

CHRIS WALL

In an era where clichés dominate every publicity bio, and country wannabes desperately try to establish their credibility by citing their “influences” Chris Wall doesn’t even bother. He doesn’t have to. In review after review he is cited as The Real Deal. If that weren’t enough one needn’t look past the faces on the packed dance floors of the western honky tonks he plays, nor past the lips of the dancers singing along to every single word. Perhaps one quote from a truly legendary Texas songwriter sums it up best:



“In this lawless terminal age where music is made for the sole purpose of creating revenue for corporations, Chris Wall is a cowboy savior/hero/poet who with his words and music gives us redemption from the atrocities of this illusion that is presently known as country music.”

—Ray Wylie Hubbard

Pretty strong stuff but a whole gaggle of Chris Wall fans agree.

With the long awaited release of his sixth album *Just Another Place* Wall continues to plow new furrows into the rich ground that is country music. Never one to spend much time in the past; here he reaches for a new take on the oldest of country themes, heartache, loss, failure, and how he deals with them. By writin’ songs. This newest project was recorded during the course of three uniquely different sessions over the span of four years.

The first is a purely live acoustic session at an old farm house in Round Top, Texas. The subsequent two were done at The Cribworks Studio in Austin. The focus of *Just Another Place* is on the songs, and finding the most appropriate instrumentation and sound. Wall enlisted many of his friends—some of Austin’s finest pickers—to round out the project. The Round Top sessions feature vocal harmonies from **Bruce Robison**, **Paul Cotton** (formerly of Poco) and **Merel Bregante** (a veteran of the Gary Morris Band and Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, among many others). The Cribworks sessions feature members of Wall’s own **Cowboy Nation** band.

Also, enlisted for backing on selected cuts are **Dale Watson and the LoneStars** and a song with local up-and-comers **South Austin Jug Band**. While Wall’s 1998 release *Tainted Angel* recorded with Idaho’s Willy and Cody Braun and their band **Reckless Kelly** closed a musical and generational circle, *Just Another Place* heads into new territory of the singer/songwriter’s range of emotion and experience, reflecting on the twists and turns of his own lost highway that brought him to where he sits today. *Just Another Place* begins looking over a back fence on down the “Khaki main street of my dusty old one bar town,” to a past that has become “a very distant country,” and ends with a lost soul stranded in an abandoned railroad depot in the Canadian Rockies. In between there are road trips with old pals in which Wall examines the cost of the road taken (*Hank Williams Cadillac*), a call to a suicidal friend not to give up hope, and join him for a beer under “one more neon sign” in *The Jagged Edge*. There are jabs at the assembly line song writing of Nashville in *The Poet is Not in Today*. As always Wall never holds back and brings his listeners along for the ride in the shotgun seat. *Old Broken Record* powerfully examines unrequited love, *Raining In Atlanta* a love gone wrong and *Just Another Place* a love that is, well just plain gone. Whether taking stock as in *Somewhere between Forty and Falling Apart* (the album’s only co-write with friend Pat Colgan), accepting his musical lot in life (*Five Piece Band*) or paying a soaring tribute to a fallen musical hero (*An Outlaws Blues*) Wall never pulls his punches—whether directed at those who pay their dues “with their daddy’s mastercard” or shattering a less-than-acceptable image in the bathroom mirror. It’s vintage Wall from top to bottom.

Just Another Place, the sixth release from renowned Lone Star singer-songwriter Chris Wall, succeeds in revealing the genius of this gifted cowboy songsmith. Wall’s poignant tales of his personal highs and lows are set to a background of stellar country that is tailor made for both dancers and thinkers. This one-time ranch hand, history teacher, bartender, football coach, actor, and current record label owner also produced his latest record.

Although Wall has always loved music and admired songcrafters, he did not pick up the pen until he was working as a ranch hand in Montana in the mid 80s. “The cowboys I worked with had a band and they would sit around strumming on their guitars and writing songs. I used to try to suggest lyrics to them until one day they told me to write my own damn songs,” laughs Wall.

