



JACK INGRAM  
THIS IS IT

No other album you'll hear this year will have a more appropriate title - for Jack Ingram, THIS IS IT.

"So much in my career has led up to this next chapter of my career," says the acclaimed Texas-born singer-songwriter. "Now, I'm just feeling like, well...this is it."

Indeed, it appears to be. Last summer, Ingram's first single for the Big Machine label, "Wherever You Are" landed at #1 on Billboard's country singles chart. That accomplishment was quickly followed up with the hilarious, "Love You," which also ascended into the Top Ten., as well as both songs' videos reaching #2 and #1 respectively on CMT. Then, just like that, millions of country fans heard what Ingram's hardcore have enjoyed for years: the power in his voice, the unending energy in his live shows, the clever wit in his lyrics and the razor edges in his melodic hooks.

"Wherever You Are," and "Love You," showcase sweeping romanticism and barbed wit, respectively, underscoring Ingram's range as an entertainer. The two songs were included as bonus studio tracks on his LIVE – WHEREVERYOU ARE album. They're now at the heart of THIS IS IT, Ingram's first full studio album for Big Machine, and his first studio album in 5 years.

Rounding out Ingram's trifecta of hits is the first single from This Is It – his own dramatic re-imagining of rock-band's Hinder's rock smash "Lips of an Angel."

Ingram explains. "I heard the song, and thought it was fantastic. It's one of the first times in my career that I've had the confidence to say, without overthinking it too much, 'Yeah, man, I'll give that a shot. It's a good song. "

As Ingram points out with characteristic wry humor, the song is about former lovers who have moved on in their lives, but not in their hearts. The illicit phone call between the two sets the stage for "Lips of an Angel," a cheating song if ever there was one.

"Come on, that's country music right there," Ingram chuckles.

At this point, Jack Ingram knows a thing or two about what is and isn't country music. While he's a new face to some, he began his career over a decade ago in the hardscrabble honky-tonks and dancehalls of Texas. He quickly earned the respect of his peers -not to mention his heroes.

Waylon Jennings called him "an incredible talent," while Billy Joe Shaver pronounced him "one of the best performers around."

Nonetheless, Ingram bounced between independent and major labels, none of which exposed him to the masses. A critic's and musician's favorite he mostly remained until Ingram partnered with manager George Couri of C.S.E. who recognized the power of Jack's appeal and continually-growing fan base. The decision to sign with Scott Borchetta and Big Machine in mid-2005 completed the team – and the hits started coming.

"All the label situations I've been in before, I don't think everyone at the company believed it could work," he figures. "This time, there was no question."

It was a question, however, that took five years to answer. Ingram's last studio album, Electric, hit stores in 2001. During the subsequent process of building his audience, and finding a new home at Big Machine, Ingram went through significant changes in his life, reflected now on This Is It.

"It's been a whole life cycle since I put out a studio record. I've become a father, three times over, and have experienced the seismic shifts associated with that – coming to terms with yourself, the central figures and the defining moments in your life." he says. "My records in the past paralleled my growth and maturity and This Is It is a further reflection of that. This is what I've been going through and what I've been doing."

Except now, there's quite a few more ears wanting to hear what those things are. Ingram insists that the high expectations being placed on him didn't affect how he approached the writing and recording of the new album.

"I know what the stakes are, but I'm not nervous," he says. "I feel like now is my opportunity to do what I've been working toward for 15 years. I'm fully prepared."

For the recording, Ingram turned to Doug Lancio and Jeremy Stover, who both produced tracks on the album. "Those guys are pretty drastically different," says Ingram of the ace producers he trusted to bring out the varied facets of his own personality. "Jeremy's got more of a seek-and-destroy type of production, while Doug is much more of a 'Come over to the house and play me a song' kind of person."

This Is It features a mix of Ingram originals and carefully chosen outside material from stellar songwriters like Radney Foster, Trent Summar, and Tom Littlefield.

"If it makes me sad or happy on an extreme level, if it's something I can relate to, and something I feel like I can deliver, then that's the kind of song I want to play," he says. "It really comes down to emotion for me."

Whether self-penned or not, Ingram says the songs that made the cut for This Is It are simply "the ones that stuck with me. These are the songs that I wanted to play for years to come."

He'll be playing them as part of Brad Paisley's "Bonfires & Amplifiers" tour this spring and summer, just the latest of several high-profile tours he's been a part of. In recent months he's won over a wide variety of crowds as the hand-picked opening act for country superstars Brooks & Dunn and rock luminary Sheryl Crow.

"It's been a blessing to be able to walk that line musically, where I can appeal to hardcore country fans as well as rock and roll fans," he says. "I know why I enjoy Sheryl Crow and her influences, and I know why I enjoy Brad Paisley and his influences. It's not that much of a stretch for me."

Bringing his music to so many new listeners has been thrilling for Ingram - and he's ready to keep all those new fans for a long, long time.

"I've spent the last year introducing myself to a brand-new audience," he says. "And now it feels like it's beginning to take hold. I'm telling you... This Is It."