



Lucas Henderson
The Rage
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Survival, in and of itself, changes nothing. And if nothing else, Todd Snider is a survivor.

Oh, he's a bunch of other things, too, like a "tree-huggin', peace-lovin', pot-smokin', porn-watchin', lazy-ass hippie," as he describes himself on track eight (the title of which we'll touch on in a minute) of his newest record, *East Nashville Skyline*.

But the underlying theme of the album is that Snider is a survivor. Whether he's happy about it or not, nobody really knows.

This record is part therapy and part diatribe, albeit in a very folksy way, for Snider, who spent most of last year in physical and psychic misery. He lost a close friend to a heart attack, and somewhat lost his mind (and more than a little stomach lining) thanks to alcohol and pills. Once he pulled himself from most of the darkness associated with all that, he began to write, and slowly got around to recording some songs with the help of longtime bandmate Will Kimbrough and engineer Eric McConnell.

Those songs more or less accidentally became a full record, "full" being the operative term. It's full of observations from a prolific and troubled and experienced songwriter who's trying to live life right now with music as his only drug, and those observations, both about himself and the world swirling around him, are spot-on.

Snider likes lists, and the sheer volume of items and/or descriptors used to describe said items is amazing to behold. Case in point: the title to aforementioned track eight, *Conservative Christian, Right Wing, Republican, Straight, White, American Males*, a loping polemic made up primarily of adjectives. On *Alcohol And Pills* he rolls out the slate of great artists felled by substance abuse brought on by the pressures of fame. On *Good News Blues*, Snider's character has some good things happen (that is, if your woman leaving is "good") that leave him "smiling on a rainy day," but you can still sense the sadness.

On the record's opener, *Age Like Wine*, after wrapping up the hyperbolic list of things he's run through during his career, like "seven managers, five labels, a thousand picks and patch cables," Snider recites a line that is all at once profound, scary and reason enough to listen up: "I thought that I'd be dead now ... but I'm not."

Keep surviving, Todd, and we'll keep listening.