

# The Boston Globe

## Wisecracker not your typical folkie

By Denise Taylor  
GLOBE STAFF

Wisecracking folkie Howie Newman doesn't have a note to spare for tunes about achy-breaky hearts or being down and out not when there are more important topics to warble about like getting up in the morning, cellphones, and intergalactic garbage.

"I do the reverse of what everybody else does. Most musicians play mostly serious songs with a smattering of funny ones. I play mostly humorous material with a smattering of serious songs," says the singer/songwriter from Melrose, who plays tomorrow night for free at the Lyrics and Latte coffeehouse in Marlborough.

Or, as Newman likes to call it, he'll be out on the 2003-2004 Shameless Self-Promotion Tour. It's the triumphant follow-up to his 2001-2002 comeback tour of the local folk circuit, which he dubbed the No Heavy Lifting Tour.

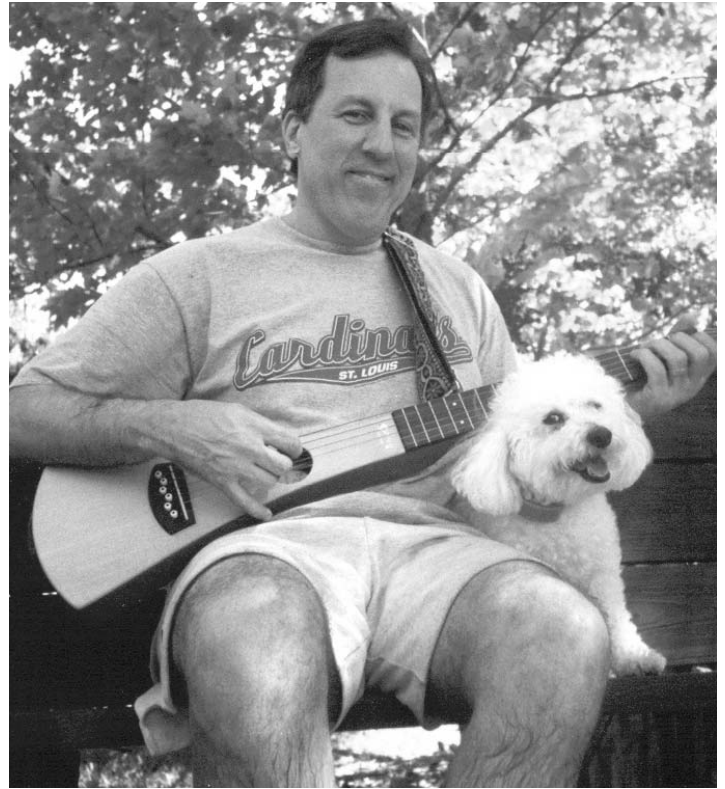
"Howie is just a lot of fun," said Lyrics and Latte founder Steve Howard, who lives in Marlborough. "He's really funny, and he works great with the audience. It's a little off the wall, because he is off the wall."

Newman only recently stepped back up to the microphone. He spent '73 to '83 "living out the dream" as a full-time performer, he said, backing up national acts like Tom Paxton and Pure Prairie League and performing for a while with the original Comedy Connection at the Charles Playhouse.

But after an editor heard his repertoire of comical baseball songs, he was lured into a sports column that morphed into an 18-year sportswriting career and then into a new life as a public relations representative. Now he spends his days handling the media for the Consortium for Energy Efficiency in Boston, but a stint promoting other folk musicians enticed him back onstage.

"I'm doing a lot more comedy in the show than I ever did before," says Newman. "My children provide an endless supply of material. My wife does, too. I make fun of everybody. I don't play favorites."

Between witty ballads like "Big in Belgium" and "Drivin' in Boston Is Drivin' Me to Drink," Newman also takes audience polls, trolls for impromptu back-up singers, and riffs on whatever



**Howie Newman appears at Lyrics and Latte, 23 Bolton St. in Marlboro, this Friday at 7 p.m.**

er comes to mind.

"I try to get the audience involved," which, he says, is easy to do at Lyrics and Latte. True, the series is at Starbucks, but Newman is not alone when he says it's a great place to see a show.

"The people sit there and listen. That's why the performers like it so much," says Howard. "It's a good crowd. It's a full house. And they have great decaf."

Every Friday from 7 to 9 p.m. Lyrics and Latte features a different performer at Starbucks, 23 Bolton St., Marlborough. All shows are free.