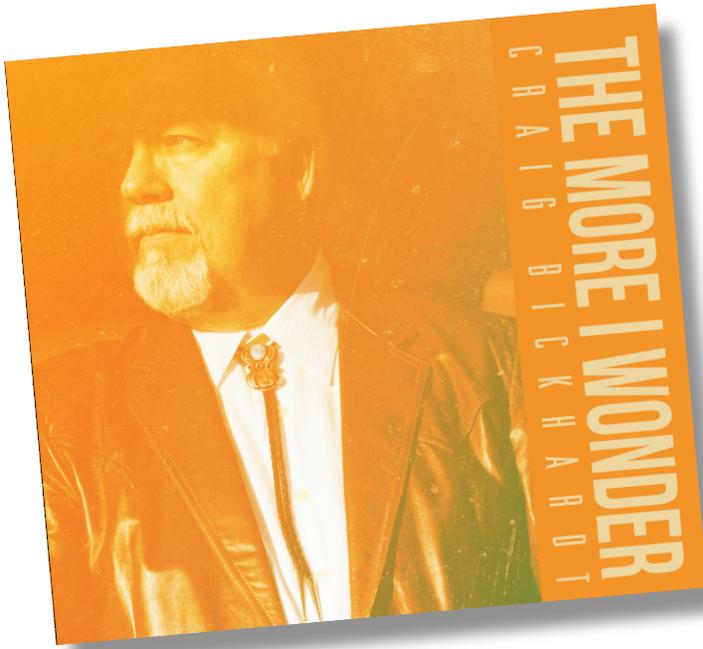


The Philadelphia Inquirer

Craig Bickhardt – *The More I Wonder* – (Stone Barn *** ½)



After 24 fruitful years in Nashville — he penned four No. 1 country hits and nine top 10s — Craig Bickhardt moved back to the Philadelphia area in 2006 to focus on his own performing career. *The More I Wonder* is another sterling showcase for the Haverford High graduate’s myriad talents.

Despite his success in Music City, Bickhardt is not really country. His music is a blend of folk, country, and pop, accented by his fluid acoustic guitar, and its exquisite craftsmanship and feeling play beautifully against the smart and literary quality of his lyrics. He strikes a deep chord whether he’s singing about the father-son bond in “Giant Steps” (dedicated to his son Jake, whose twin sister Aislinn sings harmonies, as she does throughout the album) or, in “Stan,” painting a poignant portrait of the human cost of the city of Bethlehem’s death and rebirth.

“There Is No Night,” meanwhile, offers up the album’s title line — “The more I know/ The more I wonder” — and hints at what keeps Bickhardt’s muse sharp after all these years.

- Nick Cristiano