

Let Little California Warm up Your Winter

By Lorraine Payette



A smoky vintage that goes down smooth as silk and leaves you begging for more: what better words could describe an evening with Little California?

"It's hard to say what makes Little California what we are," says Marty Rombough.

Essentially a family band, the group is made up of Jordy Jackson (Lead Singer), Randy Rombough (Acoustic Guitar and Back-up Vocalist), Ryan Rombough (Bass Guitarist) and Marty Rombough (Drummer & Back-up Vocalist).

"Approximately four years ago, after parting ways with my high school rock band, my true passion was to start up a band with my brother Ryan in the genre we grew up with - country," says Jordy Jackson, lead singer. "He was interested in learning to play bass guitar, so I taught him a few things. He took it from there and absorbed all the information like a sponge. We were originally a three piece band, but could never keep a steady drummer, so ended up investing in a drum machine and becoming a two piece band performing at local charity events and bar venues. Down the road we picked up Ryan's father, Randy, who is also my step father. He is an excellent musician and singer. A few steps further down the line we found a committed drummer in Marty (Randy's brother) who had spent a large portion of his life playing in various bands and finally Little California was born."

Jackson grew up on California Road in Jones Falls, called Little California by the locals, and it just seemed right to name the band after it.

One of the more popular bands in the Kingston/Leeds-Grenville area, they have bookings almost every weekend well into next year. This didn't come without a strong work ethic and a lot of practice.

"We went at it with the idea of don't say no to a gig," says Jordy. "You know, if they want to hear you, play. We did a lot of free shows and things like that in the beginning. You tend to make friends by doing it that way. That will help you a little further along, and you get to know people and the industry."

It wasn't long before those free gigs turned into paying performances. Their local area grew from Jones Falls to Kingston and most of Leeds-Grenville, with a lot more area to come.

"We have a fantastic manager, too," says Marty. "If it weren't for Mark Gatien representing us, I don't know where we'd be."

It isn't all wine and roses however; these are men with day jobs, each one working very hard for a living to provide for their own families.

"Ryan is our youngest member and he's got two kids aged four and two, so it gets a little hard on him because he's a new father and works days as a roofer," says Jordy. "He works hard all week, and then we're gone all weekend, so you know that he's missing out on some stuff. He loves the music and he loves his kids. The kids don't really know any different yet but it may be hard for his wife, every now and then. In the long run, she understands, it's a little extra money in the pocket, and that helps, too."

Marty's day job is in roofing and siding, while Randy works for a local firm doing landscaping and septic beds. Jordy makes his living as a waste recovery collection person. The jobs aren't glamorous, but they are honest and keep the bills paid.

"I do a good portion of our writing, and as with most country music, it all stems from your

day to day life," says Jordy. "Have I written an epic 'going to work, coming home' song? No. Why? A lot of people have already done that."

Instead, he writes about other aspects of his life and it comes out in their original music – songs like Hillbilly Party, Restaurant Parking Lot, Runnin' Around, Ode to the Creek Side, Bad Bad Girl and Pick-Up Princess. Each song has that special Little California sound and something unique that only they can put together.

"Our genre would be southern rock country – country with a little bit of an edge," says Jordy.

The band had an MP3 come out on iTunes this past August. A special piece of their original music called "Whiskey Kinda Lovin'", it can be heard on a clip made during their studio recording at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pcwao1HO2JQ>.

"The music is purely spontaneous," says Jordy. "It actually frustrates me because I can't churn it out like a machine. I've written so many songs, since I was about 15, that sometimes I feel like I must be out of ideas. It really is something that only comes with inspiration. When I try to sit down and write music, I get nothing. If I'm just sitting back and having a glass of rye and a cigarette, that's when the bright idea just hits me, that's when it's the best music."

The fans couldn't agree more. At a recent gig at Sam's Brass Rack in Brockville, one couple was up dancing, as they played their second number. They hadn't even had a chance to introduce themselves yet.

"There's just something about the music," a woman said. "It makes you want to get up and start moving to see where it will take you. That's why I keep coming back."

They admit freely they don't know where they'll be ten years from now, but they hope to be playing alongside big name artists such as their idols Tim McGraw, Luke Bryan and fellow Canadian artists such as Dean Brody and Gord Bamford. Every step now is a move toward fulfilling that dream.

"We grew up enjoying many country music artists and hopefully some people can get a little joy out of our music in the future," says Jordy. "Our main goal is to have a couple of our original songs featured on the radio in the next year, with more of our originals recorded in the studio and available on iTunes for our fans." **LH**

To learn more about Little California, go to <http://www.littlecalifornia.ca>