

# Solar-powered Singer Joins Century "Revolution"

by Jane Fredericksen, Press Correspondent  
White Bear Press, 4/16/0

Singer-songwriter **Michael Monroe** considers himself an "earth enthusiast." The former Twin Cities resident lives in a solar-powered log cabin near Grand Marais. He records - and sometimes performs live - using alternative energy sources and he's collaborated with legendary National Geographic outdoors photographer Jim Brandenburg in the award-winning documentary, "Chased By the Light."

"I feel very tied to nature in my songs," Monroe said. "And I love the technology...that allows us to take better care of our planet. "Michael Monroe will play a special Earth Day concert at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, April 22 at Century College in White Bear Lake. The event is part of a day-long conference called "Revolution," which includes speakers, discussions, films and exhibits. The public is invited. Monroe is the event's keynote opener. At press time, he wasn't sure if the concert would feature "green" energy. "We haven't talked about that yet...it's possible," he said. "I have a solar-powered trailer...right now, it's covered in snow."

The singer conserves resources in other ways, too. In concert, he uses computers to "recycle" vocals and musical loops, building a complex layer of acoustic sound. His guitars are made of reclaimed birch from the bottom of Lake Superior and rare birds-eye poplar, dotted with "natural" insect spots Monroe said the instruments were hand-crafted by Gunflint Trail luthier David Seaton. "They're dazzling in the way they look and the way they play."

The tone of the guitars, the beauty of the north woods and the rhythm of cross-country skiing all helped inspire the singer's eighth recording, released last December. "I think CD release is kind of a funny thing," said Monroe. "It's like: Be free...fly!" ***Wintersong*** includes 10 original and seasonal favorites ***in a rich mix as soothing as a soft snowfall and as warming as a down blanket.*** The new recording comes 27 years after his first album, "Summer Rain," which received strong regional airplay. Amazingly, that record was recently rediscovered in Japan, prompting a re-release there in 2006. Monroe credited at least part of that resurgence to the Internet revolution: "Oh, it's huge...it's changed the artist's ability to reach the people. "He praised longtime partner/business manager Deb Mueller for her Internet savvy, and confessed he's been online "perhaps twice in the last year. "But, he added, "I know computers enough to do my recording. "Monroe said he hoped to travel to Japan some day. Past journeys have taken him to India and the Virgin Islands. After his visit to Century College, he'll travel to Pittsburgh for another environmental performance. He'll return to White Bear Lake on July 23, for a free outdoor show at Tally's. For more information about the Century College event, call 651-748-2638.

