

It's been a while, 15-years in fact, but the Nordstrom brothers, Tim and Mike, are back with a bang with their latest album, 'Dream Catch.' Their perceptive edge on everyday life within and without Montana is as sharp as ever at these Montana Tunesmith's shower the listener with a startling adventure that takes you through those highs and lows of existence.

'Dream Catch' was recorded under the auspices of Lloyd Maines, a Texas-based country music producer who won a Grammy for Best Country Album in 2003 for producing the Dixie Chicks' album 'Home.'

Maines also worked with the Nordstroms on their 2002 album 'Life is for the Living.' The ball started rolling when Tim sent in some songs to Maines to get some "honest feedback" on them.

Maines was "pretty excited about the acoustic ones." said Tim.

The collaboration also involved Pat Manske at The Zone Studio, Dripping Springs, Texas, who Tim called one of the "best" recording engineers that he's worked with.

Further recruits included Dennis Ludiker from Asleep at the Wheel, Tracy Grammer, George Winston, with Manske and Maines also doubling up with musicianship duties.

Tim played rhythm guitar parts, banjo and piano with brother Mike sharing vocals with his brother. Maines played pedal steel, bass, mando, with Ludiker on fiddle and mando, and Manske covering drums and percussion. Winston played piano on 'One Montana' while Grammer performed fiddle and vocal duties on 'Dream Catch.'

From the opening song, Tim weaves a path from heaven to hell and back with a few fun 'fishing holes' along the way.

As he said, "The first song brings the characters from a place of knowledge and wisdom, into a world of uncertainty, greed, difficulty etc. The end redeems the characters but also the "trip" through the album show that there are always things to be grateful for, even when bad things happen to you."

'Back From The Woods' opens the account; a defiant stand for the values of Montana with an everyman asking those not to pray for him because the "Wild is in my veins and that's where it remains."

He became "a man in the palm of God's hand" and marches to his own muse and parade and likes to sharpen his knife "just to see the stars shimmer on the blade." This is surely some of the finest imagery since the early days of Johnny Cash.

He tells the naysayers he's fine right where he is "But you go ahead and find a distraction if you want out there in the darkness."

"Believe in only what you see is like watching wind through leafless trees. You'll think it's another sunny day," he states, in another killer observation.

'Beatnik Son' follows, leading us towards the State line. The antithesis of the solid voice in the first song, this kid has a "strange fascination with those who are dead" and wears his heart on his sleeve like a million poets before him, feeding off others instead of looking in.

A song of redemption follows in 'Hillbilly Storm Chaser' about a man born to be "uneasy when things are too good" and even when taught about love he keeps "sniffing for a storm." His eventual look into himself through his father's eyes makes him put his hate on the shelf and walk away.

These are perhaps the first steps outside Montana for we now find ourselves in 'Family Calling' watching a man who wanted to be an "eagle" or "a wild horse running" now shooting pool and drinking beer having missed that proverbial train in life.

Here the first rest stop comes in with 'Live It Up', where the listener is asked to do exactly that, and darkly outlines life's blueprint, "work hard, play hard and end up in the bone yard."

The bittersweet irony of '31 Flavors' continues the travels beyond Montana and into a "cookie cutter nation" where all the flavors are vanilla. "In the land of plenty, there is plenty the same."

'Death Of A Salesman' says it all, telling the plight of a kid brought up by an aunt and uncle on a farm who dreams of making it on Wall Street believing "people will fall at his feet" but with a name like Willy Loman you know he's doomed.

The grass isn't always greener.

In 'Destination Desolation' the story of visiting an 80-year-old rancher whose life style offers up the amusing observation he must be "insane to live on those plains" where "it's as cold as hell." But despite this, "I can count the traffic on my right hand," states the messenger, hinting at the turmoil of previous songs on the album where the lyrics are hemmed in by the pressure of city life and the greed to succeed.

The title song 'Dream Catch' flows beautifully through your mind taking you to a place "where heaven and earth collide" and calling out an ironic comment where a grandmother's 'Dream Catch' was "a spiritual thing, so sweet it had to be a sin."

An epilogue intercedes here to act as a bridge back to Montana by dedicating 3 final songs to those "Montanans who have protected our public lands and our stream access law."

A pristine piano intro begins 'Oh Montana' and helps the character "see the freshness of life" with its snow covered peaks, roaring creeks and "the cool mountain air that stops to make you stare."

