



Purgatory Road

[John Arthur Martinez](#)

[Apache Ranch Records](#) - ARR-1748

Available from [John Arthur Martinez's online store](#).

A review written for the Folk and Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Frank Gutch Jr.**
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Thank the gods for country musicians like John Arthur Martinez. While Nashville twists and tweaks the whole idea of country music, Martinez and his like keep the genre alive and well without the glitz and the pomp. Nashville is more than happy to hand us the slick videos and rock/pop and even Southern Rock which poses for Country, but it takes a John Arthur Martinez to hand us the song unadorned. The song was the heart of the old Nashville. It is still the heart of country music.

Martinez has dust on his boots and it's not Nashville dust. It is the dust of Texas and Oklahoma, of Alabama and California. His songs take us places Bob McDill and Bobby Bare and Tom T. Hall used to take us (and still does, when we take time to listen)—those places we visit all too often and all too seldom: the lonely hotel room, the honky tonk, the sleazy bar. They play no favorites. The songs are of love and loss, hope and despair. He touches on the edges of Americana and Rock with deft touch and seems to remember why he writes and sings, and it's not for the money. Maybe it is tribute to a life he can't have in this modern, sometimes overbearing world. Maybe it is a look backward to a time he missed, for there are ghosts in the music he plays, ghosts from Country Music's past.

As for songs, he lines up eleven beauties here and begins with what I consider the best of the bunch: *Utopia*. Struggles of an uncaring world and a growing youth's struggle to understand are musical fodder for Martinez's cannon and he lays it out for all to hear. He may not have written it (I'm sure he thanks John Greenberg and Bill Murray for it every time he sings it because it is a fine song), but he feels it. From there, he takes us down *Purgatory Road*, a trip through criminal hell, and what Country album doesn't have the obligatory drinking dilemma (and it's a beaut) like *You Can't Outdrink the Truth*?

I'm sure you get the idea, but you don't really get it unless you hear it. *Purgatory Road* is the whole package: songs, performance, production, packaging. Front to back, it flows. In fact, albums like this make me miss the days of vinyl as the only source of music because the sequencing is spot on. I've listened to the songs individually and the album from start to finish and, to my ears, the songs seem to belong in the order presented. I can't seem to shake it, in fact, and when they play in my head, the end of one flows into the next so automatically that to me it could be no other way. I have to give a big nod to Lew Curatolo, the album's producer, because if he was not instrumental in the sequencing, he at least did not step in to alter the magic.

Yes, John Arthur Martinez has dust on his boots. Marble Falls, Texas dust, to be exact. It could be dust from anywhere, I suppose, but it is not. Maybe living there helps make his music what it is. And what it is is what Country Music used to be—straightforward, pleasant and (the real kicker) honest. It comes through with every note. The guy has a fine voice and a pleasant style, but what he really has is on the inside. And while it may have been done, it is very hard to fake that.

Track List:

- Utopia (John M. Greenberg & Bill Murray)
- Purgatory Road (Kent Finlay & John Arthur Martinez)
- Can't Outdrink the Truth (Walt Wilkins & Liz Rose)
- Thunder & Lightning (John Arthur Martinez)
- Que No Puede Ver (John Arthur Martinez)
- Closer To My Dreams (Jan Landry & John Arthur Martinez)
- The Ride (John Arthur Martinez & Michael W. Blakeley)
- On the Run (Vince Leggett)
- Cobalt Blue (John Arthur Martinez)
- What Good Is I Love You (Zach Huckabee, Allen Wallace & John Arthur Martinez)
- When You Whisper In My Ear (John Arthur Martinez)

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