

Sept 16 Thursday **Roger Creager**

For more than a decade, Roger Creager built a reputation on his distinctive brand of hard-core, rabble-rousing Texas Country music, on his rich, full-bodied voice that can carry a tune for miles, and on his exceptional ability to work thousands of Texans into a rabid frenzy with his voice and guitar, in the great concert tradition of Jerry Jeff Walker and Robert Earl Keen. Along the way, he's been writing some mighty fine instant classics about family heirlooms, fields of bluebonnets, and late night trips to Mexico. Four albums, hundreds of thousands of road miles, and an everexpanding fan base later, Here It Is has Roger Creager laying his cards on the table with thirteen songs that are arguably his best batch yet.

"It's been five years since I've put out anything new," Roger says. "So it's five years of evolving and maybe even maturing, although it's still me." Actually, it's more of him than ever. For the first time, he's written or co-written every song on the album.

The first single, "I'm From the Beer Joint" plays to Creager's honky-tonk wildcat image informed by his live album, as he declares his preference for independent drinking establishments. "It's not going to change any lives, but it sure is fun," Creager laughs about the sing-along, before turning serious. "But who wants to listen to a whole album of that?" He's aiming for something higher. "I hope there's a song here that penetrates your soul, too," he says, leaning forward. "There's a few that may do just that. I aimed with a shotgun. I really did try to mix it up. There's love songs [Missing You], drinking songs [the aforementioned "Beer Joint"], up-tempo dancing songs [I Love Being Lonesome], groovy little tunes [Tangle Me in You], one about a man who's screwed up and he's driving like hell through the middle of the night to get home [Driving Home]. 'I Loved You When' is my best story song yet. It doesn't even tell the whole story. It doesn't have to. It gives you just enough to know there's a history there. It's all you need to know."

The two catalysts behind the album were Lloyd Maines, the go-to producer who produced Creager's first albums, and Radney Foster, the Texas kid from Del Rio, whose songs and productions have established him as one of country music's most innovative and edgy operators. Radney teamed up with Justin Tocket, a talented producer himself, to co-produce this project. But Roger himself is the biggest catalyst of all.

The Corpus Christi native was raised on songs like Guy Clark's "Desperadoes Waiting For A Train" and Gary P. Nunn's "You Ask Me What I Like About Texas" and under the influence of Jerry Jeff Walker, Lyle Lovett, Robert Earl Keen, and Jimmy Buffett, along with Willie, Waylon, Cash, Merle, and even Sinatra.

He graduated from college and spent two years in Houston working a 8-5 gig. He finally listened to his heart and moved back to College Station to pursue a life in music. Working without a paycheck was liberating. "I'd always been a slacker," Roger admits, "and I could easily see myself failing in music because I wasn't trying hard enough. So I promised myself that would be one excuse I'd never use. I just got out there and busted my hump."

In 1998, he released *Having Fun*, then blew open the doors two years later with *I Got the Guns*. The title track, a striking piece about his granddad and his family, became a staple on more than 200 radio stations programming Texas Country Music. *Long Way To Mexico* and *Live Across Texas* grew his audience beyond state lines.

Here It Is speaks to those broadening horizons. "I was in 14 countries last year," Roger says. "I want to take our music to a wider audience without compromising the integrity of the music. I'm taking some of who I am to where I'm going."

"I've always tried to make records where every song is different so I can listen to them over and over again instead of forty five minutes of essentially the same song," he says. With *Here It Is*, he can do just that. This go-round, he's staying on for the whole ride.