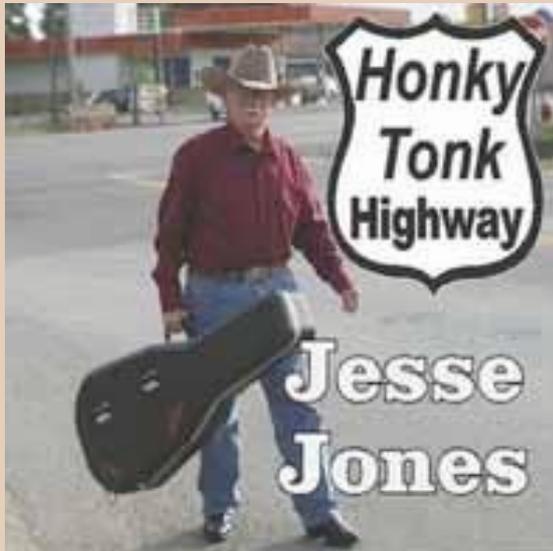


Honky Tonker of the Month

JESSE JONES Honky Tonk Highway

★★★★★



Jack And A Beer On The Side / Some Bridges Just Won't Burn / Too Close To Gone / Honky Tonk, Two-Steppin', Beer Drinkin' Saturday Night / Empty Boxes / I Can't Get Past Yesterday / Honky Tonk Highway / All The Things A Man Should Do / And I Thought Canada Was Cold / Sexy Texas Talk

Producer: Bryan Carter

Tej Entertainment

33:45

Fancy some hardcore country and honky tonk with no frills? Well, that's exactly what you get from Jesse Jones, the prolific Alabama-based singer on his third album in as many years.

Jesse Jones was what you might call a late starter, but he brings life experience and a warmth to his tales of 'the vice and misfortune of the common man.' Jones writes himself as well as bringing in some outside songs. He has included *I Can't Get Past Yesterday* as a tribute to songwriter Louis Brown (writer of the Keith Whitley song *Tennessee Courage*) who passed away in November 2015 just after Jesse Jones recorded his song, and there is input from Gary Lumpkin.

Three songs are credited to long-time former CMP writer Jon Philibert including my favourite track on the disc, *And I Thought Canada Was Cold*. It's as stone country as they come and was apparently written in the 1980s and first cut by Brit act Memphis Roots on Ritz. I had not previously heard it but am sure glad it was included here.

Jon's other songs are *Honky Tonk, Two-Steppin', Beer Drinkin' Saturday Night*, which has been recorded by several indie artists over the years and really ought to have been a hit in the early 90s, and new song *Some Bridges Just Won't Burn* which further proves that if you 'get it' you can be from anywhere and write a decent country song. Jon gets it, and it is a very decent country song indeed.

Another great song is *Empty Boxes*, which from the very first line, "*I'm staring at these boxes / the movers left behind...*" I knew was heading towards a tale of regret and heartbreak. Exactly what I want most from a country song. *Too Close To Gone* is similarly stunning... and sad.

Somehow I knew I was going to like the opening *Jack And A Beer On The Side* just from the title and I wasn't disappointed. The swinging *Sexy Texas Talk* had me singing along on the first play, and the honky tonkin' title track are also terrific.

Jesse Jones wisely never stretches himself, but has assembled a strong selection of songs presented in a very traditional style. Sometimes, like here, that is enough. On the other hand, you could view it as the kind of album you'd like to see George Strait record. Jones is hugely likable and his heart is most definitely in the right place. Not only that, but I suspect if we were to sit down for a few beers with a Jack on the side we'd be on the same page musically.

Duncan Warwick