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## *Dance With Me* JOHNNY REID

When Johnny Reid decided to name his new record *Dance With Me*, it was as much an invitation to his fans to get up and dance as it was a call to celebrate the things that bring you home, even if home is thousands of miles away.

"Life gets busy," he says simply. "You get caught up in work and the worry of life and business, and before you know it, it's kids and school and basketball, and you forget about the small things." He should know. With a family of his own and a busy touring schedule, you might think he'd lose sight of the small things himself from time to time. But the truth is, on *Dance With Me* they're never far from his mind...

Over the past two years, Reid's 2007 sophomore effort, *Kicking Stones*, has been kickin' ass. Certified Platinum in Canada, it has garnered the Scottish Born, Canadian singer/songwriter CCMA's for Top-Selling Canadian Recording and Top Male Artist in 2008, as well as a Juno nomination for Country Recording of the Year. Its also gone a long way to establishing Reid as an undeniably bright star in the Canadian Country Music firmament, yielding two top ten radio singles in "Love Sweet Love", and "Kicking Stones", and the runaway hit, "Darlin'", which sailed into both the top five at radio, and the number one spot on CMT last year.

Out of the gate *Dance With Me* is promising to be an even bigger success. It's already making an impression with the lead single, "A Woman Like You", which went straight into heavy rotation at CMT and was the #1 most added track at country radio in January 2009. And now, well before *Dance With Me* hits stores on March 10, Reid's Spring Theatre tour is selling out multiple nights in both major and secondary markets across the country – including 4 consecutive days at Winnipeg's Club Regent Casino.

In 2008 Reid racked up over 120 shows, and his fans – his Tartan Army – have packed them all; singing every word and connecting with him on what he feels is a whole new level. "It's been a great year. Unbelievable, and unbelievably humbling, to have so many people not only buy the record but show up to the concerts." On *Dance With Me* Reid returns the favour, speaking directly to the front row with songs like "Hey-O". Telling his crowd to 'Look to your left. Look to your right. Everybody here is a friend tonight."

"The big thing with this record was that I wanted it to be danceable. I wanted for people to be able to get up in their living room, or at the bars, or at the concert hall and dance." Between the infectious grooves of standouts like "Take It Outside" and "Keep Workin' On Me", they won't be able to help themselves".

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With a nod to the upbeat flavour of his debut, 2005's *Born To Roll*, and an eye to kicking his live set up a notch, Reid adds some serious steam to his sound on *Dance With Me*: rollicking pianos, soaring strings and tight horn arrangements that mine Country, old time Soul, R 'n' B, and Rock and Roll alike. But he does so without ever losing the forthright intimacy that fuelled *Kicking Stones* success.

"Anyone who knows me knows that I try my very best to keep it as simple as possible. When I sit down with a guitar I really try to be straight to the point, straight to the heart, and make sure whatever I'm singing is cold, stone, truth." And that's what drives people to his music: his ability to deliver the straight goods - deeply personal sketches of transcendent, yet simple moments, taken directly from his life, but painted in broad enough strokes you can inhabit them yourself.

"Here's the thing," Reid says. "You gotta take care of the people that take care of you. I really wanted to make a record that would speak to all the people who listen to Country radio, all the people who've changed my life." Over the past two years of shows he's gotten the chance to know some of those people. Meeting them and hearing their stories, he explains, allowed him go into the writing and recording process of *Dance With Me* with an exceptionally strong sense of what the content and rhythm of the album should be.

While recording in Nashville's Blue Room studio, Reid and co-writer, producer, and close personal friend, Brent Maher, placed the emphasis on getting strong performances live off the floor, cutting vocals and the band's tracks simultaneously. To do so they brought together a crack roster of talent and got the bulk of the album in the can in only two days: return appearances by Vicky Hampton, who's backed legendary performers like Garth Brooks, Dolly Parton, Bruce Springsteen, Kenny Rogers and Billy Joel; Keyboardist Gordon Mote and co-writer and guitarist Mark Selby; members of Mark Knopfler's touring band, including Glen Worf (Bass), and Richard Bennett (Guitars). As well as bringing in new players, like Nir Z on Drums and Percussion, who's recorded with the likes of Genesis, Joss Stone and John Mayer. The chemistry was undeniable says Maher. "We captured almost all of Johnny's vocals with the band. Nothing, nothing compares to the band and the singer reaching the moment together, and making a record at the same time."

"I wanted there to be a real sense of continuity between *Kicking Stones* and *Dance With Me*," Reid explains. There is. It's drawn from the very heart of *Kicking Stones*' final single, "Thank You", an open letter home from Johnny to his family. But where songs like "A Moon To Remember" and "Brings Me Home" follow in the same vein, the title track, "Dance With Me", picks up right where "Thank You" left off. "I wanted a song just like that. That was simple, pure, and spoke the truth," Reid says. "When I first met my wife we rented a wee place. We had a couple of kids, you know, and sometimes at night we'd just go into the kitchen or living room, throw on some music, pour us some wine and just dance. That's where "Dance With Me" came from."



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Whether it's on playful songs like "Old Flame", or those that speak painfully and candidly about his own losses, like "My Old Friend", *Dance With Me* never fails to throw the simple truths that threaten to escape us in the noise and hustle of everyday life into stark relief. "It's about how you live your life. It's about takin' a wee bit of time to spend with the person you love, to sort of get lost in a moment and get back to basics." That is, perhaps, his greatest strength as a songwriter and a performer. An ability to reaffirm for himself, *and* his audience, that nothing is more important than love, family and the small things that makes life more livable.

Regardless of whether you're an old fan or new, *Dance With Me* is a reminder to make room for those people and to treasure the memories that can bring us all home when we most need them to.

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