

## Mp3 Jason Walker & The Last Drinks - Ashes & Wine



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Sydney-based country rocker Walker has a new band and a brand new record. Essential listening for fans of Exile-period Stones, Neil and Gram. (AS SEEN AT 2004 SXSW.) 12 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Country Rock, ROCK: Americana Details: Jason Walker is not a guy that many people would once have associated with a strong work ethic. "Yeah, it's true - I did get fired from a lot of jobs over the years," he says, grinning ruefully. "It's a struggle to get anything out of me. But music has always been the only thing I've ever wanted to do for a living." Given that in the last three years, Walker has turned out a best selling music biography of Gram Parsons, released two albums and toured the United States and the United Kingdom twice, it would appear that he's being either modest or disingenuous. His new album Ashes Wine reflects the time he spent travelling by himself to all kinds of places. "It's an album of songs written while on trains and in other people's cars - not bitching about being on the road, because I love that - but it's about looking at things from a distance, looking at the people I love. Some people would be mortified to think I might write a song about them but I would never waste time on someone I didn't care about." Having enjoyed much critical acclaim for his previous album, Stranger To Someone, and its high production values courtesy of Michael Carpenter, Walker returned to Stagefright Studios in 2003 and began working on the follow-up album. Over 26 days, with a month and a half off in the middle to allow Carpenter to embark on his own UK US tour, the pair completed the album at the beginning of August. "Most of the reviews for the last record really centered on what many believe is Jason's enormous potential as a songwriter and artist. This album will prove that belief to be absolutely true," says Laughing Outlaw's label manager, Stuart Coupe. Ashes Wine, which clocks in at 43 minutes in length, is a classic in waiting. Every song is different in its scope and vision, from opener 'You're On Your Own's early 70s country pop vitality to the Stonesy thrust and parry of songs like 'Dissatisfaction' and 'Let Down' or the

peak-period Neil Young Crazy Horse crunch of 'Save Your Tears'. Says Jason, "Most of the albums I really dig are by bands or singers who can write across styles, who can handle a little country without sounding jive or who can boogie without being dumb about it. Wilco can do it, the Stones did it, the Faces, You Am I." REVIEWS "Walker's second post-Golden Rough solo album finds him in fine form. Its songs are mostly attractive, subtle, mid-tempo alt.country ballads with the Stones moment which betray what Walker was up to between albums: writing a book about Gram Parsons and touring with Jay Farrar."

\*\*\* - Sylvie Simmons, MOJO (UK) "Ex-Golden Rough mainman Walker is backed by a full band of buddies on his second solo album, *Ashes Wine*, and sounds like someone snug in his own skin. Here he draws on his carpetbag of honky-tonk tricks ("Helpless Guy"), Stonesy strut ("Dissatisfaction"; "Letdown") and the rough-diamond rattle of early Son Volt ("Please Save Your Tears"). Walker's voice is equal parts whiskey and gravel - classic rawk and bottom-of-the-glass country-blues - somewhere between Jagger and Steve Earle. Expressive, literate and ballsy stuff." \*\*\*\* - UNCUT, January 2004 "Jason Walker The Last Drinks' *Ashes Wine*" will definitely end up in our year's end list! Imagine the Stones ("Far Away Eyes"-era) teaming up with Ryan Adams for a couple of songs. The final result is classic Australiana. Great singer. Great songs. Leaving it around the CD player is like putting candy within a kid's reach - you simply know what'll happen next..." \*\*\*\*\* - CtrlAltCountry Website (Belgium) "This is, quite simply, a great record. Over forty minutes, Walker leads us through his vision of broken relationships a cast of damaged characters. The symptoms of their misery may vary, but the solution is usually the same. Drink yourself happy. Stick this on the stereo while you pour &, believe me, it might just work." \*\*\*\* - Americana UK Website "In the last ten years or so there seem to have been a succession of bands rising to the fore with original material that pays blatant homage to some particular phase of rock/pop's varied history. Oasis famously rewrote The Beatles' songbook whilst The Thrills, The Coral and a host of others have rewritten the 60s and 70s for the 21st century. And now here comes Jason Walker from Australia with his second album, all his own songs but sounding like Mick'n'Keef mislaid them sometime in the early 70s. It's all about doomed love affairs and taking refuge in the drink and I feel the lyrics reflect the rock'n'roll mythology rather than any intense personal experiences. And that's fine because we don't have to take it seriously and can just enjoy a good nostalgic wallow in solid rock music solidly played. There's plenty of knowing nods in The Stones' direction. I think Jason just happens to sound like Mick Jagger because the similarities are quite subtle, not a pastiche, but he really goes for the connection with the whole band

