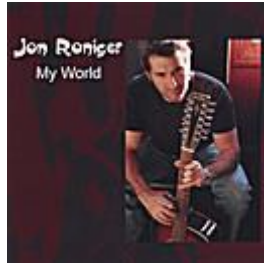


## Mp3 Jon Roniger - My World



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Rock-Folk. Music that rocks played on acoustic instruments. 12 MP3 Songs FOLK: Folk Pop, ROCK: Acoustic Details: In San Francisco for more than ten years, Jon Roniger has come a long way from his New Orleans roots. With Jim Croce and Simon Garfunkel as his early musical influences, Jon started his musical career at the age of ten in his church choir; at the age of 17, he picked up a guitar and began exploring his own musical style. As a songwriter, Jon strives to create a sound that allows his listeners to explore their feelings with his lighthearted songs about love and loss. Playing locally in San Francisco, nationally and abroad, Jon's tour schedule continually exposes him to new and exciting musical influences. Eleven Questions with Jon Roniger By Doug Wyllie I have for you something like eleven relatively random but relevant questions. Let's just get right into it. The record is so very different from the Still record. The name of the record, "Addicted," seems very provocative to me, considering how plainspoken you about your alcohol abuse of a few years ago. What are you trying to convey with that title? Well, the way I look at it is that I'm never going to get rid of the addictive personality, so I just refocus my addictions to healthier things. I'm still addicted to music. What am I trying to convey with that? Basically it's that I'm equally addicted as I've always been, it's just now I'm addicted to things that are a positive force in my life. Where was the record made and who was involved? Basically it was my roommates and me. We did about seventy-five percent of the work at our house on Pine Street. The label we formed was P&L Music, which stands for Pine and Lyon Music. My roommate Dave Hampp produced the record and engineered the record. We recorded the drum tracks down at my rehearsal studio, which is Francisco Studios out by Bayview Plaza. Took the drum tracks home, plugged them all into the computer at home and then did all the vocals and guitar parts and virtually everything there at the apartment at Pine Street. Which, you know, caused some turmoil - not as much turmoil as we thought -

but some interesting situations with the neighbors upstairs. Like what? Well, of course this was back in the days of abuse, so in one instance I was standing there wailing away on the guitar at three or four in the morning on a Thursday or Friday night and, you know, in a smoke filled room with bloodshot eyes and I kind of look up and there's my neighbor from two flights up, standing there in her pajamas, just like, "Please, please stop. We can't take it anymore." Other than that, everyone was pretty polite about asking us to stop when they needed it to happen. The guitars were so loud that the back of the house was shaking. When did you make the record? It took a long time. I'd say we finished mastering in January, and we started recording about three and a half years earlier. That's about when we recorded our first drum beats. You've got to take into account that everyone's working a full time job and we have to bring musicians in as we need them, and you know, throw in a ton of bottles of Southern Comfort and a good cocaine addiction and you know, it takes a little while. Who are the musicians you pulled in? The amount of musicians used was ludicrous. Most of the tracks feature Tony Ross on drums. Mark Abbott is the drummer on two tracks, "Big Old Mirror" and "Along Come a Day." He also plays in my band Still. There are I think three or four different bass players. Chris Ward, who used to play in a band called Steak, plays on several tracks. Charles Thomas plays bass on the track "Loaded." He's a local blues musician. I play bass on a bunch of the tracks, and of course Chad Heise, who plays with me in Still also, plays on "Weight of the World." Let's see, Randy Forester of the Eddie Money Band plays Hammond B3 and piano - if you hear piano or Hammond B3, it is Randy Forester. Guitar players include myself, a guy named Alain Godmer AKA Riot from Montreal, plays lead guitar all over the place. Another local guitar player named Rico Mastodanato plays some tasty parts on a few different tunes like "Along Come a Day" and "Big Old Mirror." Pete Sayour plays guitar parts on I think "Weight of the World" and "Lay Down Your Head." He also plays with me in Still. I think that does it for guitar players. Who provides that angelic voice on the back-up vocals? My roommate Jenny MacNamara and then Jamie McKenzie handle all of the background vocals all over the whole record. There are a few miscellaneous people here and there, but that's the bulk of it. That would be the band, if there were a band. It'd be a crowded stage. Yeah it would be a very crowded stage, but you know, the more the merrier. That brings me to a question I hadn't prepared. How is it you plan to support the record, considering the fact that you don't really have a band per se, to tour with? Are you planning on traveling? I do plan on travelling. I'm taking the initial steps to put together a Fall and a Spring college tour, hopefully throughout the west coast, south west and maybe

