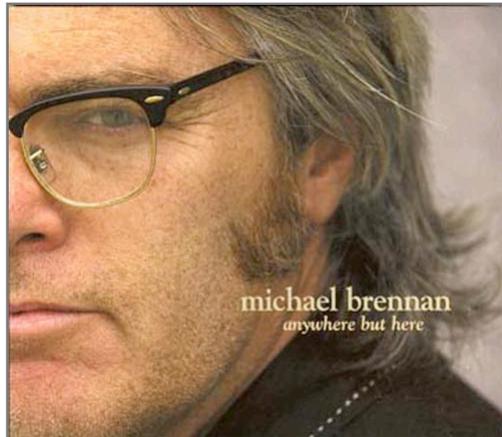


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The Inverness Oran

Brennan captures city life and country roots on *Anywhere But Here*

John Gillis



Take a country boy with a rock `n` roll heart and set him down for 20 years or more in the big city of Toronto, and you might get a glimpse of where Inverness singer-songwriter Michael Brennan is coming from on his latest album, *Anywhere But Here*.

Brennan sure knows how to get your attention on the title track with its tale of a down-on-his-luck, hard-working man having trouble adjusting to the constantly changing economic times. It's a song that Springsteen could be proud of and one that many people today can relate to.

While songs such as *Get Outta This Town*, *Anywhere But Here* and *Stubborn* are tough, no-nonsense tales about the hard life, Brennan's *Grow Old With Me* wouldn't even seem out of place in

a wedding ceremony and *Everything Has Changed* expresses a softer side as well.

Anywhere But Here is Brennan's second solo recording featuring original material and probably the one that comes closer to representing his roots than his previous release, *Cautious Man*, which featured Toronto producer Chad Irschick (Rankin Family/Matt Minglewood/Ron Hynes) at the helm. It tended to have a smoother and polished sound than the latest disc.

Produced by David Travers-Smith, *Anywhere But Here* also features the musicianship of many of Toronto's finest musicians such as Kevin Breit (Norah Jones and Harry Manx) on everything with strings, guitarist Steve Briggs, John Dymond on bass, Steve Dawson on pedal steel and Gary Craig on drums.

Brennan is no stranger to Toronto's club scene and Canada's folk circuit. He's been featured at the Mariposa Festival, the Winterfolk Festival on the Danforth, and has performed in many East Coast Music Award showcases as well in recent years.

Brennan has often been compared to Texas songwriters like Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Steve Earle and the late Townes Van Zant. *Get Outta This Town* is certainly reminiscent of Steve Earle. Brennan even closes his new CD with a lovely tribute cover of Van Zant's *No Place To Fall*.

Anywhere But Here is Brennan's most ambitious project to date, finding him with a band and a group of talented studio musicians that know seem to intuitively know how find the groove while accompanying him and bringing out the best in his material.

Brennan often includes a mini-tour of Nova Scotia venues on his annual summer vacations home to his Inverness cottage with his family. Those gigs often see him playing with friends such as guitarists Mike Tufford, Steve Briggs or Brennan's younger brother, Tim Brennan (Joel Plaskett Emergency/Dave Marsh).

"I've already been getting a fair bit of airplay (with *Cautious Man*) in Europe, primarily in the Netherlands, but also in Belgium, France, Italy, Germany and Sweden. There's an amazing network there dedicated to all forms of Americana Music," says Brennan. "I'm very happy with *Anywhere But Here*. I think a lot of it is great, but of course, I'm a bit biased," he jokes.

In Toronto, Brennan fronts the rockin' country, roots and rockabilly band, the Wayward Angels. He's also been a Sunday matinee fixture on the Toronto club scene at Graffiti's Bar.

Anywhere But Here should now be available in many stores throughout Inverness County if

you'd like to check it out.