sound on some tracks, and then when a song called "Dissatisfaction" comes along you know he's just enjoying himself being Jagger's kid brother. My favourite track is perhaps less Stones-like; "Drown in that River" has a beery (or whisky-soaked) boys chorus backing Jason as he sings a song of the drink both ruining his life and offering his only refuge (boy, does he need the love of a good woman). Amongst other pleasures it gives us the line: "I'm not dead, I'm just sleeping alone". This album's still growing on me, and, for a rock record, it brings a quiet pleasure. And finally I should mention that whilst Jason Walker is the mainman, Michael Carpenter provides Gurf Morlix like duties as co-writer, engineer, producer, drummer, backing vocalist....." - Flyin' Shoes Website

"As it happens, over Christmas I finally read the Gram Parsons bio (God's Own Singer) that's been winking at me from the bookshelf for too long. Lo and behold, the author is the same Jason Walker fronting this comely album of finely crafted songs that sound like the Stones circa "Far Away Eyes". Gram Parsons, as Walker's book explains, had quite an impact on the Stones in their countryish musings, hanging out a lot with Keith and being allowed to record "Wild Horses". So it figures, sort of, that this is the territory Walker feels at home in. In words and melody, he demonstrates uncommon ability (parts of the book really sing too) and backed up by some willing and experienced hands - a sympathetic band and producer - he's created an album that stands above the ruck of country rock records made locally (yep, he's an Aussie). In his own words, he wanted to write across various styles and play country without sounding jive about it. He has succeeded here, where many try and fail." 7.5 stars - Australian Financial Review

"Jason Walker is a self-confessed Gram Parsons nut but this is no easy honky-tonk angelic ride. Instead you get Gram by osmosis in that this cracking little album is Jason's take on the great GP but filtered through the Stones when Gram and Keith were (allegedly) hoovering industrial quantities of toot. Jason's first album Stranger To Someone, released in 2001 and produced by the wonderful Michael Carpenter, was more cover versions than the current crop of self-penned gems, and this time round the critical acclaim of the first is fully justified in the second. Inspired by touring with the likes of Jay Farrar, the new album is strong from start to finish, kicking off with the Tom Petty sound-alike of 'You're On Your Own' and the country-pop of the loping Stonesy 'Angel'. It's scary how close to a sneering Mick Jagger he gets and on the rocky third track 'Dissatisfaction' (geddit?) you'd swear it was an Exile outtake. Track five, 'Helpless Guy', slows down for a honky bar ballad in best GP-through-Mick tradition and the pedal steel positively cries out of the speakers into your beer. Following a gentle middle set to lull us into a soporific soft rock dream, things kick back in

