

BUDDY

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THE
ORIGINAL
TEXAS
MUSIC
MAGAZINE



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STONEY LARUE



**SHANE SMITH
AND THE SAINTS**

JESSE DAYTON

FREE

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Mixed up and dead on.

Jesse Dayton's latest release 'Mixtape Volume 1' draws from influential waters both deep and wide.

By Jackie Don Loe

THE WHOLE POINT OF OUTLAW COUNTRY IS doing what you want, the way you want to do it. That's what separates the wheat from the chaff, and Jesse Dayton's music has always echoed the original spirit of outlaw country. The self-proclaimed "hillbilly punk" puts his prowess on full display in his latest release, "Mixtape Volume 1" where his command of outlaw country blended with Cajun Rockabilly and deep East Texas Blues; straddles the line between Americana and raw punk.

Mixtape Volume 1 is a collection of cover songs that only Jesse Dayton could put together and pull off. When you have performed for President Bill Clinton with Lucinda Williams and recorded guitar on records and film with such legends as Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Glen Campbell, Ray Price, Johnny Bush and Rob Zombie, you can release anything you want. "Mixtape Volume 1" is a masterfully executed collection of pop radio faves, deep cuts, a lost punk song and rock and roll anthems.

So why do a cover album when your own stuff is amazing? Dayton explains, "I'd been thinking about recording a full album of cover songs, after we did a George Jones style country version of the Cars song 'Just What I Needed' that was a big hit with our audiences every night. We had so much fun doing this and that's why I named it Volume One. I actually had songs by Bob Dylan, Randy Newman, Warren Zevon and a Grateful Dead song that did not make the cut. I am sure at some point there will be a Volume Two."

A great song can't be owned by a genre. Great songs are owned by generations, and the really great ones are passed down to the next generation. The tape kicks off rocking with Jackson Browne's "Redneck Friend," drenched with classic country guitar that merges the California vibe with Texas swagger when he screeches the line, "Well, Honey, You shake, and I'll rattle and we'll roll on down the line." And yes, I did mean tape. Mixtape Volume 1 is available, like the self-produced mixtapes of our misspent youth on actual cassette tape.

The next two songs slow down the pace but keep your foot tapping. Neil Young's "Harvest" and Gordon Lightfoot's "If You Could Read My Mind" both convey melancholy and sadness with crying lap steel guitars that swirl around your heart. However, the surf's up with a faster

tempo version of the Clash's "Bankrobber." The original had a slower reggae vibe and Jesse revs it up with fists in the air, hand claps and pounding drums.

ZZ Top's "She's a Heartbreaker" has the spice of Cajun fiddles in a hot tribute to Billy Gibbons, a huge influence on Jesse. An additional factor that helped in selecting this song for the record is the mention of his hometown Beaumont. Elton John is another big influence on Dayton and he absolutely nails "Country Comfort" and makes it his own. He has been performing it for a while and his version gives you that old fashioned feeling of easy living. You can smell the sweet countryside when he sings "Country comfort in a truck that's going back home."

Then it's a pure punk party with Dr. Feelgood's mid-'70s British pub rock gem "She does it right." Jesse keeps it close to the

original and drives it straight ahead with a repeating rough guitar riff and pummeling drums. On AC/DC's "Whole Lotta Rosie" Dayton begins the song like a back-porch blues then pumps up the boogie to give this rocker a whole new feel. I suspect every blues band in Texas will start covering this song like Jesse's arrangement. Both are great songs for an encore or to get the place jumping.

Highlight

A highlight on the record is "Just What I Needed." When Jesse announces in concert, "Here is George Jones singing the Cars." The crowd wonders what is going on until they hear it - and it is jukebox gold. Fresh arrangements and outstanding guitar work with vocals evoking the ghost of George Jones, twang heavily on each song. Although there aren't any George Jones songs on the tape; Jesse, who is obviously a huge fan of "the Possum" could have channeled Jones throughout the collection, especially on this Car's classic.

Mixtape Volume 1 is rounded off with Bruce Springsteen's "State Trooper," and it has that jangly surf/spy guitar sound, and when he screams, "Mr. State Trooper, please don't stop me," it ends like a wild murder scenario from a Tarantino movie. Every single cut on the tape takes

a classic song, regardless of the source and Dayton crafts it into his own unique expression of outlaw country. The mixtape concept was spawned from his live shows, and Dayton will have plenty of time now to work in enough new material for Volume 2.

In the middle of a whirlwind tour of the East coast and Canada and playing a different state each night, on the road until the end of the year, Jesse is a hard-working musician and crowd pleaser. Headlining tours without the support of major labels, Jesse tours nonstop. Playing night after night takes a toll, and Dayton has learned some hard earned lessons for staying sharp on the road. Dayton shared, "I eat really clean on tour and try to drink a gallon of water a day and exercise. You can't eat trashy food and get hammered every night when you're playing 44 cities in 9 weeks. Besides it's a business and none of us are Keith Richards."

I had the chance to ask Jesse a few questions about his new release and current tour and he quickly obliged, it was just what I needed to finish the story. As a player, I wanted to know about the tools of trade, and he shared some of the tools he used to craft Mixtape Volume 1. Dayton said, "I used my King that's a custom-made guitar by the Blast Cult Instrument Co. in California that

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I used in the Rob Zombie movie Halloween. I also used a '72 Telecaster for the chicken-pickin' country stuff and a custom Martin D45 Dreadnought for all of the acoustic tracks. I used a 1966 Blackface Fender Super Reverb and a brand-new Fender Blues Jr. I don't use guitar pedals much but for a Waylon phase or I use a MXR phase 90 and an echoplex for some slapback."

Dayton also shared some wisdom for other new musicians hoping to make it in the industry. He added, "There is no

secret to getting better or making it. Your future success as a musician depends entirely on how bad you want it and what you are willing to do to achieve it. Most musicians say they want it, but do they really? Are they willing to be broke, slug it out on the road, sleep on people's couches or put up everything they have to finance a tour or a record?"

"Ninety percent of the musicians I've met, no matter how much talent they have, are not willing to do that." While climbing the ladder of success, Jesse found that fame was not that big of a deal. Getting attention and making things happen has never been a problem. Making enough money to produce the next bigger product was always a means to an end. These days Jesse Dayton doesn't worry about the ladders of fame and fortune, his success is defined by being his own boss and creating the music he wants for his own self-preservation.

Every little detail of Mixtape Volume 1 is retro raw and refined and cool. The packaging is spot on and reminds you of when making a mix tape was a work of art. The selections Jesse picked go great together and should turn on a new generation who have never heard the original songs to go back and discover those bands.

With no end in sight, he is receiving rave reviews for Mixtape Volume 1 and has sold-out shows with new and old fans. He has over 50 songs licensed in audio and film productions and is always on tour or in the studio.

Inducted as a Buddy Texas Tornado in 2018, Jesse has been a musician's musician with a longtime cult-like following. His hillbilly punk attitude, Texas charm and consistent work habit, have enabled him to carve out his own niche as a Texas legend, and legend has it, if you're sitting in the crowd at a Jesse Dayton live show you listen close enough, you might even hear the ghost of George Jones.

Jesse Dayton is scheduled to perform at Dan's Silverleaf in Denton on November 21 and Love and War in Texas on November 24.



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