

MATT THIGPEN

Biography

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A native Texan born in Waco, Matt Thigpen has always lived inside Texas' borders, and says he always will. While growing up in Sugarland, Texas Matt was constantly exposed to the sounds of Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, George Jones, and later on, George Strait. "I believe I subconsciously developed my vocal style early on mainly from listening to those four artists," says Thigpen. "I could usually sing through any of their songs after only hearing them a couple of times. It all came very naturally to me." His original song, "Old Outlaws Never Die", can attest to this. "In my mind, those artists will always be the best, that's what I cut my teeth on," he says.

Matt may very well not have ever pursued a music career or even picked up a guitar had it not been for a few "twists of fate" along the way. "I knew I loved to sing, but I was always very shy and quiet around other people so I rarely sang in front of anyone. No one really pushed me toward music, and few people had even heard me sing," he says. But for Thigpen, the dream and the desire to perform were always deep down inside him. He just needed a push in the right direction.

That push came his freshman year in college, when he inherited an Ovation Balladere acoustic guitar from his stepfather. "The guitar was probably going to get sold, but I decided to hang on to it and take a few lessons. I picked up the chords fairly easily and, after a few months I was teaching myself songs. I never put it down."

By the time Thigpen transferred to Texas A&M in 1993, he was playing songs for friends in his living room. Although everyone who heard him play and sing encouraged him to take the next step, the confidence level just was not there. "Had it not been for my friends and strangers telling me I was good, I probably would have shelved the guitar forever around that time. I was extremely self-conscious then," he says.

While watching a local performer named Jason Manning play a weekly sing-along show at the Tap in College Station. Matt decided to introduce himself to the singer in hopes of getting a few pointers. "I was so impressed by the sheer number of popular songs this guy knew, and how he could entertain a crowd with just his voice and an acoustic guitar. I thought, 'Man, if I could just learn some of those songs I could easily be doing the same thing this guy's doing. After all, he was just playing basic chords, nothing fancy at all.' So I walked up and asked him if he'd give me a few lessons, because I wanted to do exactly what he was doing." He agreed, and by the next school year Manning had passed the torch along and Thigpen successfully took over the reigns of the show. "Jason and I have been friends ever since," says Thigpen.

During his first year at Texas A&M, Matt auditioned for an Opryland production called "Music Country Music". Despite overwhelming odds that he would actually be chosen, Thigpen received a letter a few months later offering him a position with the cast at Fiesta Texas theme park in San Antonio. Matt was the only male performer chosen from Texas in the Cast of 20 performers. This was just the confidence boost he needed. The show was a huge success that summer in 1993. It was then that Thigpen wrote his first song.

Upon returning to school after the completion of the summer series, Matt began to focus on his songwriting craft. He again relied on Manning for some instruction in this area, and the two ended up out on the road together. "Jason needed an extra lead vocal for these six-night-a-week road shows and I needed the experience. I agreed to tour with him for a summer. It was one of the best experiences I'd ever had, both professionally and personally. I don't think you can call yourself a true musician until you've suffered a little out on the road, playing dives for next to nothing and sleeping in cheap motels. It was quite an experience."

Matt played with Manning's band, "Texas Avenues", off and on for a year after graduating from A&M in 1996. They played "A-Rooms" in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and Arkansas, playing as many as six nights in a row at times. Matt now had a bag full of tools that would help him begin work on a professional music career.

In 1997, Thigpen moved to Dallas, where he recorded his debut album, "Gone to Texas" (1998), which has received airplay on all of the Country and Americana radio stations in Dallas/Fort Worth. He has shared the stage with such Texas artists as Jack Ingram, Brian Burns, Gary P. Nunn, Chris Wall, Rusty Wier, Cross Canadian Ragweed, Robert Earl Keen, Charlie Robison, Deryl Dodd, and Tracy Byrd. Matt and his band regularly play at a variety of venues throughout Texas in such cities as Houston, Austin, and Dallas. Matt's second album, "Way Past Waco", was released in 2005 and received the Texas Music Awards' nomination for Male Vocalist of The Year and Producer of the Year (Davin James). "Way Past Waco" is currently receiving airplay Worldwide.

In 2006 Matt had the privilege of singing background vocals alongside original Lost Gonzo Band member Bob Livingston on Brian Burns' acclaimed album, "Border Radio"(2006).

Currently, Matt resides in his home town of Wharton, Texas where he is busy writing new songs, playing solo as well as with his band, and preparing to release his third studio album.