



INTERVIEW: GRANT MALOY SMITH

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Hi Grant, welcome to VENTS! How have you been?

Great – thanks so much! I am still a little bit on Cloud 9 from finishing the record “Dust Bowl – American Stories” – and now I am jumping into the deep end of doing shows, and promoting it. It’s lots of work but also lots of fun.

Can you talk to us more about your latest single “I Come From America”?

Yes, this will be the first single from the album. It’s a very up-tempo and fun anthem. It’s meant to be reminiscent of Woody Guthrie’s famous folk song “This Land is Your Land,” that every American child used to learn in school back in the day. And like Woody’s song, it has several layers of meaning.

Did any event in particular inspired you to write this song?

Well, since I was creating a theme album, where all of the songs were set in the time and place of the Dust Bowl, I wanted a song that talked about the American experience. I wanted to make the point that while we come from America – America also comes from us. All of us! We don’t just inhabit the country, we make it what it is by our behavior, our work, our personalities, and the strength of our collective will.

Any plans to release a video for the single?

Yes – I am starting on that already! I have two other videos from the album, and each one of them already has more than 100,000 views on Youtube. You can find me there by searching on GRANT MALOY SMITH – or directly at www.youtube.com/GrantMaloySmith

The single comes off your new album *Dust Bowl – American Stories* – what’s the story behind the title?

This is a theme album – all of the songs are written to represent some aspect of that environmental and economic disaster of the 1930s. The epicenter was Oklahoma and Texas, but the Dust Bowl affected 1/3 of the continent directly, and the rest of it indirectly. Imagine a drought that lasted nearly 10 years – which made your farm stop growing food, and killed millions of livestock! And the Great Depression happened at the same time, so the bank wouldn’t even give you a dime for all of your possessions. It was a dramatic time in American history, filled with stories of desperation, bravery, resilience, anguish, loss, love, and more.

How was the recording and writing process?

I spent three years on this album – writing and re-writing. I literally recorded it twice! The first recordings were OK but not good enough, so I started over again. My friend Perry has a great studio in New York, so we brought in Cyndi Lauper’s rhythm section and recorded most of the basic tracks there with me playing live in the studio with them. Then I moved production to Nashville and hired a co-producer, Jeff Silverman, to help me finish the record. We brought in some of the top players in Nashville to add their magic to the recordings, and I couldn’t be happier about the way it sounds and how it feels. It’s the best album that I have ever done... and that’s for sure. I learned the lesson about taking my time and really doing it RIGHT – with great people. It makes all the difference in the world.

What made you want to explore the things that took place back on the 30s?

First there is the pure drama of it – it’s a great story. But also, the Dust Bowl caused millions of people to abandon everything they owned and head elsewhere to find work. These were mostly southern people, and they spread their southern roots music to places like Bakersfield, California. They made roots music known nationally, for the first time in our history. It wasn’t just a regional music any more. Oklahomans like Woody Guthrie wrote and sang about the Dust Bowl and the Depression, and made it even more well known, as well as promulgating roots music far and wide. So in a sense we roots artists owe a debt of gratitude to the events surrounding the Dust Bowl, for bringing us this music. 

What American stories would you be retelling throughout this material?

It’s all about the Dust Bowl!

Any plans to hit the road?

Indeed – I already have some dates planned in Chicago, Rockford, New York, Kansas City, Los Angeles and New England. But I will be getting around to the whole country during the course of the year.

What else is happening next in Grant Maloy Smith’s world?

I am creating a one-man show version of the album that I will be able to present as a musical, with video backdrops. I will be premiering that at the Fringe Fest in Kansas City, Missouri, in July. That will be lots of work to produce, but again lots of fun to do. I will get to be a bit of an actor in addition to being a musician.

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