John Evans’ style embodies decades of bending musical genres

John Evans has released a comeback CD, the first in six years, titled Polyester.

Grammy-winning engineer Steve Christenson, who engineered and mixed the album, said, “Polyester embodies the iconic style and genre-bending Evans is notorious for. It defines what great American music is all about. It’s homegrown, written on the highways, it’s got roots.”

Recorded in Evans’ living room in Austin and mixed at Sugarhill Studios in Houston, the entire album was written and produced by John Evans. Players include: Evans on vocals and guitar; Emily Bell on background vocals; Scott Davis on guitar, bass and banjo; Falcon Valdez on drums and percussion; Ricky Ray Jackson on steel guitar; Sweeney Tulblad on piano; Will Sexton and Josh Owen on guitar. I sat down to chat with John and found him to be openly honest.

Why so long?
WHEN ASKED WHAT TOOK so long to release another album, John grew pensive and replied, “I actually recorded it in 2012. Then, I got busy with other projects and didn’t release it immediately. I did a production project for Emily Bell and one for Corb Lund out of Canada and I didn’t want to just throw it out there into space without having any real promotion behind it—a little fire power. So, I held off and then my daughter, Abigail, died at the end of 2013 and it just took a while before I felt like I could put this record out and actually do interviews without being anxious about answering questions.”

Abigail Evans
ABIGAIL EVANS WAS ONLY twenty years old when she died and the grief John experienced goes beyond description. “That was a tough one,” he comments. It has been said about John’s music style that if Johnny Cash, Buddy Holly and Elvis Costello were to have a love child, John Evans just might be it.

After listening to Polyester, I would say more like a combination of ’50s rockers, Eddie Cochran and Jimi Hendrix. One song immediately stood out to me and I had to ask John if it was from the new CD. “Until You” is track number eight on the album and carries a beautiful flowing melody. It reminded me of an Elvis Presley style song. John explained, “My bass player, Jacob Marchese (who now plays bass for Two Tons of Steel), Abigail and I were living in a house in Austin. Lots of times during the day, Jake would sit in the back room and learn new guitar licks...something different from playing the bass all the time. He came up with the first stanza of that song and I heard him playing it, so I asked about it. He said it was just something he was messing with. I told him I was going to steal it from him and write a whole melody to go along with it and he said, ‘Cool, take it’. I wrote the melody line and then wrote the lyrics for Emily Bell, my girlfriend, and it evolved from there.”

Another song on the CD that stood out as extremely different is “Dust Bowl.” I listened to it several times and couldn’t put a definition on the sound. When I expressed that thought to John, he explained, “That’s kinda what I was going for. I wanted the whole record to be slices of just about every genre that I like. I don’t want to say it’s genre-less because it’s got all sorts of genres in there but all just melded together. I like that about the album.”

Regardless of genre
“Polyester, you think of polyester blends and that takes you to the ‘70s and the outrageous outfits.”

He will be at Rockin’ Rodeo in Denton July 29 and at Adair’s Saloon July 30.

“The reason I named it Polyester is because it’s more about the blending of genres. I used to work in a polyurethane foam fabrication warehouse where we cut and skived different types of polyester foams... But the thing is that they were all based in ester and so when you think of polyester, you think of polyester blends and that takes you to the ‘70s and the outrageous outfits.”

—John Evans

Genre bending
Texas roots rocker

John Evans’ style embodies decades of bending musical genres

By Jan Sikes

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The song “Pretty” on this album is deceptive. It is about a pretty girl who kept her price tag high, sold her body, but held onto her soul at all costs. A haunting melody floats through “Sweet Dreams” as John’s voice lends a pensive tone. The tune is reminiscent of The Doors’ early style.

Lowdown blues is what you’ll find on “Trouble Is,” but with John Evans’ approach and the always present rockabilly undertone. “Trouble is...trouble is an in-law making you an outlaw.”

As you listen to “Love Notes,” you instantly be transported back to the ’50s when Buddy Holly ruled the airwaves. Perhaps this is the autobiographical song on the compilation. Any thing else production-wise, except maybe “Dust Bowl.” It will bring it!

“Open your heart and your eyes. Say more hellos than goodbyes. Life ain’t so bad, it’s the life you’ve ever had.”

John enlightened me. “The reason I named it Polyester is because it’s more about the blending of genres. I used to work very hard to get to where you want to be and it’s not a bad thing. It’s a good thing because it builds character.”

What’s in a name
WHY DID JOHN NAME THE album Polyester? Is it perhaps somewhat of an autobiography? Is it the one song on the album that is total different from anything else production-wise, except maybe “Dust Bowl.”

John enlightened me. “The reason I named it Polyester is because it’s more about the blending of genres. I used to work very hard to get to where you want to be and it’s not a bad thing. It’s a good thing because it builds character.”

John’s philosophy in life goes back to an Ernest Hemmingway quote, “Man can be destroyed but not defeated.” John slams rates on that. “You can work yourself, fight yourself down to the very nub and you can feel like everything could be over tomorrow, but that doesn’t mean you’ve been defeated. Fighting hard for what you believe in, you’re working hard for never really results in defeat from a mental or emotional standpoint.”

Please visit John’s website at johnvanderhul.com for a complete tour schedule. He will be at Rockin’ Rodeo in Denton on July 29 and at Adair’s Saloon in Dallas on July 30.

If you are anywhere in the Dallas area, you won’t want to miss the chance to watch John Evans in action.

You can find John’s new album, Polyester, on iTunes, Amazon, all of the digital markets, at Cactus Records in Houston, Waterloo Records in Austin and soon-to-be in all of the Buccees.

The tunes are well worth a listen, some of the songs are beautifully written and woven into a tapestry that is as good as any of the tracks out there today.”