

Living in Two Worlds: Thomm Jutz

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by Susan Marquez

As a boy growing up in Germany's Black Forest, Thomm Jutz studied piano and flute. "It was an orchestral flute," he recalls. "I actually won some competitions." Young Thomm's parents encouraged their children to play musical instruments, and Thomm felt that traditional European music would be the path he would take. But all that changed the night he sat in front of the family's television set one fateful evening on October 1, 1981. At eleven years of age, Thomm heard the sounds that would set the direction for his musical career.

"I watched the weekly program It's Country Time with Freddy Quinn," Thomm says. "My parents allowed us to stay up late on Thursday nights to watch the show."



On that night, renegade country artist Bobby Bare sang two of his biggest hits, "Detroit City" and "Tequila Sheila." Something clicked in Thomm. He no longer cared about piano and flute lessons. What he wanted was a guitar, and he made up his mind that someday he would move to Nashville.

When a kid is determined to do something, don't try to stop him. Thomm was determined and soon got his first guitar. He practiced and practiced. By the time he was 16, he had his first band, followed by a string of bands. Blues. Rock. Even an Elvis impersonator band.

"I listened to all kinds of music, including Eric Clapton and Led Zeppelin. But country music was always dearest to my heart."

Thomm began trying his hand at songwriting and working in local studios where he could learn the craft of sound engineering. He toured throughout Europe and studied classical guitar at the Stuttgart Conservatory to get a better handle on

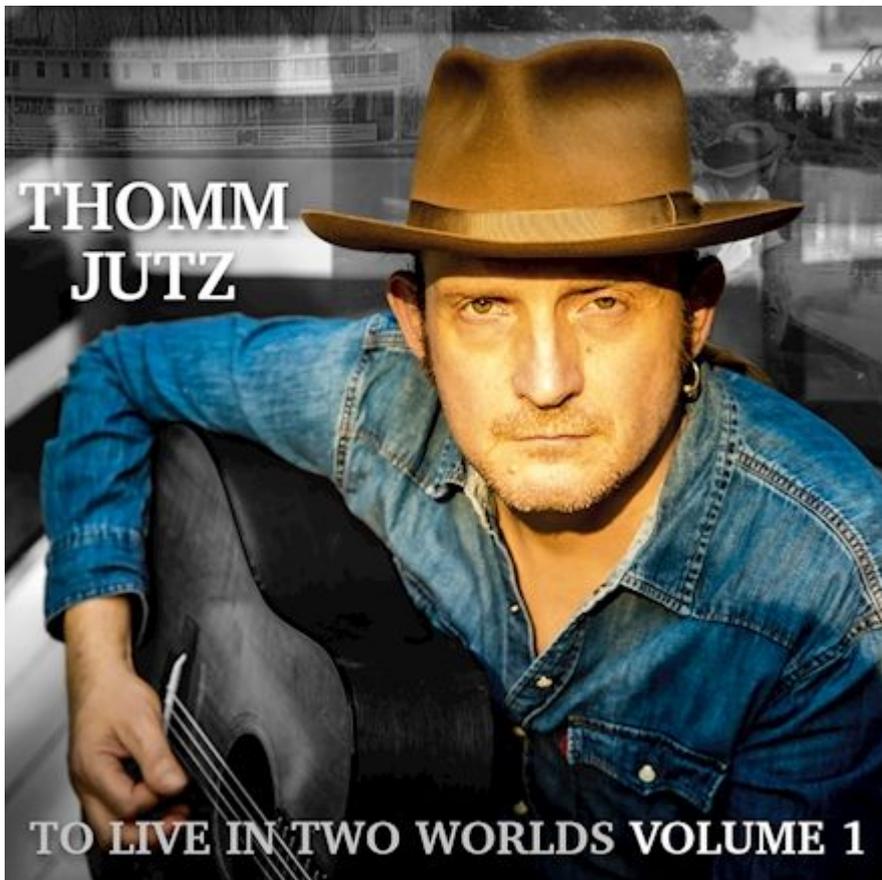
music theory.

"I began traveling to the States with my wife, who had lived here at one time," Thomm says.

<https://youtu.be/K50NH3RUfPw>

The couple traveled around, visiting the Southwest and other areas of the country, but he was always drawn to Nashville. "All I wanted to do was play the guitar there." In 2003, the couple took the plunge and made a permanent move to Nashville. He loved the city, and he thrived there. Within weeks of arriving in town, he was on the road with singer-songwriter Mary Gauthier. He then joined Nanci Griffith's band, the Blue Moon Orchestra, which toured Australia, Europe, Canada, and across the United States. He helped write and produce her album, *The Loving Kind*.

Thomm found himself as a guitar player, a songwriter, and a producer, and his musical calendar stayed full. His life came full circle 33 years after watching that television show in his family's home in Buehl, Germany. In TJ Tunes Studio, the recording studio Thomm has set up on one side of his big log cabin home in a rural setting outside of Nashville, Bobby Bare stood at the microphone, singing a song Thomm wrote. Thomm was able to share with Bobby how he had inspired him to play guitar, write songs, and move to Nashville.



