

Back in the saddle: Brandon Rhyder

Brandon Rhyder's new work is time stamped, and on it's way to becoming timeless
By S.D. Henderson



On July 15, he will release his first studio album in four years: *Brandon Rhyder*

AFTER A DECADE OF BURNING THROUGH life on the road, five years ago, Brandon Rhyder made a conscious decision to slow down. On July 15, Rhyder will release his first studio album in four years, the self-titled, *Brandon Rhyder*. The tempo on this one is a little slower, the lyrics run a lot deeper and the amps have been turned down from eleven, but it's clear that Brandon Rhyder still moves at the speed of song. The ten tracks on the new album showcase the refined pursuit of Rhyder's growth as songwriter and the value of getting your priorities in order.

With the traction of five strong studio albums and a couple of live recordings making him a staple in the Texas music scene, it could have been a tough choice for an artist looking to cement a place in the business. He knew it was more important to be with the ones you loved than writing about them from the road. Rhyder sums it up simply, "I didn't want to wake up and have my kids be grown and gone."

The new album grows from a

shifted perspective, as Rhyder relates, "My career started with just a guitar in my hand, and we hit the road running. The things that were important five years ago aren't the same anymore. It keeps evolving. Now it's more about the material than rock and roll."

Woven threads

IT'S THE MATERIAL, THE FABRIC that this album was created from that makes it special. Rhyder's talent as a songwriter is

the common thread throughout, but he's woven in some elements that make it stand out.

Life is a function of choices. Before the first track was laid down, choosing producer Walt Wilkins, who should be on the face of the new Texas-issued hundred-dollar bill, ensured that the whole body of work would be dedicated to bringing each song to life individually.

That first track, a stripped-down version of Michael Hearn's "Evergreen" was another wise decision on Rhyder's part, who recorded the song to capture that singularity of hearing the song for the first time.

Rhyder adds, "It sets the tempo for the whole record. The first time I saw him (Hearn) was in New Mexico. He played Evergreen, you just want to stay in that moment longer than it was going to last."

Rhyder worked with Grammy Award winning songwriter Lori McKenna on the first single, "They Need Each Other" who also added vocals on the track, to

create an extraordinary picture of what others may overlook as ordinary love. Completely devoid of syrup or saccharine, inspired by a clogged sink, the song paints a picture of the kind of love people actually experience if they are lucky enough.

After listening about seven or eight times, I may have to declare either "Good Morning Sunrise" or "Half the Time I'm Crazy" as my favorites despite the strength of the remainder of the body of work. If you're going to wait four years to get back in the studio to record, you might as make it all the way you want it, and Rhyder has accomplished that with the full canvas of the album. He said, "It's really shiny, pretty and beautiful. It's lyrically driven. I'm proud of it."

True and accurate

THE FINISHED PRODUCT, the one that will hit shelves and iTunes on July 15, *Brandon Rhyder* will give listeners a true and accurate representation what he hoped to accomplish with the

album. He said, "Over all, top to bottom, it feels like *Conviction*. This is unapologetically what I wanted to do. If it flops, it's my fault because it's exactly what I wanted." After listening to the full work several times, I don't think he has to worry about that.

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—BRANDON RHYDER

There aren't any throwaway songs nestled between tracks, and each song resonates individually.

I've enjoyed Rhyder's music since he released *Conviction* in 2005, and "You Burn Me" has been on my play list for about the last seven years after *Head Above Water*.

For songwriters there is always a temptation to do the same thing that made you successful in the first place. Possibly the most impressive thing about *Brandon Rhyder* is seeing the growth, the choices and a different man, authentically crafted and changed by time; and hear the album stand up on its own as a unique creation.

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Consume whole

WHEN YOU DRINK A BEER, you drink the whole beer. No one would pop a top, take a sip and leave the rest in the can. A good album is a lot like any beer, best when consumed whole.

On July 15, pick up a copy of Brandon Rhyder's self-titled *Brandon Rhyder*, or download it on iTunes. The whole album — not just a sip. You can also catch Brandon playing shows across the Dallas/ Fort Worth area during July to coincide with the release. He will play Hank's in McKinney on July 8, Rockin' Rodeo in Denton on July 13 and the Old Texas Brewing Company in Burleson on July 14.

And if you're suspicious of my whole-album/ whole beer theory, ask the folks at the Old Texas Brewing Company if they'll sell you just a sip of one of their craft brews. I'm pretty confident I'm dead on with this one. ■