



Is He The Next Johnny Cash? Exclusive Interview With Matt Westin

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Country rocker Matt Westin rocked radio waves with his first single, "Our Redneck of the Woods." The song propelled Westin into the international spotlight, earning him an International Music and Entertainment Association Award for Best Country Male. His album, "Legacy," dedicated to the memory of his father, was released this past January. Now, Westin is talking about an ambitious movie role, playing the Man in Black himself. Can Matt Westin fill the boots of Johnny Cash?

Indie Pulse Music: Tell us about the music scene in Pittsburgh. Is it still a shot/beer and cover band city?

Matt Westin: Pittsburgh has a wide variety of music for all tastes. I think music is continuing to grow into being a bigger part of the Pittsburgh culture every year, as the Deutschtown Music Festival has been going on for about 5 years now, I believe. This year they had 325+ bands and 30+ stages! There are plenty of great cover bands that are well known in the city, and there are lots of original artists too.

IPM: Who are you listening to these days?

MW: I've been listening to a lot of Johnny Cash lately. I'm studying him a little bit, since I was recently cast as a young Johnny Cash in a film called "116 MacDougal", based on the iconic Gaslight Café in Greenwich Village in the late 50s/early 60s. A lot of unknown folk musicians and beat writers got a start there, including Bob Dylan, and Johnny would pop in to perform a few songs from time to time.

IPM: If you could tour with one artist, opening shows, whom would that be?

MW: Well, there are more than a few I would like to choose, but at this point, I think Willie Nelson would be the one. I can't imagine the stories, the wisdom, and the history that I could learn from him and his experience. He's one of the last great icons from the past that we still have with us, and I can't wait to go see him perform here in Pittsburgh in September!



Why is "Legacy" an important music release? Why should new listeners give it a chance?

MW: Beyond the critically acclaimed and award winning music, there is a much deeper and beautiful reason to give it a chance. My debut album "Legacy" is a testament to the power of love, believing in yourself and your purpose, and the possibility of rising again and creating something beautiful from a tragic situation and a dark pit of depression. This album is dedicated to my father, who passed away in 2016 after a brutal fight with leukemia. Instead of continuing on the downward spiral of self-destruction and depression, with the help of God, family, and music, I was able to create an incredible tribute to my father and start a new chapter in my life.

IPM: If you could perform in your dream venue, where would that be, and why?

MW: I can think of a few places that would be a dream come true. But honestly, I think performing in my hometown of Pittsburgh at the KeyBank Pavilion (most adult Pittsburghers still call it "Star Lake") would be extra special. It's not the largest venue, but I have a lot of great memories there with friends and family that would make it extra special for me.

IPM: Your favorite song on your album is? Why is that?

MW: I think it depends on my mood. There's something there for just about everyone and every kind of day. It's really a great, well rounded collection and I have trouble finding one song that I like



more than another. However, my first single “Our Redneck of the Woods” really represents a lot about who I am as a man and who my father was as well, so if I absolutely had, it would probably be that song. It’s a gritty rockin’ country song with a great patriotic message.

IPM: Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

MW: I see myself making a living with my music, spreading a positive message, and helping others with the blessings that I’ve been given.

IPM: What means more to you: Sales, Awards, or critical praise? and why?

MW: While sales and awards are important and great to have, especially if you’re trying to make a living with music, critical praise is the most fulfilling to me. I say this because when I am true to myself, to my heart and my vision, and put in all the hard work, along with all of the amazing people behind the scenes that make it all happen, it’s great to know that all the efforts were not in vain and that my heart has touched someone else’s. I think the sales and awards will eventually come if the end product is real and quality.

IPM: Who is your dream collaboration? and why?

MW: Unfortunately, it’s impossible today, but I would love to work with The Highwaymen. That might be cheating, since there are 4 of them, but that’s the group of guys that I really look up to. It might be nostalgia, it might just be my impression of what that era of music was like, but it’s also legendary performers and songwriters.

IPM: Where do you discover new music?

MW: I don’t have a lot of time to search out new music and there’s so much music from the past that I still love and listen to. Usually, when I hear new music, it is through a friend or family member.

IPM: Any final thoughts, shout outs, lessons for our readers?

MW: Thank you for having me. I want to thank Michael Stover at MTS Records for all the work he does to get me exposure, my producer Bryan Cole, Doug Kasper at Tonic Recording Studios, all the amazing people/musicians that worked hard on my album, and last but not least, all the fans for listening and supporting me. I’m so grateful and I cannot wait to share more with the world. As a final thought, I just want to simply say to everyone, artist or not, be true to yourself and be good to others. God bless.

For more information about Matt Westin, please visit <http://www.mattwestin.com>.