

The truth in Whiskey and Pride

Cory Morrow's New Release Packs Truth in Twelve Tracks

By S.D. Henderson

EVERY ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE, YOU find one song that speaks directly to your soul. One that resonates on a frequency to which you've never tuned. Rarer still is the experience of finding a collection of those songs in one package. Days like that, you mark down on a calendar. September 14th can be that kind of day if you know what to look for. That's the day you'll find Cory Morrow's latest release *Whiskey and Pride*, a defining work for a songwriter who's already made an imprint on Texas music.

At the first glimpse of the album artwork and a cursory review of the twelve song titles on *Whiskey and Pride*, I'd already made some guesses about the contents before I ever hit play. Fortunately, as one who is often wrong about first impressions, I hit the play button again and again and again before I passed judgment on what I was hearing. There is depth, surprise, value and meaning that belie the title that *Whiskey and Pride* might otherwise convey.

Cory Morrow, and the multiple songwriting partners he creates with, has something to say and have something worth saying, which is a very rare combination. Morrow's own impression of his work is significantly understated, he relates, "my albums just reflect what's going on in my life, it's an autobiography, so each album is sort of a chapter in my life; where I'm struggling, where I'm succeeding, where I'm finding joy and difficulty and putting all into music."

Ninth studio album

MORROW'S NINTH STUDIO album marks a good chapter, and one worth reading. These pages are much more defined by things with permanent value over the fleeting pursuits of youth, but it's still a different kind of crazy life. Morrow adds, "My life

has gone kind of crazy from the days when I was single, chasing women and chasing money to now chasing God and my children and my wife. I've been married for ten years now and our kids are 7,6,3,3 and 1... so life is pretty insane."

Most of the words in *Whiskey and Pride* are Morrow's own, or a reflection of his experience shared with co-writers and collaborators like Matt Parish and Justin Lofton from Market Junction, and other gifted writers like Kyle Hutton and Drew Womack. Co-writing affords Morrow an opportunity for creativity and growth and an environment to forge and whittle pieces of an idea into finished form.

Morrow explains, "I find a lot of comfort in co-writing, there's more ideas on the table, and as long the person you're writing with is very open and without ego then you can both throw out ideas on the table and there's also constructive criticism. And you're both working towards the same goal of the song becoming what it's supposed to become, I find that's really productive and joyful."

Working again with quintessential producer Lloyd Maines, Morrow deftly translates the chapters into the tracks on *Whiskey and Pride*.

Speaking of Maines' multifold

gifts, Morrow said, "He gets the best out of everybody in the room. He speaks the language. He knows how to translate from my brain to their instruments. Working with Lloyd is like working in a well-oiled machine." Make no mistake, that kind of machine isn't turning out pulp country widgets; it's a one-off, old-world mechanism that crafts amazing music.

The Zone

RECORDED AT THE ZONE Recording Studio in Dripping Springs, Texas, all the pieces came together. Each part of that machine, adds something irreplaceable to the end product. On this album, Morrow's longtime guitarist John Carroll played in the studio, lending his years of

throughout *Whiskey and Pride*, in pieces like "Top of My Heart" and "Your Smile." It's clear that the cocaine-fueled years of Morrow's early life on the road are behind him. Lots of people sober up, but Morrow's songwriting now carries a thread of a new life woven into every song. Very few songwriters possess the ability to convey spiritual truth without preaching or pandering. In many of the songs, you get this clear portrait of grace without a reflection of judgement.

Like Walt Wilkins' "Poetry," Morrow's songs reflect belief without dogma. There is something different about Cory Morrow today that I think will make people curious about the difference. And like Wilkins, the thing

most are the surprises packed into the music. I assumed that the title track "Whiskey and Pride" would be an industry standard homage to all that is alcohol and Merica, but Morrow never takes the obvious path on *Whiskey and Pride*. The title track simply illustrates the point that whiskey is much easier to swallow than our pride.

Similarly, "Let's Take This Outside" evokes a likely image of a parking lot bar fight, but takes a much deeper right turn. Inspired by the work of Corpus Christi area ministry Majesty Outdoors, the song packs wisdom instead of a sucker punch. Morrow donates his time and talent to a youth outreach that takes kids without dads and gets them outdoors; hunting, fishing

her arrival and the pain of the loss of his wife's mom is stunning.

From the arrangement of the instrumentation, through the poignancy and depth of his words, it's simply one of those songs that stops you and speaks to you. In an album replete with songs with the same capacity, this is the one that stopped me and made me think. Morrow's baby girl is just over a year old, mine are nineteen and sixteen, but the power behind those words and experiences is universal.

Morrow writes about a life and love that is true and deep, not the kind you find in a greeting card at the grocery store. He writes from a source that is uniquely his own, but connected



He and his band will perform live with Pat Green at the Texas Live complex on September 27: Cory Morrow

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shared experience and brilliant musicianship. The lineup now includes Buddy Magazine Texas Tornado honoree Glenn Fukunaga, Austin's premier bassist to set the tone and tempo on the low notes.

It's an oversimplification to say that *Whiskey and Pride* is densely packed with great songs. It's a little trite to say that this album shines a bit of light in a dark world or sheds a glimpse into one man's spiritual journey from darkness to light. So, don't let the messenger obscure the message, the only way to verify the claim is to listen.

One of Morrow's evolving gifts as a songwriter is evidenced

that separates good songwriters and great ones is not only how they say it, it's what they have to say.

Before you get the idea, that this is a last stop before the pasture kind of album, or that it lacks enough edge to speak to the young or youthfully ignorant, it should be noted that there is something on *Whiskey and Pride* for almost every listener. Morrow's cover of Jerry Jeff Walker's show stopping, barn burning classic "Hill Country Rain" closes the album out in a manner that reminds you that music can be meaningful, but still a whole heck of a lot of fun.

I think the thing I appreciate

and mentoring to kids in a walk that backs up the talk. "Let's Take This Outside" will make you put down the remote, pick up your kid and head down to the river and wet a line for a while.

I would have loved to have had about four hundred more words, but I think you're probably getting the point. Cory Morrow had a lot more to say when we talked on the phone, but I'll let *Whiskey and Pride* speak for him and let the liner notes flesh out the details, but there's just one more song you need to be warned about. Morrow's "Daisy Diane" written for his new baby girl, through the lens of the joy

to something much bigger than any of us. To accomplish that multiple times within the confines of twelve tracks is worth much more than the price on the label.

So, on the chance that you're looking for music worth listening to, Cory Morrow's ninth album *Whiskey and Pride* will be available on September 14 at your finer purveyors of music both digital and analog.

The Cory Morrow Band will be playing live with his buddy Pat Green at the Texas Live complex on September 27 in Arlington, just down the block from Jerry Jones Monument to Self.