



Interview with John Arthur Martinez, 13.03.2023



1) This is the first time you are coming to Europe since 2018, how do you feel about it?

—I must admit I'm a little bit nervous because many things have changed in the world since 2018. We were scheduled to perform in Europe in 2020 but of course the pandemic changed that. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to return to see the many fans who have supported my music all of these years. There are so many great fans in Switzerland alone.

2) Is it difficult, after such a long break to get gigs in Europe?

—Yes, of course, there are always new acts wanting to perform but a limited number of shows and festivals not only in Europe but in the United States. I'm pleased to say I will be performing in some new regions of Europe: the country of Spain for the first time, the Dresden, Germany area for the first time, and Marseille, France for the first time.

3) Is it possible that while you are on Europe tournee, you have also gigs in Texas and then back in Germany? If yes, how do you do that?

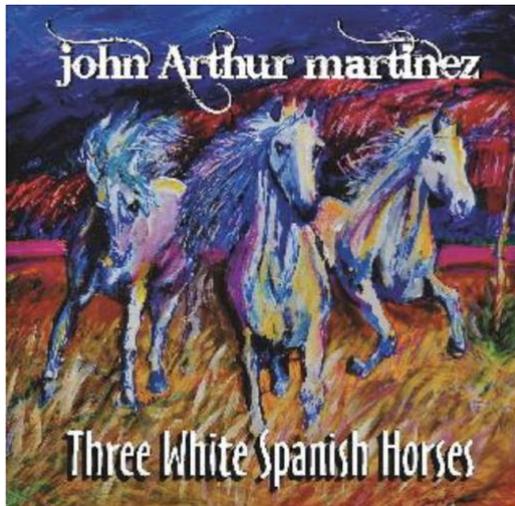
—Yes it is possible now that I have my own private jet! No, I am just kidding. I am glad you asked the question because I now realize that I have to remove the recurring shows in Texas that appear on my calendar. My wife mentioned that I needed to do that this week.

4) You have three appearances in Radebeul Germany for the Karl May Festspiele, do you know who Karl Mai is?

—Before my tour was scheduled, I had no idea who this person was. But I did research on the author, and discovered that he was quite fond of the American west, and that the main character in his books was an Apache chief named Winnetou. Coincidentally, two songs from my new album, Three White Spanish Horses, discuss the Native American experience, first, the title track, but the second song on the album, “These Sacred Lands” speaks specifically to the Native American experience. Here’s quote from that song:

“Feel the spirit at Cathedral Rock
Where Apache prayed, the white wings coo
And if you see a red tail hawk,
Say your own (prayer) before the day is through.”

5) You bring a new CD with you, Three White Spanish Horses, how did this CD come about?



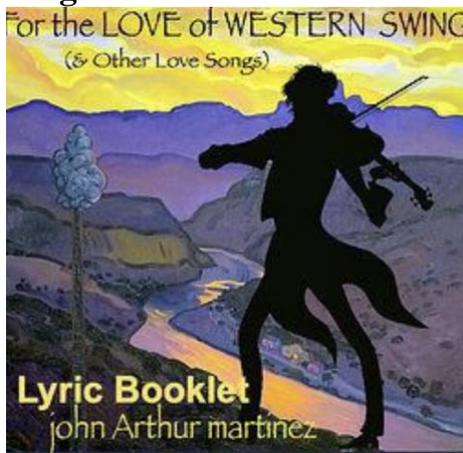
—Many of the songs were written during the pandemic. I had more time to write, because there was a period with no performances, and then periods with very few performances. I wrote some of them before I caught Covid. Then there was a longspell where I didn’t write anything as my body and mind recovered from the virus. I had trouble concentrating. I had trouble finishing a book. I certainly had trouble writing songs, but once I recovered, I started writing frantically, and the rest of the album was completed.

6) Can you say something about the songs from this CD?

—There are fans who know my recordings well, fans who would say that Lone Starry Night and Purgatory Road are my two best albums. I truly believe this one is right up there with those recordings. In addition to my band mates and performing partners, I also asked several heavy weights in the music industry to lay down some tracks, including Matt Rollings from Lyle Lovett’s Large Band, and James Mitchell, who has performed and recorded with Alison Krauss, Cole Swindell, Chris Stapleton, and many others. Matt Rollings also produced Lone Starry Night.

James Mitchell had also done the guitar work for my Purgatory Road CD. “Take the Time To Love” was co-written with Alex Harvey, yes, the same Alex Harvey, who wrote “Delta Dawn,” “Reuben James,” and so many other country classics. Two of the songs were written with my wife, Yvonna Martinez, “Port Aransas Standard Time” and “Once Upon a Pawn Shop Ring.” A phone call from a long time friend during the pandemic stirred memories of the musical influences upon my life, west of Austin, in Marble Falls, Texas, not far from where Willie Nelson set up camp in Spicewood. Those memories led to “The Phone Call,” a co-write with Jan Grape. The song mentions an early Willie’s Picnic near the Pedernales River, the early version of Asleep at the Wheel, and a magical day at Manor Downs that included Jerry Jeff Walker, Johnny Winter and the Allman Brothers.

7) Tell us something about the CD For the Love of Western Swing and its songs.



—In Texas, I believe both George Strait, and Willie Nelson would agree that Bob Wills is still the king of Texas music. My band loves to play western swing music, both songs I have written, and covers of Bob Wills’ standards. It was natural that I record an album of mostly western swing. The title track was awarded the Academy of Western Artists Song of the Year. It talks about a journey my band took to see the Bob Wills Museum of Western Swing. My favorite track on the album is called “Cherry Springs Swing,” which I co-authored with Ron Knuth, the fiddler from my first tours of Europe. The song talks about the legends who performed at an iconic, but now dilapidated dancehall in Texas.

8) How did you get the idea about the Lyric Booklet?

—As you know, I’m a songwriter, so it’s important to me that people see the lyrics that I have written and that I offer them so they can read a long while they listen to the recordings. There are many great singers in Texas, the United States, and all over the world but I believe my strength is my songwriting.

9) Has your music style changed during the past years? If yes, how?

—There are songs on my very first album, *On the Border*, which I believe could fit on my 15th release. But overall, I believe the music is stronger. I believe I become a better songwriter, a better vocalist and performer. As a creator of music my earliest songs probably sounded more like the Eagles, Jim Croce and James Taylor than Dwight Yoakum, Johnny Rodriguez and Asleep at the Wheel. But I've always written many different kinds of songs. That's the beauty of Texas, the state that created Freddie Fender, Johnny Rodriguez, Lyle Lovett, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Johnny Winter, Beyonce and George Strait. I've certainly become a better guitarist over the years. Practice makes perfect and I'm still striving for that goal of perfection.

10) What do you think about today's country music scene?

—The pendulum is swinging back toward traditional sounds and lyrics. There are some songs that are popular on country radio today that I am very fond of, including “Heart Like a Truck.” My wife and I were listening to the country chart countdown on Country Music Television (CMT). We liked quite a few of the songs. I didn't feel the same way about the country music industry five or ten years ago as I do today.

11) Would you like to tell the public and the fans something that is important to you?

—Passion is the most important thing to me, as a songwriter, and as a performer. It is especially important when performing for European audiences, who may not understand every word, but my hope is that they can feel the passion in the music.

<https://www.johnarthurmartinez.net/>

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