

Farmer and Former Factory Worker Finds Overnight Fame with Viral Country Ballad

Last week, Oliver Anthony was a blue-collar worker from Farmville, Virginia, living on a 90-acre farm with his three dogs, a man unknown to the world.

Today, his song “Rich Men North of Richmond” is at the top of the global music charts. A backyard recording of his “blue collar anthem,” as it’s been dubbed, has now been viewed tens of millions of times across social media.

According to the [Morning Wire podcast](#), in recent days, eight of the top 15 songs on iTunes were by Anthony, even though most of them were recorded on his phone.

But still at the top is Anthony’s first viral hit, the chorus lamenting:

It’s a damn shame what the world’s gotten to

For people like me and people like you

Wish I could just wake up and it not be true

But it is, oh, it is

Livin’ in the new world

With an old soul...

Before you read on, if you haven’t listened to his song yet, do yourself a favor (but mind the occasionally colorful language):

Oliver Anthony’s rather unexpected week began when an account

on X, formerly Twitter, [posted his song](#), simply captioned with the word “Banger.”

The account owner was Chase Steely, a southern culture enthusiast, who had heard Anthony’s song on a YouTube channel that promotes homegrown Appalachian music.

Soon, [country star John Rich](#), [podcaster Joe Rogan](#), and many other large accounts had shared the song—and the rest, as they say, is history.

As reported by *Morning Wire*, Anthony began writing songs just two years ago during a difficult period of his life when, as he explains it, he “wasted a lot of nights getting high and getting drunk.”

The instant popularity of his song has set many tongues wagging.

According to [some cynics](#), it all seems a little astroturfed, as though Oliver Anthony had friends in the industry or connections with conservative influencers. As yet, however, this appears to be a conspiracy in search of a theory.

[Occam’s](#) razor—and the fascinating comments sections on social media—suggest that his song is popular simply because it is authentic and easy to relate to, particularly for American working men, who increasingly feel like strangers in their own country.

There is no doubt that Anthony Oliver has genuine musical talent. His voice is raw and captivating. When he sings about his heartfelt grievances, the grief is audible, even slightly uncomfortable.

On the surface, “Rich Men North of Richmond” is a country song. But it’s also a misfit in a genre that has been homogenized and commercialized. Anthony wears no cowboy hat or designer jeans to convince you he’s from the country. You know

he is from his unkempt beard, his ever-practical wood chair, and his dog sitting faithfully nearby.

Predictably, the corporate press has already started crafting hit pieces against the singer and his song. *Rolling Stone* was the first out of the blocks, [whining](#) that “Right-Wing Influencers Just Found Their Favorite New Country Song.”

Actually, before his meteoric rise to fame, Oliver Anthony [described himself](#) as “dead center” politically, complaining that both Republicans and Democrats “serve the same master.”

There’s also the song’s lyrical contents to consider, which are politically all over the place.

While Anthony voices populist complaints about runaway inflation and an aloof political class, he also mourns for “folks in the street [who] ain’t got nothin’ to eat,” pitiably low wages, and a mental crisis—all traditionally liberal talking points.

His ballad raises other concerns shared by establishment conservatives and even anarchist libertarians, such as high taxes, “the obese milkin’ welfare,” and politicians who “just wanna have total control.”

There’s even a veiled reference to the [puzzling Jeffrey Epstein saga](#).

While “Rich Men North of Richmond” is a song with political themes, it doesn’t have a particularly cohesive political message. It is, as commentator Michael Knowles [notes](#), “a stew of lamenting about the political order.”

It’s not your average country song. In fact, it isn’t even really a country song. Again, to quote Knowles, it’s a folk song—an “anthem of crippled America.”

But it’s one that resonates. It’s a man calling out from the woods in the middle of nowhere, as Knowles says, with a wail

that's finally been heard.

The establishment can mock it. The industry can try to ignore it. Critics and cynics can claim it isn't relevant, or acceptable, or genuine, or worth hearing.

But it is, oh, it is.

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Image credit: [radiowv on YouTube](#)