

Parker McCollum

Never Enough, Parker McCollum's second major-label release, is a statement album. If its predecessor, *Gold Chain Cowboy*, announced Parker's arrival in the country music mainstream, *Never Enough* (MCA Nashville) says that, damn right, he's here to stay.

Like *Gold Chain Cowboy*, it pairs Parker with producer Jon Randall (Miranda Lambert, Dierks Bentley), a fellow Texan who understands exactly what fuels Parker's artistry: authenticity, vulnerability, and a little bit of defiance. *Never Enough* bristles with honesty and attitude and is shot through with equal parts rock guitar and country songwriting.

"What I do best is write songs from a very real place and sing country music, but also be very 'me' and not try to sound like someone else," Parker says. "We definitely did that on this record and every one of the 15 songs sounds different."

Compare album opener "Hurricane" and the confessional ballad "Have Your Heart Again" to hear his point. "Hurricane," a song about a strong-willed girl who blows through your life and leaves it in tatters, is a driving rock anthem with a guitar riff that calls to mind the theme from *Friends* ("I'm sure some people will hate on that, but I don't give a shit," Parker laughs. "I thought it was cool"). "Have Your Heart Again," meanwhile, is a simple vocal-and-piano arrangement with Parker hitting a stunning falsetto note. The songs are each irresistible and unique, rich in lyrical imagery, and unlike anything you'll hear coming out of Nashville today.

Credit that to Parker, as sturdy as a live oak, for knowing exactly who he is.

"This town can eat you alive, the music business can eat you alive, with artists trying to remain relevant and have hit songs. That's something I never cared about when I'm writing or making a record," he says. "I'm never thinking about singles. I'm trying to just write songs that can potentially stand the test of time. That's the sole purpose of writing songs for me."

Even *Never Enough* tracks that have since become gold-certified hits weren't written with radio in mind. To Parker, "Handle on You" was just a drinking song with clever lyricism ("I tell myself that I should quit/but I don't listen to drunks") and a late-Eighties country sound as smooth as Tennessee whiskey or, perhaps, a Shiner Bock.

"That song is a nod to some of the great records I grew up with," says Parker, who counts George Strait, Willie Nelson, and cult hero Chris Knight as chief inspirations. "A lot of radio songs nowadays are kind of bubble-gummy. I don't have any problem with pop-country, but I'd like to hear a little more classic country too. My team kept saying 'Handle on You' was a radio song and I said, 'If y'all put that on the radio, then hell yeah.'"

A mostly solitary songwriter prior to his entrée into Nashville, Parker has now written with some of country music's finest. Hillary Lindsey, Lori McKenna, and Liz Rose (a.k.a. The Love Junkies), David Lee Murphy, Brett James, and Ashley Gorley all contribute to *Never Enough*, along with Parker's Texas peers Randy Rogers, Wade Bowen, and Ryan Beaver.

“That’s been the biggest change since coming to Nashville: having access to some of the best songwriters in the world and sitting in a room with them to write,” Parker says. “The way these songwriters care and write, it’s from a place that I think I do as well. It’s made me look at songwriting differently.”

The proof is in Parker’s chart history. He scored his first-ever No. 1 country hit with 2020’s “Pretty Heart,” his debut single. “To Be Loved by You” followed suit, also hitting No. 1. Now, he’s staring down a career-making single in “Burn It Down,” a moody, smoldering break-up song that equates a busted relationship to a house reduced to just ashes and smoke.

Written with the Love Junkies, “Burn It Down” was born during a writing session at Parker’s home, where he spontaneously started singing the words “burn it down” over and over again. “Some days are like that, where the melody and the idea for the song is so good and everybody is on the same page,” he says. “If you’re talking about moving the needle in my career, ‘Burn It Down’ is probably going to be the song.”

Parker lives for the type of spontaneous creation that happened that day. He’ll often challenge himself to write a song without changing a single word. He did that with “Too Tight This Time.” With a pretty acoustic guitar lick, a Dobro guest shot by Jerry Douglas, and a heavy dose of humility and introspection in Parker’s vocal performance, “Too Tight This Time” is Parker’s favorite track on *Never Enough*.

“I said, ‘Let’s pour this thing out and whatever it is in 15 minutes, that’s what it’s going to be forever.’ I love to write songs like that and live with the end result. This one was easy to do because the melody was so good,” he says. “The line ‘There must be something broken inside this lonely man’ just hits so hard.”

For all his quiet strength and rough-hewn masculinity, Parker isn’t afraid to bare his soul. But, ironically, one of the most personal songs on *Never Enough* is the only song he didn’t write: “Things I Never Told You,” penned by Monty Criswell, Lynn Hutton, and Taylor Phillips, parallels Parker’s relationship with his mother. “When I moved away from home/I didn’t realize how much I’d miss ya,” he sings. “A phone call don’t take the place/of your smilin’ face cooking in that kitchen.”

“Those lines were all in there. People send me songs all the time and I never really hear any that I’m blown away by,” he says. Currently getting ready for a massive summer tour, including stadium dates with Morgan Wallen, Parker debuted “Things I Never Told You” for his mother during rehearsals. “We were in this massive amphitheater and my mom came the last day and I sang it for her. It was pretty cool.”

To Parker, the gesture was a way to show he cared. *Never Enough* then is a testament to how much he cares about country music.

“Sometimes I wish I didn’t care so much because everything would be easier. Hopefully one day people will look back at what I’ve done in country music and think it was honest and good for the genre,” Parker says. “This album may be called *Never Enough*, but if they see that what I did was real, that’ll be enough for me.”

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