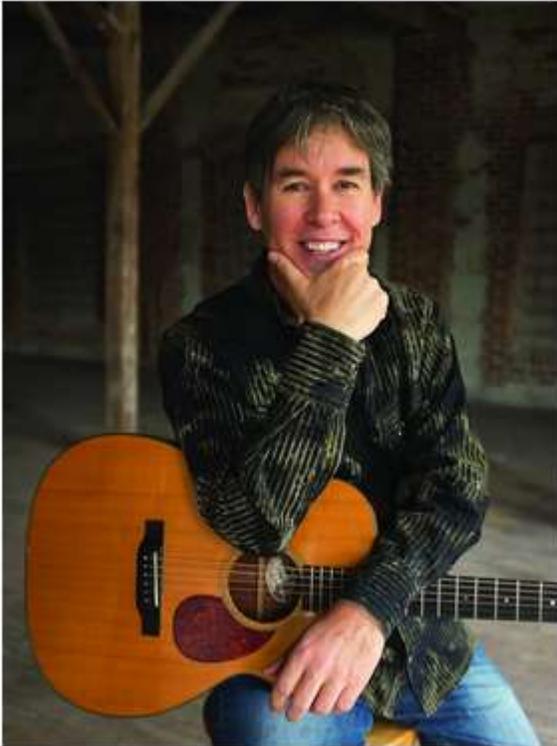


## Pete Huttlinger: Musical Survivor Releases His Own Project

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The road to success has been anything but easy for Pete Huttlinger of *Local 257* (Nashville, TN). Though his résumé sparkles with his work with names like John Denver, LeAnn Rimes, and John Oates of *Local 257*, it wasn't just getting to that point that was difficult, it was staying there.

After graduating from Berklee College of music in 1984, playing endless gigs and honing his chops for years, Huttlinger was dealt an almost deadly hand. In 2010, he suffered from a stroke that left him temporarily paralyzed on his right side and he had to relearn the guitar. Then, while still recovering, he was devastated again by end-stage heart failure, a result of a condition he's had since his youth. Still, he stands by his optimistic attitude.

"It's the only attitude I can have," he says. "I'm blessed to be alive, and to not make the most out of the opportunities I have, would just be wrong."

Today, Huttlinger, 52, is still celebrating the release of his 2013 album, *McGuire's Landing*, touring, and giving motivational talks to groups of all kinds throughout the country. He's gives inspiring speeches to everyone from high school students to thousands of military men and women.

"I tell people I'm a regular guy," he says. "And if I can get through it, they can too. It's amazing I've gotten through all this stuff, and not just health issues. I've had several suicides in my family and other things, but I just keep getting back up. I think it's important we share these life lessons with people because not everyone has contact with someone who's been through this stuff. We all go through things in our lives. Knowing that you can get through it, shines a glimmer of hope."

Though Huttlinger speaks about the hardships he's had to overcome, his life has also been one filled with hard-earned successes. He toured with John Denver from 1994 until the singer's death in 1997. He's been on numerous Grammy-winning and Grammy-nominated projects, and he won his first National Finger Style Guitar Championship in 2000, which caught the attention of *Local 47* member Steve Vai, who immediately signed Huttlinger to his label, NAME. Huttlinger was invited to perform at the 2004, 2007, and 2010 Eric Clapton Crossroads Festivals and has performed several times at Carnegie Hall.

His recipe for musical achievement is simple: "Practice," he says. "And keep practicing. Keep diversifying. I don't just play one style of music. I've played everything from weddings with a classical quartet to rock 'n' roll gigs. If you're gonna make it, now more than ever, I think you have to be a very versatile player and learn to read music. It's not that hard and all it can do is make you a better player. I see people fight that every day."

Huttlinger has also been a member of the AFM for nearly 30 years, something he values to this day. "I joined initially because I was told by a lot of local players to become a union member," he says. "It turned out to be a really good thing. They've come to my aid many times. If someone releases something they didn't get permission to, you call the union and say, 'Can you please go after this person?' That's a good thing. And we've got one of the best leaders, [Local 257 President] Dave Pomeroy."

Today, the guitarist's focus is on continuing to take advantage of all the opportunities before him. Huttlinger has released material spanning Celtic music to a Stevie Wonder tribute album, and his latest original work is one of dazzling acoustic beauty. Utilizing some of the best musicians in the business (Local 257 members violinist Andrea Zonn and Rob Ickes on dobro, and Local 47 member Herb Pedersen on banjo), it captures the spirit of a man who doesn't give up.

"I wrote the first tune [on *McGuire's Landing*] in 1997," he explains. "I didn't really plan on doing this for many years, and then somewhere around 2006 or 2007, I started thinking maybe I should, but I was busy working on other people's projects. Then, in 2010 I had a stroke, and had to relearn how to play guitar, and before I completely learned, I suffered heart failure, which put me in the hospital for five months. After that, I had a whole other batch to overcome before I could feel like a player again. My wife said, 'You have to finish this record. You survived a stroke and heart failure. What are the chances you'll survive the next thing?' So I knuckled down and did it."