



## Craig Morgan - *This Ole Boy*

There are certain milestones in an artist's career that would seem to inspire a moment of reflection. Yet as Craig Morgan put the finishing touches on THIS OLE BOY, an album that will mark ten years since the release of his self-titled debut album back in 2000, the singer/songwriter has a surprising reaction when asked for his thoughts on his decade-long run.

Total shock.

"Is that right?" Morgan asks, leaning back in his chair when told the news. He's quiet for a moment as he lets his mind wind its way back through ten years of memories to double check the math. Then his eyes brighten, "I guess it is," Morgan marvels, "But I tell you, I feel like I just got started. I feel like I'm 25 years old and saying, 'Wow, I hope I make it in the music business.'"

The statement sums up Craig Morgan in nutshell. By all accounts, Craig Morgan has made it. As an artist, he's been a mainstay on the charts with an impressive body of work that includes fourteen Top Ten hits -- including fan-favorites "Redneck Yacht Club," "Almost Home," "That's What I Love About Sunday," and "Tough." As a performer, he's entertained countless fans in every corner of the globe. And as a country star, he's reached what many consider the pinnacle of his profession when on one cool October evening in 2008 he became a member of the Grand Ole Opry. Yet despite not only surviving but *thriving* for a decade in a cut-throat industry that is known for chewing up and spitting out talent, Craig Morgan is an artist that is still humble, hopeful, and hungry to continue making his mark in country music. THIS OLE BOY is proof.

"When you go out and buy an album, and I've done it myself, you sometimes feel, 'Well the songs on the radio were great but the rest was okay,' admits Morgan. "When they play this record, I want them to say, 'Man, I like the songs on the radio but I love this other song even better!' That's what's rewarding about an album."

And there is a lot for Craig Morgan fans to love on this record. Yes, there are hit songs that are sure to continue his impressive run on the radio charts -- from the pumping-but-playful "Still A Little Chicken Left on That Bone," "Out Here" and "Accident." But it's the attention, craft and care he put into the deeper cuts where Morgan reveals just how much he's grown as an artist.

"No matter what level of an artist you are, you choose songs based on who you are at that time and how you feel," Morgan says. "I'm at a point in my life where I'm extremely comfortable. Extremely confident. I feel good about my family, my children, my friends, my career. I think the songs that I picked, looking back now, kind of reflect that."

That feeling of confidence is a long-time coming for this talented man who is surprised as anyone to find music has become his profession. "At first I thought music was going to be a full time hobby," Morgan confides. "My dad was a bass player in Nashville. I grew up going, 'the last thing I'm going to do is this.' And you know, it wasn't until the Opry membership that I knew it was going to be my full time job."

Having made the initial choice to steer clear of a career in music, Morgan racked up a working-man's resume taking on work as an EMT, a contractor, a sheriff's deputy, and a Wal-Mart assistant dairy manager as well as serving more than a decade in the US Army. Those experiences forged an appreciative approach to hard work that would serve him well as a country music artist. "Whether I was working at Wal-Mart or as a police officer, I enjoyed what I did," says Morgan. "And I could go right back to that today. I'm going to make whatever I'm doing interesting and fun. I've always tried to look at this like, 'It's a job. And I'm blessed to have it.'"

Morgan might not punch a clock anymore, but he still puts in plenty of overtime. He annually plays over 120 live shows every year, touring with Carrie Underwood, Keith Urban, LeAnn Rimes, Brad Paisley and Trace Adkins, and consistently sells out headlining dates.

And in 2010, Morgan didn't just put more on his plate. He added a new meal.

Meet Craig Morgan. TV star.

Debuting in June of 2010 on the *Outdoor Channel*, "Craig Morgan: All Access Outdoors" is a 30-minute reality show that offers fans a fly on the wall look at Craig's extreme lifestyle at home, touring and in the great outdoors: hunting, aerial bow fishing, bungee jumping and skydiving. It didn't take long to find an avid audience. In its first season it quickly became the networks #1 rated Saturday morning hunting show.

“I’ve been hunting and filming (it) for as long as I’ve been a singer...or longer,” says Morgan. “It’s always been a big part of my life. I didn’t pursue that as much because my music has always had my total focus. When this opportunity came about for me to have my own show, I felt like this was another avenue I could explore as an entertainer.”

But the show is about much more than bucks, bows and bungee cords. It’s also given Craig Morgan fans a front row seat for the roller coaster ride that is the music business.

While fans certainly enjoy his Saturday morning television adventures, the reason they fell in love with the man is because of his music. When it came time to begin to record THIS OLE BOY, Morgan once again took a hands-on producing role along with long-time co-producer Phil O’Donnell.

In the past when we were looking for great songs, there was no theme. Just find great song,” says Morgan. “And then once we’re done recording them, we’ll figure out how they work together. This time we took every song that we’ve had that we felt was a hit, even some that weren’t hit singles but we felt were great songs, and we put them all together and listened to it and lived with it for a while. The end result is a bit of a throwback to a time before singles ruled the world. A time when albums were a creative body of work that you could press play on and listen from the first note until the final chord fades away on the last track.

THIS OLE BOY roars out of the gate with “Out Here,” a song that has Morgan reminding listeners that country living is about much more than just surviving. “It’s a cool life living in the country,” beams Morgan. “Even people in the city envy that, that’s why they take trips into the woods. We’re living everyday what they get to do on the weekends.” And the title track is already a fan favorite. “When I do ‘This Ole Boy’ live,” recalls Morgan, “before I get to the end of the song, people are trying to sing along as if they’ve heard it before.”

Morgan also continues to prove he’s a writer who is one of the best in the business at painting a picture with a song. One of his personal favorites is the track “Accidents.” “It’s one of the most vivid songs we’ve written,” says Morgan. “Writing was actually my first love. I left the Army to be a songwriter. I knew I could make money writing songs. I didn’t know I could make money being a singer.”

In his more than ten years on active duty Morgan served in the 101<sup>st</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Divisions and is a graduate of the ROK Ranger School. Since leaving, he’s been an enthusiastic supporter, travelling into some of the most dangerous places on earth to entertain our troops. “I was one of the first artists to go into Afghanistan,” says Morgan,

who received the 2006 USO Merit Award for his tireless support, an honor also awarded to Steven Spielberg, Elizabeth Taylor and Bob Hope. “Right after the invasion, they were still sweeping up glass in Kandahar in the airport. I get to give those men and women a little piece of home. It really does make a difference.”

Morgan’s experience in the military played a role in including one very special track on THIS OLE BOY. He recently became a spokesperson for *Not Alone*, an organization that empowers and assists soldiers and their families who are dealing with the after-effects of combat – especially combat stress – as they transition to life back at home. Morgan was asked to write a song for the organization and the result was so strong that he knew he had to include it on the album.

“It’s a sensitive subject,” admits Morgan. “I’ve been in that environment myself and I know that the things that they see and experience are unlike anything that most people can comprehend. So I felt like it was something that we could help with. If I can help raise funds and awareness to help those men and women and have an impact, I’m honored do it.”

As the ten-year mark offers Morgan a chance to look back on the twists and turns of the winding road he’s travelled to get here, the man can’t help but be overwhelmed by the role fate -- and faith -- have played to keep him on the right path. “I’ve always felt that I’ve been very blessed,” says Morgan. “There’s someone much more important than me in charge of this. Because if you look at where I came from and the things that had to happen for me to be here, there is absolutely no way anyone could have planned this.”

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