

Hemingway's Whiskey: Chesney picks up the tab

Written by Terry Mathews
Thursday, 07 October 2010 10:09



Kenny Chesney unveils his grown-up side by choosing a Guy Clark song for the title of his new CD.

“Hemingway’s Whiskey,” released last week, offers up a mature Chesney who appreciates the value of a good story, well told.

The title cut, first released on the CD “Some Days the Song Writes You” in 2009, details the struggle between an artist and his muse.

*It's tough out there
A good muse is hard to find
Living one word to the next
One line at a time.
There's more to life than whiskey.
There's more to words than rhyme.
Sometimes nothing works.
Sometimes nothing shines
Like Hemingway's whiskey.*

No one in music today delivers a song like Guy Clark. He’s not at the top of the charts, but you’d be hard-pressed to find an artist who has escaped his influence or who doesn’t consider him a master.

Chesney stayed true to Clark’s arrangement, which was a good call, as it’s hard to improve on perfection.

The song getting the most air time on radio and CMT TV is “Boys of Fall,” Chesney’s tribute to his days of glory as a football player at Gibbs High School in Luttrell, Tenn., which is to be expected, as he’s sung about the game before.

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Chesney expanded the tune into an emotional documentary currently playing on ESPN.

"Somewhere with You" is a breakup song with an upbeat twist. Think Smoky Robinson's "Tears of a Clown." Chesney does a good job handling the heartbreak in the lyrics. I hope country radio will give it a chance.

"Where I Grew Up" takes a look back at the moments in life that make us who we are. Chesney shines in songs like this, tugging at everyone's heartstrings.

"Reality" is the only Chesney-penned tune on this CD, and he's on familiar ground singing about getting away from it all. He's built a career by letting the "music take us away."

"Round and Round" laments about how no one is ever satisfied with their lot in life.

It fits well with "Live a Little," a reminder that all work and no love makes Kenny a dull boy.

*Stressed out, running late
Racing down the interstate
Spilled hot coffee down the front of my jeans.
It's work, work, pay the rent
Money and my time spent
Not a minute left for me to be me.□□□
Been going like nothing can wait
I've got to get my priorities straight.*

Chesney has often been called country music's answer to Jimmy Buffett.

"Coastal" provides a beach bum's view of the world and will have parrotheads tapping their toes and swaying to the music.

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Chesney shares the spotlight with indie artist Grace Potter on "You and Tequila" and with George Jones on "Small Y'all." Both will probably get air time because they're catchy and country, but neither is a step outside Chesney's comfort zone.

"Seven Days" gives the listener a glimpse into what happens when romance comes too fast and leaves too soon. Chesney does a nice job bringing the song down to a quiet, sad place.

It's good to hear Chesney stretch his musical muscles and tell stories that matter. With "Hemingway's Whiskey," he proves he's not just a superb live entertainer. He affirms he has what it takes to interpret and deliver a great lyric.

Here's the short version of "The Boys of Fall."

Here's a brief interview about "Hemingway's Whiskey."