"You're not so hard to find. Montana you're on my mind."

We're pushing on home now "as these memories can't compare to being there."

The Montana theme continues on with 'Full Moon On The Missions', as the listener is invited homeward.

"Do you think I jest when I suggest the Mission Mountain Range with a clear velvet sky and the stars shine over the heavens."

Farewell then, to the Rat Race.

The final song title says it all, 'One Montana.' It is a reaffirmation of the brothers' undying love of the state where the two have grown up.

This is the listener's passport back to stable ground.

"You are the one thing that's real, you tell no lies, even the sun gets lost in your skies."

There is nothing left to express about this state. Paradise can be found outside of a parking lot.

Throughout the album, it is plainly clear that the Montana songs are more about independence and rugged calmness as opposed to songs set outside the state where the angst runs around with its head cut off trying to offer appeasement but only getting stomped in to the ground.

Quite the journey.

'Dream Catch' can be purchased at Rocky Mountain Market and Sylvan Peak in Red Lodge and at The Base Camp in Billings, as well as iTunes and CD Baby.

***Your first album in 15 years, how was it working together again?***

It was just like yesterday. Mike and I recorded vocals in Billings at Trevor Krieger's Home studio. It was relaxed, fun and felt like old times. I've been so busy with family and work that I only had time to do my Tim Nordstrom Band stuff....both "A Socially Relevant EP" and "Generational Pull" I did all myself. And "Christmas is Calling" was done pretty much myself with a couple songs with Mike and a couple with George Winston.

***No doubt you had more than 14 songs lined up for the album, was it one of those moments when you feel, "I have these songs and I need to get them recorded?"***

I actually have a couple hundred songs of various genres from instrumental, blues, country, rock and even funk. I sent quite a few to Lloyd Maines to see what he thought. I wasn't even thinking about recording, just wanted some honest feedback. He responded by being pretty excited with the acoustic ones. He explained that he has been doing a lot of distance production, where people send an instrument track and a vocal track, then he does most of the instrumental work from home. He then collaborates with Pat Menske at The Zone studio, who turned out to be the best recording engineer that I have ever worked with. Anyway, when he explained the feel he could get I sent him about eight songs that I knew would fit that vibe. Once I heard the rough mix, I wrote four more to make the album flow well -a mix of up-tempo, slow, short and long songs. I recorded a couple albums by myself under Tim Nordstrom Band playing all the instruments, mixing and mastering but I have to use sampled sounds on the keyboard. This group of songs I could have never done myself because I am not a good enough musician. Although I play on the record, the real musicianship is Lloyd Maines and Dennis Ludiker from Asleep at the Wheel.

***What was it like recording with Grammer and Winston and Ludiker and working with Maines again?***

So I have always been a big fan of Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer. He was an incredible lyricist. Since his death, I hadn't heard much from Tracy so I gave her a call and she was willing to collaborate on 'Dream Catch.' She didn't disappoint. She knew how to tastefully lay down her fiddle part, and after I explained that she actually is the Grandmother in the song, she had a sensibility about part that was spot on. Ludiker blew me away when I heard his tracks, he has technical expertise that I would consider world class. In both fiddle and mandolin, Dennis nailed the vibe, and I'm sure Lloyd coached a lot of that out of him. Lloyd- when it comes to Lloyd what you get is a very solid person. He has worked with so many people on Austin City Limits, or in the studio over the years with Jerry Jeff Walker, Joe Ely, The Dixie Chicks etc... he draws from so many different creative influences. But most importantly I know that I can trust him.

***At the end of Dream, I'm probably wrong here, but I felt Grammer was the river harboring the soul of the rainbow trout that escaped.....***

Well, the thing about this type of Lyric writing is it is open to interpretation to some extent. Not in songs like 'Hillbilly Storm Chaser' where there is a specific story, but in songs like 'Back from the Woods' you get a transcendental message as if coming from Henry David Thoreau. 'Dream Catch' is about many things. First, I believe that the first human that practiced catch and release had to be a female. I also needed to express the change in fly-fishing from when I was young to now. I can mark the change by the movie 'A River Runs Through it.' After that movie fishing pressure increased exponentially. Anyway, Tracy plays the Grandmother in this story. At the end, she is in heaven, on the perfect stretch of water at the perfect time of day, kind of like at the end of the movie 'Field of Dreams' when Kevin Kostner is asked "Is this heaven", he says "No it's Iowa."