

Zack Walther and the Cronkites

by: Deric Garza

His name isn't Roger... Glasses are clinking. Voices are softly rumbling in the background. Luke Leverett provides the acousti-melodic music for this mellow Thursday night at Tavern in the Gruene. I have the tape rolling, a freshly ripped up pen packaging sitting on the lops-sided table next to my PowerBook, and a red, one dollar and seventy-eight cent Walgreen's composition notebook in my lap. The Houston Astros are on TV behind the bar and they've just won. That's a good thing seeing as how

I'm an Astro fans as well as the man I'm sitting down with to interview tonight. I can now have his undivided attention. Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce you to Zack Walther, the next thing to happen to Texas music.

The Birth of Rodger, Abridged ~ Zack Walther, pronounced wal-ter (the 'h' is silent), comes to us from West Columbia, TX, a suburb outside of Houston. Zack, now 26, had been grooming himself for the music business ever since he enrolled in choir when he was in the 6th grade, even though he probably did not know it at the time. Though singing was on tap at a young age, his public performance skills weren't developed until his best friend asked him to join theatre his junior year of high school after one of the cast members in a play failed and wasn't able to perform. After high school his interest also shifted towards a sound recording degree when he enrolled at what was then Southwest Texas University in 1998. Needing an instrument of study for his degree, Zack chose voice, which he was then classically trained in and received his degree.

Zack had been in many bands through out high school, most of those being alternative bands. He recounts to me how the first songs he learned were the Rolling Stone's "Paint it Black", and Everclear's "Santa Monica". It was while Zack was at college that friends of his, including longtime friend and drummer Matt Briggs, who was currently in school in Wharton TX, formed a top 40-dancehall band in which Zack's dad managed and taught Zack and his band mates important business techniques of the music industry. Matt later brought along Stephanie, a karaoke queen who hailed from El Campo and who was currently enrolled in classes with Matt,

and had her audition for the band. She proved to them she clearly could sing, and she was a welcomed addition to the group. The band later dissolved and soon after, Matt and Stephanie joined Zack at Southwest Texas. Matt again approached Zack about starting another band alongside Stephanie who was in the process of learning bass. And that was the birth of the band Rodger Wilko.

The Death of Rodger, Foreword ~ Over the next few years, Rodger Wilko became a popular college band in and around the San Marcos area, not to mention the popularity they gained from a constant touring schedule that included dates across the state of Texas as well as Oklahoma, and many admirable opening bills for acts such as Cory Morrow, Randy Rodgers, and many other notable acts. Over 5 years the band released 3 albums, one that was produced

by Michael Ramos, and had radio play with their single "With You In Rome". But, towards the end of those 5 years, the band faced issues with songwriting where both Zack and Stephanie were writing songs, but were never writing together, inherently producing two different styles and in turn creating a sonic divide within the band. Soon after, Matt and Stephanie began to perform on their own as well as Zack. The band had a mutual split and on February 4th of 2006, Rodger Wilko performed their last show at the same bar in which Zack and I are sitting at having this interview.

"I got the P.A. and they got the van" – Zack Walther on the breakup of Rodger Wilko

The Death of Rodger, Vol. 1 ~ The ending of Rodger Wilko marked the beginning of Zack's new band, Zack Walther and The Cronkites. The name comes from the suggestion of Zack's drummer and Zack agreed after he figured it would help people learn how

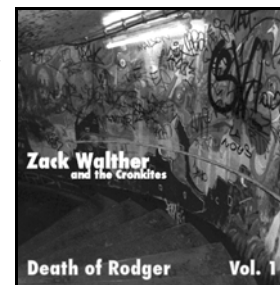
to correctly pronounce his last name (remember the 'h' is silent). And getting his name across right is important to Zack, not just because of the silent 'h', but over the past 5 years of performing some fans became to know him as Rodger. But that's all over now.

Zack has Carte blanch when it comes to his new project, not to mention complete artistic and creative control, something he obviously had to compromise in his former ventures. That being said, in some aspects, 'The Cronkites' is a completely different project than that of Rodger Wilko, but on another level it's exactly where Zack left off in the former project. He believes that as a songwriter, the material he was writing at the end of Rodger Wilko was some of the best he had ever penned. So he takes that, and his 5 plus years experience in the business, and is ready to expand his horizon.



And the kid's got chops! His live performances are a complete crowd pleaser, and put a blue star on his band as well, all top-notch musicians who treat the music they play with the utmost professionalism. And that's what you'll get out of his live shows, professionalism and buckets full of energy. And in a business flooded with singer/songwriters Zack has one thing that sets him above the rest...he can sing (he did study classical voice in college remember?).

September 19th 2006 brings the death of Rodger Wilko, literally. It marks the release date of Zack's first EP in a series of 2, cleverly titled The Death of Rodger Volume 1. Self produced by Zack, engineered by Hunter St. Marie, and mastered at The Zone at the referral of Ray Wylie Hubbard, the six song EP was created with the thought of getting Zack's music into the hands of old fans, and prospective new ones, as quickly as possible. He borrows the move from Mike McClure after he left The Great Divide to pursue his solo career in which he put out a series of EPs to get his music out to the public and have them start to engage him as a musician outside of his former band. Zack also embraces the fact we now live in a digital world. These days MySpace is king when it comes to music promotion, and that was also one of the motivating factors to getting his new material recorded as soon as possible. And MySpace is not the only place you can preview



Zack's new material, the whole EP is actually up for downloadable sale at www.ourtracks.com before you can get it in stores.

If you're in the music industry, be aware, Zack Walther and The Cronkites is the one band you don't want to pass up on. Zack is currently seeking an executive producer to the follow up EP to The Death of Rodger Vol. 1 and the ensuing full-length album to follow as well as producers for each. To hear the new material and for all pertinent contact info, be sure to visit www.ZackWalther.com and MySpace.com/zackwalthermuisc.

Just remember, the 'H' is silent. DG

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