

Brandon Rhyder – “*Brandon Rhyder Live*” (Apex Nashville)

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With his gritty, haunting voice, Texas singer-songwriter Brandon Rhyder is one of those performers who, when he loses himself in a song, can't help but remind you of a guy who sounds at times like a cross between Roy Orbison and Glen Campbell.

I know that's a pretty bold statement to make, but Rhyder, who has released three albums of terrific Texas music, has finally given a chance for fans and casual listeners alike to hear a live show on disc – on the just released “Brandon Rhyder Live.”

Recorded at shows in College Station and Nacogdoches, Texas and produced by eclectic-yet-respected Texas musician Radney Foster, “Brandon Rhyder Live” features 11 heartfelt songs that really shine.

Kicking off with his biggest hit, “Man of Conviction,” the Carthage, Texas native really sounds like a man convicted.

One song that I continue to return to is one Rhyder co-wrote with Foster called “No One Stays In Love Alone.” Reminding me of an earthier Chris Isaak, Rhyder's vocal delivery, framed by his crackshot back-up band led by guitarist Charlie Richards, will give you chillbumps!

“She's growing tired, of trying to light your fire / You better wake up, you better wake up or she'll be gone,” sings Rhyder.

“Do You Remember” takes on a spookier vibe while “One Step Closer” is now a standard on Texas/Red Dirt radio, having been a hit for co-writer Wade Bowen.

“Have I Waited Too Long,” a track originally featured on his 2001 release “Because She Loves Me,” is Rhyder at his best. While a Hammond B3 organ propels him along, Rhyder gives the audience (and the listeners back home) something to thoroughly enjoy.

The final two songs are some solid studio tracks. The first, “Before I Knew Your Name,” is a nice honky-tonk rocker while “Home Again,” currently in the Texas Music Charts Top 10, is a bouncy, alt-country gem with Rhyder reminiscing about growing up in Northeast Texas.

And when you assess all of these songs, you realize that Rhyder has a lot of depth to his songs, most of which deal with love, fatherhood and memories of growing up in the country.

And it should be noted that the packaging and liner notes of this live disc are quite good, with each song featuring either the lyrics or written comments about the song from Rhyder.

All in all, “Brandon Rhyder Live” is a swell collection of live songs with a couple of new tracks that will make all Rhyder fans smile with pleasure.

Grade: A