with the Neil Young-guitar of motoring rocker 'Please Save Your Tears' and the quality continues through to the end with the sad 'Looking Out' with its haunting 'Strawberry Fields' organ and ghostly backing vocals. Superbly produced throughout by Michael Carpenter again and completed in under a month with exceptional backing from the Last Drinks this is a belter of a CD. Looking like Frank Black after a bad night, Jason Walker can still make a beautiful noise and I'll eat my lunch (I'm fed up with hats) if it's not a big success." - Songbook "Aussie (originally N.Z.) alt country artist Jason Walker is blessed with a strong, emotive voice and terrific song writing skills. Gram Parsons, Steve Earl and Neil Young are obvious influences (Walker has written a book on Parsons!). Judging by this album Walker stands up well, at least at this early stage, in comparison to those music icons! He also has spent a lot of time with Bill Chambers (Dead Ringer Band, Kasey Chambers). It shows. Some of Kasey's superlative song writing skills just might have rubbed off on Jason Walker. "I'm not dead I'm just sleeping alone/ every word I sing for you is torn from the bone." And "Above his head the FM radio cries/ here to remind you how love dies." And "her dad liked a drink so does she/ you don't fall too far from the family tree." Delivery is everything when it comes to lyrics and this singer has the ability to hang his words out for us to hear, a tribute to his alt country music background. He's got one of those ear friendly voices. There's a bitter sweetness about the album, but also enough variation for it to happily stand repeated plays. It begins with a shuffle piece, moves to a soft country, then a Rolling Stones type of format in 'Dissatisfaction'. There are a few country ballads and a touching song about a woman who's a drunk, and there's 'Drown In That River', a bouncy country rock drinking song. Jason Walker has been touring successfully in the US and the UK. Look out for him if he gets nearby." \*\*\*\*1/2 - ABC Far North Queensland "Jason has contrary to his first cd written all the songs himself with a little help of Michael Carpenter, who also produced. The result is a terrific sample of great country-rock (the Australian way). The spirit of Gram Parsons wanders through this cd ("Listening out for our song", "Helpless Guy" and "Last drinks"), while "Dissatisfaction", "Letdown" and 'Drown in that river" could be part of a countrified Stones cd. "Please save your Tears" reminds me of Neil Young. For the fans of G.P., countrified Rolling Stones and the Jayhawks." - Roots Revival Radio Show "New songwriters keep on growin', even on distant australian coasts: Jason Walker has refined with fresh sensibility his music and most of all he decided to play his smart roots-rock with a straight rock'n'roll band named Last Drinks. In Ashes Wine Jason increases his songwriting and sketches out a sort of tribute to last ten years of lively alternative-country music, just in between brilliant Jayhawks harmonies and rootsy

depressed Son Volt ballads." - Roots Highway Website (Italy) "Laughing Outlaw Records appear to embody that most wonderful of concepts: be led by the soul and not by the mind. They may not make a pocketful of money this way, but they sure as hell will make a bunch of friends. A perfect example of their policy is the release of this album by a man and his friends who play in such a laid back style that they are probably horizontal for most of the time. For the more upbeat, rockier tracks they are probably sitting around dangling long neck bottles from their fingertips. The thing is the music makes you want to do the same thing yourself! It isn't that this band break any new ground, far from it. You slip the CD on and it comes through the speakers with a call as nostalgic as that from an old friend who you haven't seen in an age, and there he is, on your doorstep, with a smile as wide as the Grand Canyon. The music is as comfortable as your favourite cardigan, slippers, hat, whatever, and that is where it's appeal lies. Not the same old same old, though. This is fresh, straight from the oven stuff, warm and delightful, full of promise. When it's finished you don't feel bloated either, you have not had too much of a good thing. And there are tracks here that stray from the alt country byway that was cut out of the raw earth by Uncle Tupelo. In places there is more than a hint of the Stones surfacing, and if you listen closely Steve Earle's twang and Joe Pernice's phrasing have been given room to peek over the parapet, too. All in all these make for a very good thing. You can return to this album as often as you could turn to that old friend for conversation. It's as simple as that." - She Took His Breath Away fanzine "Another Laughing Outlaw production from Michael Carpenter's Sydney studios, but Ashes Wine differs from others in its rawness: Carpenter, limited to drums here rather than his usual multitasking, has given Walker his reins, and the result's an unassumingly splendid set of rootsy rock that would net its author far more attention than he'll garner if he hailed from Austin rather than Australia. Great band name, too." 8 / 10 - TNT Magazine (UK) "Jason Walker's acclaimed biography of Gram Parsons ('God's Own Singer') and recent tour with alt. country icon Jay Farrar gives a fair first impression. What you may not expect is the quality of his songwriting; though laced with plangent country chordage there's an indefinable punk ethic here - that's punk as defined by the words 'street' and 'real life' - one that he shares with Jesse Malin, exemplified by the mysterious blood on the sheets that brings 'Angel' to life, and the alcohol that streams through 'Last Drinks'. It's an easy album to pin down, calling on every reference from 'Exile...' era 'Stones to Ryan Adam's bloodless fashion, but there's blood all over 'Ashes Wine', a rallying call to the new country cause." - 3.5 / 5 - Logo Magazine (UK) "Jason Walker has been building a cult following in the UK for his

