

Mp3 Troy Campbell - American Breakdown



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this one, I'd been talking to Gurf in the studio, explaining about how I'd flipped out in London because I was dying to get back home. I didn't think I was having a nervous breakdown. And Gurf said, "It was like an American breakdown." That's what a lot of the songs are about - how to throw yourself out of your element, fragment and come back even stronger." Campbell's been defining his own element from the time his international genetics blessed him with what he jokingly calls "that un-American Indian look, exotic white trash from Ohio." Despite the cultural strains of his parents' marriage ("he brought her from Korea to Kentucky to show what really poor people looked like," Troy says with a laugh), both of them instilled the love of music from his earliest memories. When he'd take road trips in his dad's coal truck, they'd listen to Elvis and George Jones on the radio and play Red Sovine on the truckstop jukebox. Back home, he'd sing with his mother, who favored the likes of Sam Cooke, Freddy Fender, even Bobby Darin, the sort of distinctive crooners who inspired Campbell to develop a voice all his own. Like so many among his generation, Campbell responded to the alarm of the '70s punk-rock revolution, embracing the emotional urgency of the Ramones and the Clash, seeing every touring band that passed through nearby Dayton. Among them were the True Believers from Austin, Texas, fronted by Alejandro Escovedo and his brother, Javier. Flying the do-it-yourself flag of inspired amateurism, Alejandro encouraged Troy and his brother Mike to form a band and said he'd let them open for his band, even though they had no musical experience. Playing with enough passion to offset their lack of instrumental proficiency, the Campbell's quickly developed the Highwaymen into one of the most promising band from the Dayton area. From the start, Troy found it easier to write material than try to play someone else's. Winning a radio station's battle of the bands gave them studio time to record their 1986 debut EP. The four-song, self titled release served as a calling card for the touring band, who quickly lived up to their name, while opening for the likes of the True Believers and Green on Red. In 1989, the brothers Campbell followed Alejandro all the way back to Austin, a creative hothouse filled with kindred musical spirits. Fusing rootsy heartland strains with punk energy, the band found it's spark renewed through Austin guitarist Scrappy Jud Newcomb, who played like Keith Richards to Troy's Gram Parsons. After changing their name to Loose Diamonds (from a song by Jo Carol Pierce, whose acclaimed Austin tribute album Troy co-produced). the band became a national favorite. They conquered clubs one by one, with the intensity of their live performances recalling Austin hero Joe Ely or even Bruce Springsteen (who proclaimed himself a fan of the band's "wide-open sound," while calling Troy "a rare voice"). Though 1993's Burning Daylight album debut won NAIRD's

award as the year's best indie rock CD, and 1996's *Fresco Fiasco* was listed among that year's 10 undiscovered gems by the New York Times, deals with financially-plagued Austin labels and years of hard touring eventually ground Loose Diamonds down. Campbell and Newcomb retained a creative friendship (co-writing the title track to *American Breakdown*) that keeps the possibility alive for a band reunion, while both continue to pursue separate musical paths. With *American Breakdown*, Troy not only takes a big step in his musical progression as a solo artist, he takes a look back at the various stages that have brought him here. "There's bits and pieces of everything from the breakup of my last relationship to a whole lot about my family, and some perspective on Loose Diamonds, too," he explains. Is this music alt-country, or Americana, or whatever the buzzword of the day may be? "I've never worried about that," Troy says. "Wherever I go, it seems like somebody connects. And that's all I'm looking for - just connect."

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