even over to as far as New Orleans. I'll be doing that, mostly acoustic. The band that I'm in now does play several of the songs off that record. So for the most part, I'm working on promoting and marketing this thing through the Internet. I'm really focusing on promoting it acoustically, because the band is sort of moving in a different direction. Well, yeah, we'll get to that in a moment. (Laughs) What's the website? The website is [jonroniger.com](http://jonroniger.com). The arrangements are, to me, at once simple, and rich. I'm wondering how you accomplished it, and further, what was the aesthetic you were going for with the background violin in "Weight of the World," for example? We actually feature a Cello on that, and well, we changed directions on that song probably ten times. As an overview of the whole record we wanted to make what we thought would be a Classic Rock album. Something where one or two of the songs might be radio-play and the rest of them might be album cuts that don't ever make it on the air but real fans really enjoy. That was the overall goal, and then for example, in "Weight of the World" the cello track just kind of came up. The arrangement just kept getting thinner and thinner to where it was almost just bass, drums, guitar. We had tried putting down a string part, and a keyboard part and it still didn't sound as full as we wanted and then Dave did a session with a cello player and invited her back to do a part on that one. Her name was Karra Duchi. The idea we had for the arrangements in general was that we wanted to record everything so that when it came time to mix, we had more to choose from. So things just kind of fell where they did. So the mixing process, we had a ton of fun doing that because we had all these things to choose from. We'd say "OK, let's bring the piano part in here, and leave that out in the next verse, or bring the acoustic guitar in in the third verse but leave it out in the second." The options were definitely great. In many ways, and especially on certain songs, it's vastly more down-tempo than your band, Still. Is this the darker side of Jon Roniger? I would say so. I mean, to me it's basically a dark album. That's kind of the concept that made Dave the happiest as well. I don't know, the songs were all written in, let's just say, the darker times and that's just kind of the way it fell you know? That sort of gets me to my next prepared question, which was the development of the record obviously took a long time. So from the writing standpoint, did you write the songs as you went? What was the evolution of the record? The answer to your question is no, all the songs had been previously written. We started by making a four-track tape of every song I had written, which at the time really wasn't that many - maybe like twenty or something. We just picked out our favorites and the ones we thought were the strongest and just went from there. It was pretty basic. We wanted to do a ten or eleven or twelve song record. It's funny, "Waiting," one of the acoustic songs