distinctive alt.country attack. This second album finds him accompanied by a crack band he's named the Last Drinks. Comprising Worth Wagers (ex-Cow Lily and the Moviegoers), Andrew Lay (ex-Golden Rough), Brian Crouch (Golden Rough), and Dave Keys (Soap Star Joe), they provide a solid foundation for Walker's well-written lyrics and vibrant vocals. There are hints of the swaggering Mick Jagger in intonation, and both Let Down and Dissatisfaction, with their Stonesy-vibe, could be Rolling Stones' cast-offs. In contrast, Last Drinks leans more into honk-tonk territory while Please Save Your Tears is very much in the rockin' Neil Young Crazy Horse style. The overall tempo of Dead Leaves, a sad tale of a relationship end, is on the subdued side with some haunting steel, along with the electric guitar. Drown In That River is a hard-cutting drinkin' song and Listening Out For Our Song is mid-tempo tune in which there's hope through the tender caring of a lover who distracts the singer from his troubles. An agreeable effort from a guy who seems to prefer slow, gentle ripples to big waves." - \*\*\*1/2 - Maverick (UK) "Jason Walker The Last Drinks' "Ashes Wine" will definitely end up in our year's end list! Imagine the Stones ("Far Away Eyes"-era) teaming up with Ryan Adams for a couple of songs. The final result is classic Australiana. Great singer. Great songs. Leaving it around the CD player is like putting candy within a kid's reach - you simply know what'll happen next..." - \*\*\*\*\* - CtrlAltCountry Website (Belgium) "Jason Walker last year made two impressions on the altcountry scene, firstly his biography of Gram Parsons 'Gods Own Singer' and secondly his solo debut 'Stranger to Someone' which in its own way also paid its dues to the originator of Cosmic American Music. On that set he combined craftsman like covers of Parsons' material with some of his own highly worthy compositions which sat very comfortably alongside those of his guru affording ample favourable comparisons. On his sophomore effort 'Ashes Wine', Walker takes his muse by the scruff of its neck and presents twelve tracks of his own writing (two co writes with Michael Carpenter) on a set that will serve to strengthen his already strong reputation in these circles. This is an album of carefully illustrated melancholy tales that is framed with a contemporary country rock feel, that in turn tips its cap to a number of influences outside of Gram Parsons. Carpenter, who produces, has in the past promoted a style that has brought a pop sensibility to the artists he has worked with. Here his interpretation of Walker's work is more muted and restrained, which works perfectly with these songs, leaving the whole thing with a nicely understated feel and allowing that ever so important space in the mix for the writing to materialise within the gaps. The opening cut "You're On Your Own", is probably the least memorable of the twelve, but it is a fine scene setter. It doesn't arrive with a blast, so much as a gentle

filtering in, featuring some wistful melodic touches which pave the way for the elegance that follows - this is one of those albums that seem to improve the further in you travel. Tracks like "Dissatisfaction" and "Letdown" add backbone with a restrained yet effective guitar offensive, a touch of Hammond B3 support adds weight, fooling with a mellow Stones 'Exile' era feel. Later in the set "Please Save Your Tears" make use of Neil Young's Crazy Horse sound, accumulating a whole plethora of Youngian references and cramming them into just shy of four minutes of historic rock. The best moments though are when the accelerator pedal is eased up and the subtle nuances of the instrumentation and the writing are allowed to come to the fore. There are some fine touches on "Listening Out For Our Song" a mellow country rock number where Walker's vocals come across with a magical drawling warmth that entices you into the nub of this nonchalant heartbreaker. The highlight of the set for me though is the gentlest ballad "Helpless Guy (Every Moment With You) where the pensive pedal steel of Graham Griffith adds its characteristic lonesome expression to the tender resonator guitar and the strolling beat. Walker's vocals here are impressive, his twangsome edge conjuring images of lonely and heartbroken honky tonkers waltzing their days away in a smokey, beer soaked bar-room on the edge of a nameless one horse town...pure magic. The set closes in a slightly less conventional manner, "Looking Out" visiting a different vibe entirely from what has gone before, using mellotron and theramin to add a spacey ambience to this pleasant, if somewhat off kilter epilogue. Walker has made a considerable advance with this set. On his previous outing he seemed to be hiding his light behind the Gram Parsons bushel...whether or not that was an intentional bow to the intense research that went into the book he was writing is a point worth examining. Here however he has spread his considerable song writing wings with a flourish, adding a valuable and extremely mature piece of work to his burgeoning catalogue, an album that is a welcome addition to the altcountry genre." \*\*\*\* - Altcountrytab "His debut, Stranger To Someone, attracted excited interest and rather overblown comparisons with Ryan Adams and Uncle Tupelo star Jay Farrar. Excellent though it was, it was mostly covers and the few own songs were approached rather tentatively. Now on this excellent sophomore release he shows a new found confidence in his own abilities as a clever and intelligent songwriter with the versatility to cross the genre boundaries from gritty alt.country to country pop to crunching rock. Great band too, including ex-Cow Lily guitarist Worth Wagers." 4 stars - Bristol Evening Post (UK) "Jason Walker is the author of a Gram Parsons biography. As well as that, he is himself a musician. 'Ashes Wine' is his 2nd CD, upon which we hear him, with a new backing band, take

