

ERIC TESSMER

“Life is never going to go exactly the way you think it will,” says Eric Tessmer, “but I’ve come to appreciate that fact. Good things take time.”

Tessmer’s stellar new release, ‘EP II,’ is proof of that. Three years in the making, the collection was recorded in Los Angeles with acclaimed producer Sean Beavan (Nine Inch Nails, Guns N’ Roses), and it finds the incendiary Austin guitarist matching his technical flash with new heights of lyrical craftsmanship and studio sophistication. The performances here represent Tessmer’s most raw, powerful work to date, tackling sobriety, commitment, and redemption with both deep insight and fearless vulnerability. It’s a remarkable step in an already remarkable career, one that showcases a virtuosic instrumentalist boldly stretching his limits and embracing his artful evolution as a singer and songwriter.

“I wanted to go deeper than I ever have before with this EP,” says Tessmer. “I still love ripping things up on the guitar, but this time around, I wanted to save that more for the live show and really focus on concision in the studio.”

A Wisconsin native, Tessmer developed his love affair with music through a kind of familial osmosis. Both his grandmother and father played guitar, and Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and Cream were all staples around the house growing up. Inspired in part by watching reruns of Austin City Limits on his local PBS station, Tessmer moved to Texas straight out of high school, and he quickly garnered a formidable reputation there for his fierce fretwork and explosive live performances. He cut his teeth playing residencies in clubs and bars, shared stages with everyone from Gary Clark, Jr. to Tab Benoit, and released a series of live and studio albums that earned widespread critical acclaim, with the Austin Chronicle dubbing him an “SRV-fast firebrand” and the Austin American Statesman hailing him as a “working class guitar hero.”

‘EP II’ reflects the loose, energetic freedom that’s become Tessmer’s trademark, with searing rocker “The Treatment” kicking things off with an infectious guitar riff that at once calls to mind AC/DC and ZZ Top. It’s a love song, no doubt, but in typical Tessmer fashion it comes with a dark edge, a hint of danger that flows just beneath the surface. The slow-burning “Good So Bad” grapples with the rollercoaster of addiction and recovery, while the eerie “Early Early Morning” mixes romance and film noir, and the swampy “Po’ Boy” is a funky instrumental fireworks show. Though the collection prizes economy, Tessmer’s sprawling cover of friend and collaborator Anders Osborne’s “Love Is Taking Its Toll” is a notable exception, clocking in at ten minutes of blistering guitar work and smoldering vocals. Of all the standout moments on the EP, though, it’s perhaps the soulful “Simple Solution,” an anthemic ode to music itself, that captures Tessmer’s spirit best.

“I must have had ten different sets of lyrics for that song,” he remembers. “I felt this pressure to be ‘profound,’ but then I realized that the most profound thing I could do was to stop taking myself too seriously, crank the music up, and do what I love to do.”

It may have taken a while to get there, but the finished product is everything Tessmer hoped it would be and more. Good things take time, after all, and a collection as strong as 'EP II' is undoubtedly worth the wait.

"This guitar prodigy plays like a man possessed" - ***Boston Globe***

"Tessmer is the real deal." - ***The Austinist***

"You can't watch him play guitar solos. It'll make you dizzy." - ***Gary Clark Jr.***

"The first time I saw Eric play, the top of my skull blew off." - ***Nancy Wilson***