

Charley Crockett chronicles an outlaw story on “Age of the Ram”



PHOTO COURTESY OF @CHARLEYCROCKETT ON INSTAGRAM

by Elijah Polance
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/THEY/THEM
elijah.polance@uconn.edu

Prolific doesn't even begin to describe the work of Texan country singer Charley Crockett throughout the 2020s. From 2020 to 2024 alone, he released seven studio albums, one live album and a mixtape, showing off distinct elements of his outlaw-country sound.

Crockett continued the run in 2025 with the release of “Lonesome Drifter” and “Dollar A Day,” the first two installments in his narrative-driven Sagebrush Trilogy. On Friday, April 3, Crockett released the trilogy's finale, “Age of the Ram.”

Like the prior installments, “Age of the Ram” was produced with Shooter Jennings. While the first two records followed a wanderer and then a rustler, Crockett now turns to a fictional outlaw, named Billy McLane. He outlines McLane's narrative on his Substack page, describing him as an innocent Texan farmer forced into criminal activity after roaming the southern U.S.

The sound of rolling film and a narrator referring to the album as a “feature presentation” mark the minute-long opener, called “Life & Times of Billy McLane (Theme I).” After showing his affinity for dramatics, Crockett comes in for his own acoustic part in the intro. The opener is one of five “theme” songs on the record, taking up a quarter of the 20-song track list.

Crockett moves smoothly across the album, working in a charming vocal cadence, simple yet catchy guitar melodies and jumpy pianos. Most songs feel apt for a lounge or calm bar performance, while some capture the atmosphere of a wild Western tavern when group vocals kick in.

“Lonesome Dove” conveys the spirit and sound of being in both social drinking settings with its calmly jaunting verses and group vocal outro. Crockett sings about McLane leaving his familiar home and missing his lover, Anna. He blends modernity with an old-timey sense in

the lyrics, beginning each chorus with “It's a Coke and Pepsi world / They can have the whole thing, girl / Long as I know your love is true.”

“Rancho Deluxe (Main Theme)” sees Crockett establishing McLane's motivation for leaving home and his willingness to take chances to better his life. The fingerpicked strings are cheery, matching McLane's initial optimism that grows shaky in the following “My Last Drink of Wine.” There, Crockett's lyrics capture McLane's use of celebratory drinking to mask his distress from the inevitability of death.

Lead single “Fastest Gun Alive” sees McLane after a gunfight of sorts. While he takes some pride in earning the title of the “Fastest Gun Alive,” it quickly turns to regret and melancholic reflection, featuring some of the album's most poetic lyrics. “I thought I saw my life in the melting snow,” Crockett sings, as McLane moves in and out of disillusioned sleep.

It's fitting then that by the time “I Shot Jesse James” comes around, Crockett's lyrics are more confession and dirge for the man killed than a proud proclamation. Crockett's crooning is mournful, and a horn makes its sole appearance on the album, intensifying McLane's sense of regret.

While Crockett maintained a steady narrative for the album's first half, “Age of the Ram” gets a bit more abstract and loosely connected in the second. “Crazy Women Ridge” interrupts the sorrowful mood with an out-of-nowhere honky-tonk tune, followed by a pair of shorter tracks that fall back on McLane's growing sentimentality.

If anything, it's the shorter interlude moments that shine most toward the end. “Border Winds” stands out for its pleasant acoustics, “Remembering Pat” carries a sentiment fitting for McLane's post-Jesse James headspace and “Powder River” has one of Crockett's best vocal performances across the whole album. These three tracks, along with the final “theme” songs, still stand out, despite the



Charley Crockett is a Texas native with a chockfull discography of 16 studio albums. His newest album is the final part of the “Sagebrush Trilogy,” which followed previous releases “Lonesome Drifter” and “Dollar A Day.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF @CHARLEYCROCKETT ON INSTAGRAM

murky narrative and being only 30 seconds to two minutes long.

Along with the consistent literal song “themes,” McLane repeatedly comes back to the ideas of drinking to ease, the emphasis of Texas as home and the sense of drifting throughout different U.S. states. But above it all is a sense of acceptance.

He accepts his old farmer identity and stays confident in the need to travel; accepting the mistakes he makes along the road and the consequences that come with it.

Crockett imbues this acceptance through the whole narrative of “Age of the Ram.” And he comes with the confident

singing and upbeat range of country instrumental arrangements to sell it. With this sense of songwriting ability and the Sagebrush Trilogy reaching its end, who knows what Crockett will focus on thematically next. But given the speed he releases music, you can probably count on it being soon.

Rating:

