

JIM MORRIS BIOGRAPHY

Jim Morris is an articulate singer/songwriter with a devotion to storytelling. Whether it is a thoughtful ballad about doomed love or an anthem to a night of drunken revelry, the listener can always count on well-crafted songs with carefully drawn characters, clever lyrics, and satirical charm.

Although Jim's musical style is admittedly reminiscent of Jimmy Buffett and Jerry Jeff Walker, he has a knack for defying categorization. He mixes a whimsical island sound with a splash of Texas to produce a sound that is uniquely Gulf and Western.

Jim grew up in Georgia and has a heritage rich in music. His grandfather led a dance band, and everyone in the family either played an instrument or sang. At age 10 Jim taught himself to play the guitar by listening to Hank Williams records. After college (BA in English and graduate studies in English and Human Resources Management) while pursuing a career in human resources management, he continued to write songs and dream of the day when he could do it full-time. "After I graduated, I wanted to be a drifter and a writer; instead, I settled for corporate executive and closet entertainer."

During his 15-year corporate career, his job allowed him to live in several interesting locales, such as Montana, New Orleans, and St. Simons Island, all of which would figure prominently in his writing. Following a business trip during which he renewed his love affair with the southwest coast of Florida, Jim took the leap he had been contemplating for some time and left the corporate world for good.

Jim spent the subsequent years writing songs and playing gigs around Florida. From the beginning he took a big risk by featuring original music. "I spent about a year writing and developing a catalog of songs. I was unsure of my ability to sing and play the guitar professionally, but I thought my songs might separate me from the other performers."

A fortuitous meeting with recording artist Randy Matthews would result in Matthews producing Morris' first recording, "Laid Back and Key Wasted," released in 1996 by Fish Head Music. As you would expect, each song tells a story: the title track is about a guy who gives up the corporate world for the beach; one is about the exploits of a pilot who flies contraband; another is about roadkill and the people who collect it; others tell great stories of sailing, fishing, and drinking. "After my first CD was released, I changed my focus. I stopped playing bars so much and I worked coffeehouses and bookstores. I wanted to play before a listening audience who might appreciate what I had to say. I made less money, but I started to develop a fan base."

Jim returned to the studio during the summer of 1997 to work with noted guitarist/producer Chris Hattingh. The result was "Bocanuts" which was released by Fish Head Music the following November. "Bocanuts" shows again that Jim is capable of creating memorable stories in a variety of musical moods. "With 'Bocanuts' I found a formula that I'm comfortable with and that people seem to enjoy: some tropical, some jazz, some country, some acoustic folk, and some humor. It certainly reflects my musical tastes."

With the success of "Bocanuts" and a growing catalog of songs, Jim decided to release a CD every year. In November of 1998 he was back with Hattingh recording "Looking for a

Place to Happen” which was released in February 1999. “The CD didn’t turn out exactly as planned,” says Morris. “Several songs I was hoping to include were not as good as I wanted them to be. Sensing my frustration, my wife, Sharon, sat me down with a list of my songs and pointed out a lot of songs I had neglected. Consequently, songs like “What Kind of Fool Can I Be,” “The Hammock Club,” “Gatsby Dreams,” and “Sometimes I Wish” were added.” “Looking for a Place to Happen” became the most critically acclaimed CD to date. Hattingh had little doubt that the CD would be successful. “As soon as we listened to the final mix, I knew that Jim had topped his other CDs. For a CD with a variety of musical styles, it had such an amazing continuity.”

Following the release of “Looking for a Place to Happen,” the pressure grew to perform more outside the state of Florida. “I wanted to be a ‘lifestyle artist,’ fishing by day and playing music by night. But I also wanted to broaden my fan base, so I hit the road a bit.” He also formed the Big Bamboo Band in order to capture the full sound of his CDs in live performances. “Playing with the Big Bamboo Band required more discipline and concentration than playing solo. It took a while to get used to it. Playing with a band is like playing team sports, and you get the same feelings after a tight performance that you do when you win the big game.

True to his plan to produce a CD every year, December 1999 found Jim back in the studio working on his fourth CD, “Bar Stools and Beach Chairs.” He took a different approach this time, preferring creative spontaneity to careful planning. “I wanted to feel my way through the project and do some tweaking and changing as we went along.” As it turns out “Bar Stools” may be his best effort yet. Along with his customary strong lyrics Jim has produced a work with remarkable musical diversity. Chris Hattingh knew that once again Jim had a winner. “I know that Jim felt some pressure to top “Looking for a Place to Happen,” but there is something for everyone on this CD.”

Jim will direct his efforts to expanding his fan base and touring with the Big Bamboo Band. He will still make time to fish and will always be on the lookout for song material. “I don’t have much to show for my years except some great experiences, and that’s what I write about – the characters I’ve met and the places I’ve been. The thing that is both satisfying and alarming is that most of it is true.”