

Jackopierce Biography

Breaking up is hard to do. But staying together is nearly impossible. The average marriage lasts about 6 years and 95% of new businesses fail within five years. Twenty years of anything, especially Jackopierce, an acoustic duo that got its start playing fratparties in the late 80's, is hard to believe. Add in the fact that Jack O'Neill and Cary Pierce did not speak for nearly 5 years before reuniting in 2002 makes 20 years a downright miracle.

To celebrate their 2 decades together (and apart), Jackopierce will release a new CD, Promise of Summer, on August 12. The 11-song disc contains 10 brand-new songs and includes a remake of the JP classic, "March". The album will be available for digital download in mid-July on iTunes, Amazon, Rhapsody, Napster and most other digital sites. CDs are available now for pre-order through www.jackopierce.com.

Promise of Summer is full of all the things that hundreds-of-thousands of fans have loved about this duo: gorgeous harmonies, acoustic guitars and songs that take you somewhere else.

The songs range from acoustic pop, (the title-track, "Promise of Summer"), to Mellencamp-tinged country-rock ("Everything I'm Not"). Heartache is ever-present on a Jackopierce record. Songs like "Come On July" and "I Gotta Know" find Jack O'Neill drawing from the same muse that gave fans songs like "Late Shift," "My Time" and "Wildflower." But Jack's longing for his once home state of Texas produced one of the standout tracks from the CD. "Texas" is one of those songs that sounds so familiar, it's as if you've been listening to it for years. When Jack sings "If I could just get back to Texas - if I could hold you in my arms tonight - the way we used to do when we were young and restless," it just takes the listener to another place.

After working with some of the biggest producers in the business including T Bone Burnett (Counting Crows, Wallflowers), Stan Lynch (Don Henley, Mavericks), John Alagia (John Mayer, Jason Mraz), amongst others, Jack suggested that Cary take the helm.

"Cary has been producing for almost 15 years," says O'Neill from his home in New York City. "It started with Jack Ingram's first record when we were all at SMU (in Dallas). He's become quite a craftsman - both in writing and producing. I'm proud to have his name on there. He does great work and no one knows the Jackopierce sound better than Cary. Plus," Jack chuckles, "he cut us a deal!"

"The best part about producing this record," says Pierce from his Dallas home, "is that I'm a Jack O'Neill fan. He's a great writer. "My Time," "March," "Iron John," "Late Shift" - man! And new songs like "I Gotta Know", "Come on July" and "Texas" are awesome! He's got an old soul. He's from a huge, Irish, military family from Pittsburgh. There's just a depth to him that no one can really get to."

A real surprise treat for longtime fans of the band is a fully produced version of the JP classic "March." "It's definitely one of Jack's best songs," says Pierce. "We really wanted to showcase that song in a way that would draw new folks to it. The lyrics are amazing and timeless. Jack is a 3rd generation Army kid. I think he's read every war book ever written. The lyrics 'every generation makes the same mistakes, but still we send our sons away to do the same' are universal. Almost everyone can relate to that in some way."

But what happened to them almost 10 years ago?

In late 1997, after a decade-long run that produced 6 records (2 for major label A&M), shows with the biggest acts of the day (Dave Matthews Band, Matchbox 20, Counting Crows, Sheryl Crow, etc), touring on 3 continents, in 9 countries and 44 states and nearly 500,000 records sold, Jack O'Neill and Cary Pierce decided to amicably go their separate ways.

"I had just had enough," recalls Jack. "I couldn't just take a break - I needed it to be over. I needed to find myself - outside of being the guy from Jackpierce."

After a brief stint with his new band, American Horse, Jack moved to NYC, joined the critically acclaimed Bat Theater Company and did voiceover work. Cary took a yearlong break from music and then embarked on his solo career. Eventually, both Jack and Cary would release solo records, but neither of them would reach a fraction of the success that they had achieved together. Rumors circulated about a possible reunion for years. Finally in the summer of 2002, JP's old manager, Brady Wood and his brother, Brandt got together and started making the idea a reality.

"The timing could not have been better," says Pierce. "I was in the middle of a painful divorce and it seemed as though my life was falling apart. Brady and I started scheming on the phone about the reunion while Brandt was working on Jack."

Calls were made, the Gypsy Tea Room (a club that Brady and Brandt used to own in Deep Ellum/Dallas) was booked and the ball was in motion. To sweeten the deal, Matt Scannel, Sean Hurley and Ed Toth from Vertical Horizon (long time friends and touringmates) volunteered to be the backing band. It was starting to come together. After almost 5 years of not talking, Jack and Cary were about to get on the phone and discuss making up, making music and making a lot of JP fans very happy. The shows were sold-out weeks in advance - with hundreds left in the streets with no tickets. Had JP actually grown in popularity during their hiatus? Offers started pouring in and they took their show on the road once again. But this time it was just like their humble beginnings: no band, no bus, no crew - just two guys and two guitars - the way it used to be. And it was working. The fan base was continuing to grow.

Older and wiser - both are now fathers. Priorities have changed. "We both admit that we did not realize or appreciate what we had," says Jack. "There is a lot more gratitude - for each other and for the gifts we have to write and play music."

"We have been blessed with the ability to strap guitars on our backs, get on a plane and go play a show anywhere in the country," says Pierce. "That is the career I always hoped we would have."

"I love the universal theme that is in the lyrics of "Promise of Summer"," says Pierce. "The winter fields begin to recover, finally it's the Promise of Summer...lights are shining round and their guards are coming down.' It's about love won and love lost. It's about hope and new beginnings. It's been the working-title for almost 2 years now as we've wrestled through logistics - trying to get this record off the ground. But there was always the "Promise of Summer." That hope has kept us going."

Hopefully we'll get another 20 years of one of America's most-loved acoustic duos.