing somewhere right now. That much is all but certain. The longhaired, guitar-toting singer-songwriter appears Friday night -- and every Friday night -- at Portico on Tower Drive in Monroe, Wednesday afternoons at Moe's Southwest Grill on Tower Drive, Wednesday evenings at Sixth Street Bar, Thursdays at Louisiana Legends inside the Holiday Inn on U.S. 165, and in between at other joints like Enoch's, too. Familiarity hasn't come close, however, to breeding contempt. Fans, fellow pickers and saloon keepers alike call him one of the area's most important, and consistent, working musicians. "I think he's one of the best entertainers anywhere," says Enoch's owner Doyle Jeter. "He makes everybody happy when he plays." O'Neal continues to appear regularly as single act, having made his reputation alone on stage, but he's also dabbled in larger groups with instrumentalists like Billy Hicks, Britton Currie (who went on to play with Alan Jackson and Trace Atkins) and T-Bo Lairscey. "I think Johnny and Britton Currie, when they were playing as a duo at Ponchatoula's in Ruston and Cottonport in West Monroe, were the best act in Louisiana - and could have been huge if the rest of the world had caught on," says Monty Russell, himself a weekly performer at Ruston's Sundown Tavern. It was with T-Bo and Rickey Pittman that O'Neal reached a national audience, when his parody "The Jerry Springer Song" was aired at the end of that television program. Big news stories greeted him. O'Neal took the newfound fame in stride - remaining humble and reliably upbeat. "That's the beauty of being a musician," O'Neal jokes. "You can get on the front page without having gone to jail first." He laughs for a moment, then muses: "There's a song in there somewhere." That novelty song was just one of dozens of his own tunes that have received local airplay, including "Side by Side" and "The Snaggin' Song." "Personally, I think his original songs are his best material," Russell says. "He's got a song called 'Up and Running' that I think is a mega-hit, if the right person gets hold of it." O'Neal's

performances are marked by a pleasing mixture of old songs and new, original songs and choice covers. "It's a throwback of when people told stories with songs," says fellow musician Bruce Gay, a longtime member of the Lightnin' Bugs and Dorothy Prime's blues acts. "As we move more into sampling, electronics and hi-tech computer-generated sounds, I think it is important to have troubadours - storytellers - that we can actually sit and listen to." That Springer song - a huge hit with local university students a few years back - underscores O' Neal's ability to both entertain and inspire. "He's able to cross generation gaps because he knows how to pick out the right songs to sing," Russell says. "For instance, he's covered 'If I Had A Boat' for a while. Us older folks know that as a Lyle Lovett tune. The college kids think it's a Dave Matthews song. Johnny's smart with his set list like that." His voice cries with joy sometimes; his playing never goes ragged, though. "What makes him such a crossover act is hard to put your finger on," Gay says. "But for one thing, he's just good."

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