

Mp3 Trailside Rangers - Promise And Prayer



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Country Rock/Roots Rock/Alt Country 9 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Country Rock, ROCK: Roots Rock
Details: Formed in early 1991 in NYC, the Trailside Rangers were probably the most "alt" of the early Alt Country scene. Having all cut their teeth in punk/alternative/avant/noise bands, (both together and separately), three of the members came together just to help songwriter/guitarist Joe Wilford flesh out some new material. After a few rehearsals, Wilford, Duane Larson (bass) and Rowan Bishop (really a guitar player, but at the time filling in on drums) were already thinking to make it a serious band. After a few months of more writing, Bishop moved back to guitar and they advertised for a real drummer. Len Wexler of Queens NY auditioned and ultimately got the gig. A few months later the band started gigging in all the big clubs in NYC at the time: CBGB, Continental Divide, Brownies, Under Acme and the rest, as well as Maxwell's in Hoboken NJ and the Court Tavern in New Brunswick. Fans were drawn to Wilford and Bishop's Everly Brothers-like harmonies, guitars that alternately jangled and raged, and Wilford's earnest, haunting songwriting. "At the time Joe was really into the great american novelists like Faulkner and Steinbeck" says Bishop. "He often would read a book and write a song based on it." Larson and Wexler provided stripped down, upbeat rhythms. Mostly, though, the band expanded people musical horizons: Many fans (and later music journalists) offered comments like "I've never cared for country music, but i really like you guys." 1993 saw the release of their first cd, "Peacemaker". The disc contained tales of confusion and rebirth, ways lost and the lament of murder. Journalists from CMJ Music Report, The Noize and The Big Takeover all praised the cuts inside, drawing analogies to Dwight Yoakum, Husker Du, The Long Ryders, X and Neil Young. Unfortunately, the band's schedule soon began to take a toll on drummer Len Wexler. (a TV cameraman by trade, many of you may remember him from comedy bits on the "Rosie O'Donnell Show".) After a gig in Asbury Park in the summer of 1993, he split with the

band. More auditions followed, with fans and hanger-ons insisting the band find a stripped down, in-the-pocket drummer. Always ones to flaunt convention, they selected Jason Byrne, a drummer with monstrous jazz technique and a love of Gene Krupa. Byrne brought complex rhythms and a fire to the band that no other outfit of the genre possessed. With his influence the band's arrangements became harder and less conventional, and the band now stood out in the crowd - maybe a bit too much, as they started to become hard to classify. Still, 1994 brought the release of the first full-length disc. "The Great Divide" on a small, unmentionable label. (the band's first and third discs were released under the band's own Jericho Hill imprint.) The day after the label shipped out promo copies, the two principals of the label literally got in a fist-fight, thus ending their relationship, the label, and the promotional effort behind "The Great Divide". This was a crushing blow to the band - all their hard work on what was considered by those who heard it to be their best album was pretty much down the drain. A lawsuit ensued to reclaim the copies of the disc, but it wasn't settled until years later, and the vast majority of the stock was never returned. Such a downturn could not have no effect on the band and it's music. The music got darker and angrier. Gigs continued to go well (opening slots were offered for The Blasters, The Mekons and former X bassist John Doe) and the band explored new, dark areas of the genre, but pieces started to drop out. Founding member Duane Larson left in the summer of 1996. The rest of the lineup continued with a succession of bass players who never lasted, and a lot of the magic was gone. Soon everyone was just past or on the brink of turning 30, and the distastefulness of spending the rest of their lives in Manhattan started to occupy their minds. Initially there was talk of all moving to the same area and starting the band over, but with no consensus on where. Soon it was apparent that the time to disband had come. However, there was still unfinished business to take care of. The decision was made to record and press what was always planned to be the third album. Geography made Larson's involvement impossible (he was physically in Iowa but in NYC in spirit), but Wilford, Byrne, and Bishop (who was only as far away as Massachusetts) met up in their old practice space, rehearsed for a couple of hours, then went to the studio the next day and laid down "Promise and Prayer", their final release. Bishop played bass under the pseudonym of Dale Nixon (a Black Flag in-joke), and the cd was finished and mixed a few days later. Not quite containing the fire and optimism of "the Great Divide", "Promise and Prayer" still held it's own with probably Wilford's best songwriting. Critics praised the disc and were enamored with the tale behind it's recording. Looking back years later, All the band member's feel it's a fitting swan song - a poetic,

emotional tale of the end of an important period in their lives.

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