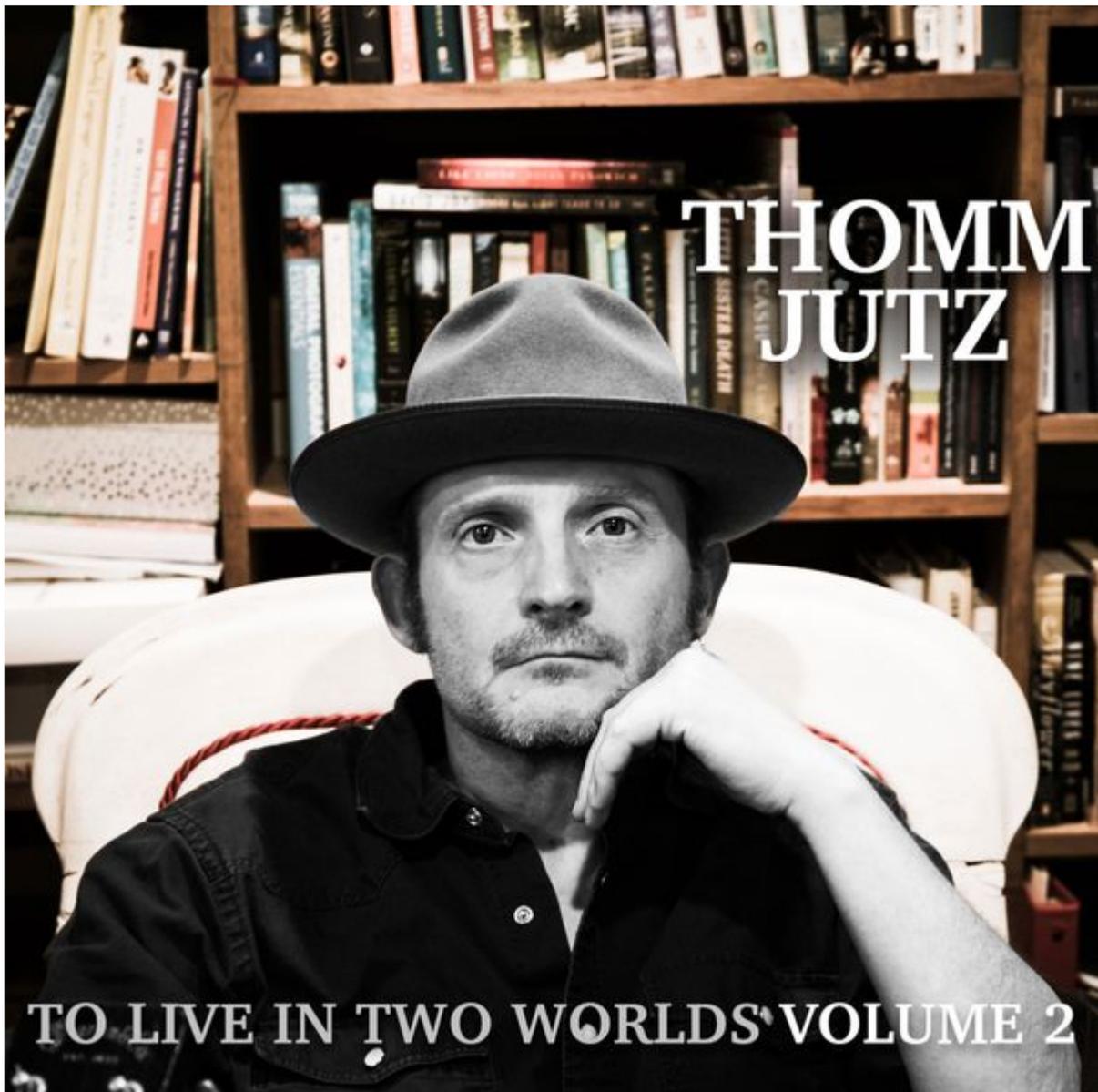
"I enjoy studying the history of music," he says. "I'm also very interested in Southern and Appalachian literature, and the history of the area's people, and even the food."

Thomm has done a great deal since moving to Nashville almost twenty years ago. He has songwriting credits on four number one bluegrass hits since 2016 and on nine other top-20 bluegrass songs over the same period. He has produced over 20 albums over the same period.

In many ways, Thomm lives in two worlds. He was reared on traditional European music but was drawn to American country and bluegrass music. His lifelong interest in the American Civil War had him writing songs about the conflict that resulted in three volumes of music titled *The 1861 Project*, featuring a who's who of artists, including John Anderson, Marty Stuart, Jerry Douglas, and Bobby Bare.

Thomm's latest project is called *To Live in Two Worlds*, which perfectly describes his life, with one foot in a different

world, and one here today. Volume I was released in March, and Volume II was just released on September 25.



From a songwriter's perspective, Thomm believes this is his best work to date. The bluegrass set features both solo tracks with Thomm singing and playing guitar, as well as tracks with a band. "The players on these albums are my dream team," he says. "I love how the band and the solo tracks correspond on the album."

Thomm is still excited to live in Nashville. "It continues to be an exciting town to live in as a musician. There is so much energy here and so much talent." Thomm is also teaching songwriting at Belmont College. "I love teaching. It helps to

keep me on my toes!"