

"When I think 'country music,' I think of a smoky bar with a glass of whiskey, and somebody playing heartbreak songs. That, to me, is what country music is."

Gary Allan has stayed true to that sentiment since making his mark on the country music landscape nearly 25 years ago. Coming out of California rugged and edgy, Allan built his career with songs that draw on raw emotion and cutting lyrics about real life-and that has never been more true than on his 10<sup>th</sup> studio album *Ruthless*.

To arrive at this rocking, swinging, loud, subtle, funny, vulnerable and sizzling suite of thirteen songs, Allan allowed himself the freedom and space to select the very best of dozens of songs cut over the past eight years. The result is a stellar album which revisits and reimagines the 90s sensibilities that firmly placed Allan on the musical map. "This is a montage of everything I have done since my last album," says Allan. "I remain influenced by the '80s and '90s, so you can hear some of that in there. It's what I love."

An accomplished songwriter and self-proclaimed "lyrics guy," Allan is also humble enough to step back and "let the best song win." This project is the largest batch of outside songs he's ever released on an album and those winning songs come from a wide array of country music's most impressive writers including Hillary Lindsey, Shane McAnally, Jim Beavers, busbee, Sarah Buxton, Rodney Clawson, Nicolle Galyon, Ryan Hurd, Matt Warren, Josh Kear, and the list goes on.

Allan weaves seamlessly between the deepest human emotions, whether that's the enduring anguish in "Till It Felt Like You" or fleeting passion in "Trouble Knows Trouble." He offers straight forward honesty in the gritty "Unfiltered" and he is the first to admit "there are quite a few lessons I had to learn from getting my teeth kicked in," as the headstrong narrator in "The Hard Way."

Because *Ruthless* is a collection of songs pulled from the past several years of creating, recording, playing live, writing, and recording again, Allan also pushed his boundaries using multiple producers. Reuniting with his *Smoke Rings In The Dark* team Mark Wright and Tony Brown for some, partnering with Greg Droman on others, and sharing the reins with Jay Joyce on another. For Allan, his reasoning is clear, "I want to hear left turns. I want to make sure it evolves and pulls something new out of them and pulls something new out of me."

However, it's Allan's unwavering vision and distinct sound that bring *Ruthless* together into one cohesive, irresistible ride. From the "rocking and dramatic" opening track "Temptation" to the slowly galloping "Slide," and from the Jesse Winchester ode "Little Glass of Wine" to the bluesy undertoned title track, "I like the songs that make you laugh, make you cry, or piss you off," and Allan delivers on it all.

"I want my albums to take you on a full journey," says the seasoned entertainer, and Gary Allan's *Ruthless* does just that.

Put the needle in the groove and let it roll.