



stories. songs. revival.

## MATT KOGER: POET AND PILGRIM

**Rory Crump**

Matt Koger closed the decade like a flooding Trinity River. His 2006 critically acclaimed debut, *Blackland*, earned him a 2007 Texas Indie Music Awards Rising Star nomination. The record, full of textured laments and sharp wit, quickly defined a signature sound welcomed amongst the tight brethren of Texas singer/songwriters.

*Blackland* flowed strong into 2008's *The Coyote's Call*. More rambunctious and unpredictable, Koger experimented with heavier instrumentation and a fuller sound. The equation spawned a couple of radio-friendly singles and earned him a black belt in song craft. A quiet start to 2010 allowed him to see his reflection in calmer waters. A smattering of live gigs and woodshed writing found him returning to his sonic roots.

A new record of bare acoustic tracks is brewing, mirroring his preferred live set-up: Koger, a guitar, and a captive audience. Armed with his Taylor 510 sunburst acoustic, he promises more offbeat plots and jagged characters. Like his lyrics, Koger's casual speak has magnetic qualities - they kind of force you to listen. Koger recently shared what was on his mind.

### **1.) What were your favorite music happenings of the past year?**

I still have a passion for discovering a new band. First and foremost, I'm a music fan. It is part of who I am. There is no telling what category of music I will find my next favorite. Currently, I would say We Were Promised Jetpacks. Also, a major part of falling for a band is the performance, namely the live performance. In that way, old music can be new again.

I also had the opportunity to see Springsteen close down The Spectrum in Philly. This amounted to a religious experience. On a personal front, playing solo has been the most fun. I have enjoyed a great reception for my regular gig at the Blue Armadillo Winery in Greenville. Also, I met a DJ from Melbourne, Australia who is a big fan of my songs. He traveled to SXSW and was kind enough to bring my boys an Aussie rules football from the Brisbane team. A small gesture that went a long way.

### **2.) You've leaked a few new songs on your site.**

What can we expect from your new record? I think this record will reflect the style of music I have been playing more these days...acoustic, stripped songs that showcase the lyrics. There are stories, emotions, and laughs.

**3.) Do you see this as a natural progression from your first two records?**

I have no plan, so I can't say if this is a progression, regression or transgression. I just know it is where I am right now, in a musical sense.

**4.) You have compiled a lot of songwriting credits. When you write songs now, does everything meet your expectations?**

Not always. I'm not one to struggle to complete a song. If I get started and hit a dry spot, I let it go. I figure if the start is good enough, I will remember it. If not, then it was literally forgettable. I rarely set out on a topic that does not present itself to me in some real way. Contrived songs about beaches or red wagons are not my forte. I would rather write about having my red wagon stolen at the beach

**5.) I dig the new song "The Reckoning" because it's rocking. But for that reason, it may not make the final cut.**

"The Reckoning" will be on the new record. I agree it may be out of place, but I think there will be enough produced tracks to build a bridge from Nebraska (new track) to Reckoning.

**6.) How do you fit into the current state of the music business? Or, do you even try?**

There is a music business? I thought you had to pay to make good music.

**7.) Why does Texas breed so many good singer/songwriters?**

Why do bees make honey? Don't question nature, just enjoy. Seriously, I'm pretty sure it was born in Willie's redneck-hippie-outlaw three way that he got started in Austin. This gave Texas its unique, commercial be damned voice that can still be heard in the likes of James McMurtry today.

**8.) Your day job allows you to follow your muse. Ever have nightmares about being a starving artist?**

Nope. Writing and performing is its own reward at this point. That's all I really see in the future, too. I think, when you put a financial responsibility to anything, it changes your outlook. Art is no different. Precious few persist untouched save Townes Van Zandt, Jerry Garcia, and Willie.

**9.) What is your secret to keeping a captive audience when it's just you and an acoustic guitar?**

Humor. That's a universal emotion. I think anything that connects with someone on an emotional level will draw them in. Combine that with the intimacy of an acoustic guitar and you can captivate an audience. You have to make them feel like they are part of the show. If that doesn't work, apply alcohol and start doing Jimmy Buffett cover songs, works every time.

**10.) You've been doing this awhile. Is it still cool that a simple acoustic guitar can provide endless entertainment and inspiration?**

If I was a sailor, a guitar would be my boat and music my sea. To answer your question, though, anything that provides endless entertainment is by definition, still cool.