towards the end I was just kind of sitting around the apartment one day and the microphone was set up and we were just kind of learning how to work the program so I just kind of recorded that song. I recorded the rhythm track and went back and recorded the lead track, which is more like a lick track just to double the guitar, and then recorded the vocal with the same setting on the mike and then four years later we were just kind of listening to that song and we were like, "We can work with this, let's just throw it on the record. The joke between us was that it was going to be like the "hidden track" or the "bonus track." You know how you fall asleep with the album on and like twenty minutes after it ends, another song pops up? So the joke between us was that the bonus track was actually track nine, because that wasn't intended to go on the record at all. You've already mentioned "Waiting" and I have two song titles in this next question. I want to know the inspiration behind "Loaded" in particular and "Waiting" because those both kind of jumped out at me. Let's start with "Loaded." Growing up in New Orleans, one of my favorite bars was on the streetcar track on St. Charles. Hundreds of nights - I can't even count - I'd end up walking home because my friends would be like "Hey, we're leaving, do you want to go?" And of course me the lush, no I don't want to leave I'm going to stay here and keep smokin' cigarettes and drinking and playing pool and doin' whatever. So that song kind of is just my little walk down memory lane of how many times I've walked down the streetcar track to get home. The funny thing for me was that no matter when I started walking, the streetcar inevitably came down the streetcar track going the wrong way. It's just a little story about me getting drunk at a bar on the streetcar track in New Orleans. Nice, and "Waiting?" "Waiting" I wrote when I was away from a girl I was dating at the time and we were in the middle of a long-distance thing. I had moved back to New Orleans briefly and she was living out here and that song just kind of popped into my head one day. I'm sure you'll understand that when you're in a long-distance relationship half of your time is spent wanting to be with that person and that's just kind of where that one comes from. How many records have you made? This is only my second full-length album. I've done a lot of three, four, five song EP's. What I'm kind of getting at here is I guess that the saying I once heard when I started first doing music, was that if you don't learn something from every studio session, you're not paying attention. I wonder if there was anything in particular that you learned over the course of this fairly drawn out process or anything that maybe surprised you during the creation of the record? Oddly enough, I think this might be the only time - well this and the Still project - have been the only two times when I'd actually learned and had life-changing knowledge gained. I guess what I learned most from this one is

that it's more important to do it right than to do it quickly and I also learned that the most important thing to me is that making a record is about where you are now. So five years from now, I need to look back on that record and say that was a part of my life, that's where I was in my life then. Because we could still be making that record if we wanted to. You could spend an entire lifetime making twelve songs, but what's the point. I want to do another record. And then I want to do another record. So, the learning process was "it is what it is, and let go of it and move on." It's a snapshot. Yeah, basically that's exactly right. This could just be my perception, it could be something stronger. To me there's a real Country feel - especially to the backline - but also to other elements of the sound. Are you a Country singer? (Laughs) I'm definitely not a Country singer, but I don't know if I'm a Rock 'n Roll singer either. I write all of my songs on acoustic guitar, sittin' around the house. I almost feel like I'm a Folk singer. Even the band has recently accused me of being "Folkier" than I let on. I take that as a compliment. As I get older, I know that I can sit around the house and play acoustic guitar and write songs. I can do that until I'm a hundred and ten years old and hopefully I live that long. So, if that's what Folk singers do, then that's what I am. But I definitely throw in the Southern twang. There were certain times, as I listened to the album for maybe the third or fourth trip through, that I was kind of reminded of early Eric Clapton in the vocals. I know we've talked about this before but to whom do you hear yourself being compared? I've heard people say that I kind of remind them of like a John Hyatt. My vocal coach as of late said, "You kind of have a John Hyatt with a little Steven Tyler thrown in there." I was like, that's a really good group of people to be thrown in with, even though I don't hear that. But, I mean, Eric Clapton, a huge influence on me. John Hyatt is one of the best song writers out there. So to me that's a phenomenal compliment. We've reached question eleven, which is always the same. I know I missed something, what the fuck did I miss? Is that the question? That's the question. Um, you know what, I think we just about covered everything. And the beauty of not covering it all is that it maybe it leaves us something else to talk about next time. You know, I guess my goal for this record, which I don't know if we've talked about, is I just wanted to have something that I could hand people and say, "This is me." And I can now do that, and I can say I'm proud of what we've done, I'm proud of the artwork that we have to show it visually to people and I'm really proud of the work we did. It certainly wasn't the easiest thing I've ever done but it was made with love and there it is. I hope you like it and if you don't, not a problem. Find somebody who does. Hopefully a ton of people will like it. My guess is that a ton of people will, because I definitely did and that's not just because

I'm a friend, it's because I know one or two things about music and I definitely found it to be very strong through and through. Cool. I really appreciate that. Doug Wyllie is a freelance writer and communications consultant in San Francisco. He can be reached at [dougwyllie@thunderhush.com](mailto:dougwyllie@thunderhush.com). Buy Jon's CD, "Addicted," now.

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