In 1988, while bartending in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Wall had a chance encounter with Jerry Jeff Walker that led to a summons from Walker in early 1989 urging him to take a break from his job as a ranch hand on the Horse Creek Ranch near Livingston, Montana and join Walker for a two week songwriting soiree, where one thing led to another. As it was, Walker recorded three of Chris' songs on his stellar (some call it a career reviving) *Live at Gruene Hall* CD—among them *Trashy Women* and *I Feel like Hank Williams Tonight*, a song called “the best song ever written to explain country music’s plaintive appeal” by Stereo Review. Shortly thereafter, Wall became a part of Walker’s recording and management roster on Tried and True Music/Rykodisc. Five years of relentless touring with Walker and the release of two highly acclaimed solo albums—1990’s *Honky Tonk Heart* and 1992’s *No Sweat*—on the Rykodisc label followed.

In 1994, Confederate Railroad scored a top five hit with the now classic, *Trashy Women*. That same year, the song was nominated for a Grammy for Best Country Song. In 1997, BMI recognized Wall in a ceremony celebrating the fact that *Trashy Women* had been played over one million times on the radio since its release.

Wall’s ability to write a country hit did not go unnoticed by the industry. He turned down offers to write for the big assembly line Nashville publishing companies and opted instead for writing and releasing his own music.

These days, Wall splits his time between Montana and an old farm house on the outskirts of Austin near the almost non-town of Driftwood, Texas. Though he was born in California in the shadow of the Hollywood sign it was as a boy, on one of his annual summers at his uncle’s cattle ranch in the Big Sky country, when he developed his affinity for “the country and the western.”

Just Another Place is Wall’s fourth release on his own label, Cold Spring Records, which he founded in 1994. It follows the brilliant *Cowboy Nation* in 1994, the live honky-tonk masterpiece *Any Saturday Night in Texas* in 1997, and 1999’s *Tainted Angel*. Generally considered his finest work to that point, *Tainted Angel* earned Wall his fourth nomination as Independent Album of the Year from The American Federation of Independent Musicians, formerly NAIRD.

Cold Spring’s other releases include **Reckless Kelly**’s remarkable debut *Millican*, the soundtrack to the motion picture *Bullriders: Chasing the Dream* (a compilation featuring Chris Wall, **The Derailers**, **Don Walser**, **Doug Supernaw**, **Jack Ingram**, and Reckless Kelly) *Hot Lunch*, the highly touted fourth release from perennial Austin favorites the **Asylum Street Spankers**, and **James Hand**’s old school country standout *Evil Things*.

Probably the biggest compliment to Wall is that his favorite songwriters and peers, including Guy Clark, Jerry Jeff Walker, Chris LeDoux, Ray Wylie Hubbard and Joe Ely genuinely respect and enjoy his songwriting.

Since 1993 Wall has been on his own performing mostly in Texas and points west. He has travelled extensively and head-lined large festivals in Europe and Scandinavia, most recently Norway’s prestigious Seljord Country Fest where Wall closed the Friday night show in front of a crowd of over twenty thousand. “We’re real big where people don’t understand a word we say,” jokes Wall.

Wall’s songs have been recorded by over a dozen artists including: Jerry Jeff Walker, Confederate Railroad, Johnny Bush, Dale Watson, Jack Ingram, Reckless Kelly, The Geezinslaws, McClintock, Joanie Haber and have appeared on many compilation discs. His tunes have been featured in several films and numerous television shows. His lyrics have been quoted by Dick Arme on Meet the Press, in “Confederates in the Attic”, a Pulitzer Prize winning novel, and in a very weird autobiography by professional football coach Jerry Glanville. He has appeared on stage as the opening act for such legends as: Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, George Jones, Conway Twitty, Chris LeDoux, The Dixie Chicks, Lyle Lovett, Nancy Griffith, The Bellamy Brothers, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Confederate Railroad, David Allan Coe, Bruce and Charlie Robison, Shenandoah, Desert Rose, Jerry Jeff Walker, Guy Clark, Steve Warnier, Kelly Willis, Juice Newton, Asleep at the Wheel, Robert Earl Keen, Pat Green, Joe Ely, Ian Tyson, Tom Russell, Billy Joe Shaver, Rambling Jack Elliot, and many others.

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