on a countryrocker role. For country bands with the closest comparisons, one might hear The Jayhawks (Angel), Slobberbone (Listening Out For Our Song), Neil Young Crazy Horse (Please Save Your Tears) and Jay Farrar/Son Volt (You're On Your Own). Sometimes Walker seems to be sitting right in the middle of those, and then he calls to mind the Glimmer Twins, and their time spent collaborating with Gram Parsons (Letdown). Walker is also able to hold his own here when it comes to ballads - the piano-driven love song Dead Leaves, fantasy song Looking Out, and the somewhat psychedelic offering Not Only Love, something that singer/songwriters don't always have in them. " - Altcountry.NI Website (Netherlands) "In which Jason Walker, one time member of Aussie troubadours Golden Rough, becomes - just for one night only, Matthew - Mick Jagger's younger brother on the (appropriately titled) Dissatisfaction. Ashes Wine is the album where Walker exercises his love of Ryan Adams and Gram Parsons, and then some. This album has muscle; songs like You're On Your Own and Listening Out For Our Song grab you by the throat and demand to be heard while Helpless Guy cranks up the lacrymose content with its big men do cry harmonies and pedal guitar steen that gives it classic country tale status. Ashes Wine - mixed, produced and engineered by the ubiquitous Michael Carpenter - ups the ante from Walker's previous album, Stranger To Someone. For a start Walker has written, or co-written with Carpenter, all the songs, where previously he had penned only four. The difference is threefold: Walker sounds more confident, the band behind him is tight and powerful, and the overall sound has more punch and drama. Occasionally, you get the feeling Walker is doing just a little too much to make his point, but in the main it works: Ashes Wine has a gritty rawness that should elevate Walker onto the same level as the people he so obviously admires." - NetRhythms Website "Songs on the radio have long been a moving metaphor in the best country music. Recently deceased legend Max D Barnes, with 533 plus songs in his catalogue, struck the jackpot twice with The Kendalls and Alan Jackson topping charts with Thank God For The Radio. Now expatriate Kiwi Jason Walker fleshes out Listening Out For Our Song with radio the conduit between a spurned factory serf and departed lover. Walker's house without doors phrase evokes imagery akin to Jackson's dark hit A House With No Curtains. Jason and The Last Drinks are marketed as alt-country but on most tunes he arises above the anal angst quicksand that drowns many peers. That doesn't mean he will share U.S. charts with stone country superstars such as Jackson but he has sufficient song depth for a sub genre gallop on Americana stations. Walker, like unsung late heroes Barnes and Harlan Howard, injects lyrics with a credible passion. He sets the mood with the

negative love song, You're On Your Own, daubed with pedal steel by 50 Million Beers veteran Graeme Griffith, and sibling song Angel. Despite the bleak themes the songs, highly reminiscent of the best work of Steve Hoy, are a salient signpost to the twin peaks of Ashes Wine - Helpless Guy and Last Drinks. Walker's genetic alcoholic analysis on the latter is a nice touch - "her dad liked a drink, so did she" and "the bitter truth is she drinks for his sins." More effective a mood modifier than pub rocker Dissatisfaction and Please Save Your Tears - melodic mate of Michael Murphey tune Geronimo's Cadillac - is whiskey chaser, Drown In That River. "I'm not dead, I'm just sleeping alone," nails the morose message. Dead Leaves may be derivative in title of the Stones Dead Flowers but not in content; it has an inherent beauty shared by evocative finale Looking Out. Ashes And Wine won't create major radio waves during daylight but has nocturnal appeal for dial surfers - not necessarily here in our woeful wasteland." - Beat Magazine

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