

By Shain Shapiro

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"I played my first paid gig when I was 13. I had to sign a waiver to play in a bar and wait in the kitchen before the show," replies Roger Marin on the phone from his home in Thorold. Since he was 13 in Timmins, ON, Marin has been gigging, originally backing up his dad in smoky bars and clubs throughout the Canadian touring circuit. Since then, he has grown to become one of the most highly recognized pedal steel pickers in the country music circuit, logging nearly three hundred shows a year backing up Fred J. Eaglesmith or touring with his own outfit, the Roger Marin Band.

For hundreds of shows a year, Marin is country roots legend Fred J. Eaglesmith's pedal steel player. After being discovered in a music store by a friend of Eaglesmith's and being heavily persuaded to join his band on tour, Marin has developed his own sense of style within himself over the years by traveling the world with Eaglesmith. "He has been the biggest influence on my career. For example, I never wrote a song till I was 23. I did not understand how until I joined his band. He has always been a big mentor to me."

During his sparse off time from touring, Marin invested in a portable recording studio and began work on his now completed self titled solo debut. "Being on the road, I did not have the schedule to properly record in a stationary studio. Instead of investing my money in studio time, I took that money and bought tons of gear. Then I used the portable rig to produce the record on the road," explains Marin. "To be honest, it simply had to be that way."

Combining his own growing mature songwriting style with the co-writing talents of Eaglesmith and legendary songwriter Willie P. Bennett, Marin has crafted together the fiery emotion of punk with the raucous energy of rock, to create an appetizing set of raw genre-bridging country music. For the first time in his career, Marin has let his solo work take centre stage, and the result is a bouncy collection of emotive, truthful songs with the heart of the road poking through each individual note. "Most of my music is pretty honest, because everything I write I have gone through growing up on the road. When you live 300 days of the year on the road, you tend to write honestly about the ups and downs of the lifestyle," explains Marin.

As the summer rolls on, Marin is looking forward to some time off spent at home in Thorold while mixing in some sporadic touring in both Canada and the United States to support his solo work. "On the road I travel with such eclectic and talented musicians (local musicians Dan Walsh on electric guitar, Darcy Yates on bass and Matt Keigan on drums). While half the band listens to straight up rock and roll, the other half is into traditional country music. It ends up generating this cool vibe onstage when the two styles meet. I guess it creates punkin' country."

In addition, Marin has intensely supported the local St. Catherines scene that has

facilitated his love of unique country music throughout the years. "No matter what, I will always make time to be a part of the local scene. Just growing up here has given me the opportunity to play with some incredible local talent. When I have days off, I do not sit at home; I go out and gig locally," adds Marin.

With 144 shows and the new record already under his belt in 2004 Marin sees no reason to slow down. "To be honest, I never intended to write songs. Thankfully, my recordings have been accessible and the rest has just fallen into place. It is great."

Marin will showcase his new material at Club Lasalle in St. Catherines on Saturday, July 24th. The event is free and will begin at 8PM. For more information, visit www.rogermarin.com