

Nick Shoulders' New Orleanian Beginnings Trace the Ozark Mountains with "Okay, Crawdad"

At first glance, Nick Shoulders seems confused in his musical aspirations. Often sporting a bolo tie, ornate button down, and cowboy hat, he appears affirmed in his country-music persona; however, his mohawk-mullet combination, bushy mustache, and tattoos place him at the end of a dark bar at three in the morning in French Quarter, New Orleans. Shoulders emerged into the country music scene gradually, making small waves with roots from the Ozark Mountains that give you that firefly-filled night next to a raging campfire feeling.

Shoulders hit the public first in 2018, with a rough but genuine 7-song album called *Lonely Like Me*. Gritty as it is, his voice swelled into the ears of listeners with a high-pitched, unwavering whistle. His songs often begin with simple guitar chords layered with a beautiful and unique yodeling vocal melody, reminiscent of old-time Roy Rodgers. It brings you to a place you've never been - a place untouched and full of life. His talent seems dated, and his direct influence may be hard to pinpoint. But Shoulders is undeniably unique by inventing a music of his own, a one man band creating sounds that are sure to hit the country music scene hard as time continues to pass.

With his introduction, Shoulders took his time before releasing his most recent EP, "Okay, Crawdad." Drawing on his New Orleanian roots and his mountain-dwelling persona, he pushed forth an album that is all that you want in a country-twang album, and more. It is toe-tapping, funky, and backwoods creativity that shines throughout as he yodels his way to near perfection. Shoulders brings a vocal range that makes each song an adventure of its own, twisting through melodic whistles, and finding solace in his singing tone. Nick Shoulders is undeniably paving the way for future roots musicians as he proves to be the one of the most gifted vocalists in a movement for musical creativity. It is clear that Shoulders can do it all, from strumming away on the guitar to reaching notes unheard for generations in music. His album has become a call-to-arms for yodeling and accordion-playing backwoods musicians alike.

With songs like "Hank's Checkout Line" and "The World Needs Sissy's Too," Shoulders

makes light of political barriers with comical lyricisms. Understanding the modernized world appears to be against him and his dated sound, he thrives on creativity and the unexpected. He harps on classical story-telling country lyrics, but layers in modernized and experiential current events to flesh out songs that are sure to keep you moving, laughing, and your jaw dropped. The listener can hear notes of the Beach Boys, Hank Williams, porch swing steel guitar, and Appalachian country twang throughout; however, Shoulders puts together a cohesive album that stays true to his Southern roots. Saying he is entirely a one-man-band would be incorrect, for his accompaniment comes through on multiple top numbers from the album. It's New Orleanian jazzy, southern country that helps Shoulders along, not that he needs it.

Shoulders is a gem in country-roots music today. With little to no publicity from the press, he moves forward genuinely with his unique stylings. Planning his next album release, Shoulders is sure to produce masterfully. Music stumbled upon is often the best music, for it evokes a deep appreciation for the vastly different talent that exists. Shoulders is the one that will make you stop and dig deeper. He is a creator and visionary that will leave you smiling before the song even begins. A once-in-a-generation musician, Shoulders will leave the listener coming back for more and more. Whether it's a yodel, a doodling whistle, or a throaty lyric, Nick Shoulders has brought an antiquated musical style to new light.