



Photo supplied by artist

The first song on **Johnson's Creek's** self-titled debut EP is 'Light Up The Honky Tonk', and when the boys drop an early reference to Hank Jr.'s 'A Country Boy Can Survive', you get the picture of what they're all about.

The group proudly declares itself to be the purveyors of 'redneck rock', and they wrote all of the tunes and play all of the instruments on the EP, with the exception of some keyboard work courtesy of their producer. The band, which hails from south-central Ontario, consists of Glenn Code on vocals, Michael Lanteigne on lead guitar, Mike Crombez on bass, and Rick Carreiro on drums. As luck would have it, Open Spaces was able to corral three of the rednecks (sans Rick) on a conference call.

"With Light Up the Honky Tonk" we wanted to be able to tip our hats a little bit to the music that we all grew up with and still listen to today." Glenn begins. "Guys like Johnny Cash and George Jones really broke ground as far as what country music means to a lot of folks. We just wanted to give them a nod and maybe turn some new folks onto that vibe as well."

If you're looking for a current reference point for this band, however, you need to look no further than the Road Hammers, another group steeped in traditional country and classic road songs.

The song "I Like It Dirty", which did well for Johnson's Creek as their first single, picks up where the Road Hammers' 'Mud' left off.



ENTERTAINMENT

"I love all of the guys in the Road Hammers but it's not like we're trying to emulate their sound because they've got their own thing," Mike says. "We both kind of cross the borderline between the rock and roll and country thing, and that's where the redneck reference comes from."

"I think all of the guys in our band have that similar dual influence," adds Glenn. "I grew up listening to Conway, Merle and all of the old classics. My brother was geared to rock and through him I was listening to Ted Nugent and Peter Frampton, so it was really an eclectic mix."

While the EP does serve as a breath of fresh air, one wonders how it will fare in the current country market which seems to be geared to a pop, rock and rap audience. Urban Cowboy certainly doesn't have the same meaning today as it did in 1980.

"We're hoping that with all of the contemporary stuff going on right now, country radio may be prepared for something that's a little bit different," Michael says. "We hope that by being a bit more traditional than what's out there right now will get us noticed."

"We also bring a lot of different influences to the table and maybe that will make us stand out," Glenn chimes in. "There's such a jambalaya of references in our little recipe that makes up the band and the music that we make. It's pretty exciting to see what it is we're creating and watching it come to life."

The EP is fairly upbeat throughout, with one exception being 'The Water', a riveting tale about a young girl swept away by creek waters (Johnson's Creek, fittingly) and a boy drawn to the same location one hundred years later. Even though the subject matter is rather dark, the song does sport a rather upbeat chorus.

"It's funny but it was originally supposed to be a party song like 'Come on down to the water and have some drinks'," Glenn says. "As the song progressed it turned into this kind of story that mapped itself out. It turned into more of a folk tale about this little girl who drowns. I know with writing and creating music you almost never know the twists and turns that the journey is going to take you on. This was a neat creation in the studio that came together really well for us."

The song "Little Things" is a real high stepper that sounds like it may have directly come from the Marty Stuart/Travis Tritt canon. 'Don't sweat the small stuff', they offer as a piece of opening line advice, advice the group has taken to heart in terms of shaping their career over the last four years.

"Yeah, we try to focus on the real challenges like finding a label, finding a record contract, getting distribution deals, meeting the right people and getting things to radio," Michael says. "I think those are the challenges any independent artist in Canada faces. When they are no longer indie



artists, they get picked up, taken by the hand and walked through the process. We don't have that enlightenment. We're kind of driving in the dark and heading to one place which is getting on stage, becoming a touring band and getting our music out there. We hope that we can move forward from there."

The EP ends on a melancholy note with 'Boots', a song in which the singer maps out his life's journey through the stains and wear on his Durango's. The song lends itself to mean different things to different people.

"I get a lot of people coming up with their own interpretation of the song," Mike explains. "For me it was more of a reflective song, you know, it's been a long road and sometimes you have to know when it's time to go home. An old pair of boots really reflects what you've done and where you've been, whether you're a farmer, a fireman or someone in the military service. They all have their own story to tell."

Johnson's Creek will be promoting their new EP at several upcoming shows that can be found at <https://www.johnsonscreekband.com/on-tour-tour-gallery> Mike says the band is really interactive during their performance and they're "not afraid to get off the stage and onto the dance floor and move around with the crowd." You might even see some line dancing taking place at their shows. Just don't look for any mechanical bulls. www.johnsonscreekband.com/

Excerpt from The Music Express Magazine, October 5 2019 By Columnist Roman Mitz for Open Space



Photo by Ted Van Boort