

Joe Diffie – Tougher Than Nails (2004)

Written by bluelover

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01. *Tougher Than Nails* - 3:10 [play](#)
02. *Nothin' But The Radio* - 3:26
03. *Good News, Bad News* - 3:47
04. *The More You Drink, The Better I Look* - 2:24
05. *Am I* - 2:56 [play](#)
06. *Movin' Train* - 3:31
07. *If I Could Only Bring You Back* - 3:54
08. *What Would Waylon Do* - 3:16
09. *Something I Do For Me* - 3:44
10. *Daddy's Home* - 3:37
11. *This Time Last Year* - 3:10
12. *My Redneck Of The Woods* - 3:58

Personnel:

Joe Diffie (vocals, guitar);
Scott Sanders (steel guitar);
Aubrey Haynie, Audrey Haney (mandolin, fiddle);
Larry Franklin (fiddle);
Jonathan Yudkin (strings);
Steve Nathan (piano, Hammond b-3 organ);
Gary Lunn, Larry Paxton (bass guitar);
John Willis, B. James Lowry, Biff Watson (acoustic guitar);
Brent Mason, J.T. Corenflos, Jason Roller (electric guitar);
Paul Franklin (dobro);
Randy McCormick, Tim Akers, Gary Prim (piano);
Lonnie Wilson (drums, percussion).

Joe Diffie left Sony after 2001's *In Another World*, and three years later he released *Tougher*

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Than Nails, his first independent album. The switch from major to indie hasn't altered the essential sound of Diffie's music -- he's still a good-time neo-traditionalist, as comfortable with a twangy country-rocker as he is with a sweet ballad -- but there are some subtle changes. He co-writes five of the 12 songs, the most since 1999's *A Night to Remember*, and he co-produces the album, keeping the sound bright and accessible, but just a little more country than current contemporary country radio constructs. Apart from that, there's nothing new, but there doesn't need to be, since Diffie is still a satisfying straight-ahead country singer, capable of delivering solid records on a regular basis. *Tougher Than Nails* is no exception to the rule, and while only a handful of songs truly stand apart from the pack -- the sentimental Jesus tale in the title track, the nostalgic "Nothin' But the Radio," the rolling and summery "Movin' Train," and, best of all, the rowdy barroom raver "The More You Drink, the Better I Look" -- there are no bad tunes, either. Of course, that makes it no different than most Diffie records, but that's hardly something to complain about, since this is a solid and enjoyable collection of neo-traditional country, as enjoyable as most records he's made. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine

The 90s saw an aggressive onslaught of neo-traditionalists trying to put a contemporary edge spin to traditional honky tonk. Joe Diffie, with his southern flavored baritone, has certainly left an indelible mark with novelties such as "Prop Me Up Beside the Jukebox," "Honky Tonk Attitude," "If the Devil Danced in Empty Pockets" as well as his more solemn "Home," "Ships That Don't Come Home" and "Is It Cold In Here." However, due to the copious release of tepid material, Diffie's popularity waned at the turn of the millennium. His last album, 2001's "In Another's World" was not acerbic enough to set this Okie apart from Nashville's saturated crooners.

After being released from his contractual agreements with Epic Records, Diffie returns three years later with his first independent effort "Tougher Than Nails." With drummer and Diffie's seasoned producer, Lonnie Wilson still on the helm, Diffie continues what he does best: honky tonk with an attitude. However, unlike his last couple Epic outings, this time the material is a tad stronger with entries from Diffie as well as some Nashville heavyweights such as Leslie Satcher, Frank Myers, Wynn Varble, Harley Allen, George Teren amongst others.

Sprightly, finger-picked acoustic guitar lines, insistent fiddle quotes, a taste of moaning pedal steel, constitute the mise en scene for the title cut and single "Tougher Than Nails," a moral tale of forgiveness crafted around the story of a father giving advice to a son to "do as Jesus would have." Diffie showcases his own gritty vocal prowess on "Nothin' On But the Radio," a catchy hard-rocking scorcher. Without any trace of slowing down, Diffie locks in high gear on his self-composed "Moving Train," a song describing the feelings of a man in love. Not a man to

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abandon his paternal upbringings, Diffie pays his tribute to his dad on the midtempo "Daddy's Home," a track reminisce of his earlier hit "Home" both in terms of lyrical content and melody.

However, the better moments of "Tougher Than Nails" are the ballads. A sonic cousin to Diffie's biggie "Is It Cold In Here," "This Time Last Year" finds a passion-packed performance by Diffie over a picturesque tune of heartbreak. Equally provocative, though a tad more cliché is "If I Could Bring You Back." With its wailing steel guitar forming the backdrop of the song, Diffie's plea for his lover's return is heartfelt. "Something I Do For Me" is another powerhouse ballad coming from the pens of Diffie and Harley Allen (writer of John Michael Montgomery's "Little Girl").

However, George Jones' presence as Diffie's duet partner on the Leslie Satcher/Wynn Varble composition "What Would Waylon Do" is predictable and tiresome. Though "What Would Waylon Do" is a 2004 copyright, but hasn't such a title and song idea been used before? "The More You Drink, the Better I Look," "My Neck of the Woods" and "Good News, Bad News" are obligatory uptempo numbers. They are by no means offensive, just humdrum. ---Tomothy Yap

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