

So which one is Ezra?

By AMY DAUGHERTY

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELECTRA RECORDS



What started as a college band playing a gig in a Baton Rouge bar in 1988 has transcended into a third release for Better Than Ezra, which stands as proof that the New Orleans-based trio is not going to succumb to the dreaded third album jinx. *How Does Your Garden Grow?* has placed the band into the limelight once again after the lackluster response to its second album, *Friction, Baby*. Better Than Ezra has been playing together for 10 years and has been nothing short of persistent, a quality that continually works for the band.

After their first self-made release *Surprise* in the late '80s, the band relocated to Los An-

geles, where they sent a tape to a local magazine. After several positive reviews and interest from record companies, *Deluxe* was released on their own Swell label in 1993. "Good" became one of the biggest hits of the year after the band signed on with Elektra Records in 1995, with *Deluxe* (which was re-released as the band's first major-label album) eventually achieving platinum status. Better Than Ezra became MTV's definition of alternative rock, and its listeners eagerly awaited another record.

Everything did not stay rosy in Ezra-land for long, however, and their critically acclaimed second major-label release, *Friction, Baby*, created harsh reviews and did not sell as well as the group's debut.

Along with Better Than Ezra's new release, *How Does Your Garden Grow?*, comes a new

sound and the beginning of a tour that will showcase the band's more mature sounds. The strong melodies are still present, but it is obvious some major changes have occurred, including the addition of Malcolm Burn, the band's new producer, who also hails from New Orleans.

Burn previously worked with U2 and Iggy Pop and was recruited to help Better Than Ezra mix up their sound.

Getting their own recording studio was also an influence on the band. Better Than

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Wingin' it down to Aggieland Walker to perform tonight

By SCOTT HARRIS
The Battalion

How did someone named Ronald Clyde Crosby from Oneonta, New York become a Texas country music legend? Simple — he moved to Texas, befriended Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings and changed his name to Jerry Jeff Walker.

Walker, playing tonight at Shadow Canyon, is touring behind his latest release *Cowboy Boots & Bathin' Suits*, his 28th album.

Recorded in the South American country of Belize, Walker said the album is "country music from another country."

Cowboy Boots & Bathin' Suits has a much more tropical feel to it than most of his other work.

This mood is now a way of life for Walker, who has a home in Belize, as well as Austin and New Orleans. In *Country Weekly Magazine*, Walker said his latest album was recorded differently than most of his other work.

"I'm not Paul Simon going to Africa. I'm just going to Belize," he said. "I didn't have time to work on it for a year and come up with some cosmic sound. We just took our band down there and played some songs that related to the wind, the sand, the rain, the beach, the water. That was what gave us criteria for how the songs were chosen."

In his early 20s, Walker decided to leave New York in search of musical nirvana.

Before landing on both feet in Texas, he put out two albums with his band Circus Maximus and be-

friendied Jimmy Buffet in Florida. Walker's life experiences show up in his songs, whether it is drinking, love, loss, life on the road or tributes to people he has met along the way, he always has something to sing about. Walker, who seems to have as many crowd favorites as he does years of life, first earned fame with his song "Mr. Bojangles."

The song, which has been covered by Sammy Davis Jr. and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, is about a dancer he met in jail after being arrested for public intoxication in New Orleans.

New Orleans was also the last place that Walker played for an Aggie crowd.

"I celebrated the new year at the New Orleans' House of Blues with a bunch of Aggies," Walker said. "They were celebrating the bowl game and the new year. I really rocked the house."

Walker says he enjoys playing for Aggies in College Station.

"I always have a good time," Walker said. "Maybe just a little too wild. I remember the old Star Ballroom... I had a good time."

Walker said his live shows for college students are much different than his shows for older crowds.

"College students want to be over the top. So it's a different show for them, I leave out a lot of ballads and emotion," Walker said. "I can't sing about life experiences to people who haven't had them yet, it won't be the same. But I do play what they want to hear, I keep it upbeat and rock 'n' roll. It's a good high-energy show."

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