

DON LOUIS

LETTING THE LIQUOR
DO THE TALKING

BY CILLEA HOUGHTON



Photo by Caylee Robillard

Don Louis is bringing confidence to country music, as evidenced by his new album *Liquor Talkin'*.

Raised in the rural town of Commerce, Texas, on his family's farm, Louis recalls feeding the pigs before school, cleaning the chicken coop, and chasing down runaway horses, while weekends were spent bailing hay and building fences for the animals. This experience instilled him with a strong work ethic that he's carrying into his burgeoning music career.

"I was the oldest, so I had the most responsibility all the time," he shares with American Songwriter in a Zoom interview from his hotel room in Las Vegas. "It made me have so much discipline, which carried into me wanting to stand out more and be an example and a role model and a leader for my family."

When he wasn't tending to the farm or playing football, Louis devoted his time to music, playing his toy drum kit and keyboard. "I've always loved music," he reflects. "I've always had a good ear for music, and I think it's helped me be able to make the kind of work that I do." Louis admits he didn't consider music as a career path initially. He was a star football player in high school and had hopes of joining the NFL until a knee injury left him sidelined. After some encouragement from family and friends, he started to take music more seriously.

"I remember people saying, 'You're not bad at this; you should probably should try it out,'" he says. "It gave me enough confidence to continue to want to make that kind of stuff." A friend of a

friend owned a recording studio, and after hearing Louis freestyle, he offered him free studio time to record "Lost Ways," the first song he wrote. "I loved the feeling I was getting from it," he describes. "Music just became what feels right. It's been so natural you can't even fight it."

In August 2024, Louis released his new album, *Liquor Talkin'*, a collection of songs that demonstrate his ability to write clever lyrics and deliver them with a gritty southern drawl around melodies that blend traditional country, blues, and R&B. Louis cites the title track he co-wrote with Kipp Williams as a "confident song" that's not about getting drunk, but rather how he feels "smooth" and "suave" after a few drinks.

"Rap definitely helped me have more wordplay in the country scene. Getting the math and the syllables to add up has been a big thing for me now, especially in country, because you got to say a lot while saying a little," he explains of his songwriting process transitioning from rap to country music, calling his brand "sultry music."

"When I write a hook, how can I invoke the idea that this hook is a question and a statement at the same time? Those are the kind of songs that I've noticed have thrived the most throughout musical history," he continues, citing Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" as a song whose title could be read as both a question and statement. "I wanted to start having music with more fulfillment in it."

The album also features "Mine in My Mind," an acoustic number about an ex he can't escape, and

the personal single "Long Time Comin'," which features autobiographical lyrics such as *hopin' I can pay the rent with my dreams* and *Better believe I keep strumming / It's been a long time comin'*. The latter line is based on a true story of when Louis was busking on the street and donated the cash he made to a local homeless community.

"I always try to give back. It makes you feel good. I think when you do those certain things of giving back, you're setting yourself up for a moment, which could be inspiration because you never know what light bulb's gonna switch or what conversation lands and you're thinking, 'That's a good song title. That wouldn't have happened if I wasn't here today,'" the singer expresses of being open to inspiration. "That song's beautiful; it's got a wonderful message." Louis notes that each of the songs on the album touches on a different feeling, from the confident title track to the heartbreak song "Tough Pill to Swallow."

"It's different ways of how you're feeling, and it all relates back to the simple term 'it's just liquor talking,'" he says.

As he puts his best foot forward, Louis hopes that his music speaks to his fans. "I'm the first consumer of my music, so if it doesn't make me feel something, I doubt it's gonna make the listener feel something. I know the emotions that were behind every word when I sang the songs. You have a certain tone or feeling in a song; you can capture how the listener is feeling," he professes. "I can't expect how anyone's gonna feel, but I hope they feel something." ★