

Mp3 The Beau Roland Band - The Road To Wichita



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Smoothly easing its way out of the genre trap, the Beau Roland Band is a little bit old-time waltz and a little bit indie pop mixed with a heavy dose of the down-home auditory aesthetics associated with classic country. 12 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Alt-Country, COUNTRY: Country Folk Details: Traveling Music: The Beau Roland Band By Christa Weber (Wicked Hawt Magazine) There is music we leave on in the background of our lives and then there is the music that calls out for us to stop. To sit down. To put a fist to our mouths and focus inward, back to the memory or the fantasy of a time that seemed to stretch out forever. The sound of the Boston-based, non-eponymous Beau Roland Band is firmly entrenched in the latter category, forcing us not only to look back at the road we've traveled, but to stare down the road ahead. Smoothly easing its way out of the genre trap, the Beau Roland Band is a little bit old-time waltz and a little bit indie pop mixed with a heavy dose of the down-home auditory aesthetics associated with classic country. It's what one who has spent any time on the road at all might call traveling music. The band's debut album, *The Road to Wichita*, was, in fact, inspired in part by the journeys of singer/songwriter Phillip Ouellette, a Little Rock, Arkansas native who found himself pulled in a northeasterly direction at age 19, after he, as described by Beau Roland bassist Tyler Pollard, "saw beyond his own Arkansas landscape, due in part to the influence of similarly driven Alt-Rock of the early 90's heavily penetrated by spiritual surroundings and AM candy pop." "I moved to Boston with some other Arkansas boys to play drums a weird indie band called Slept," said Ouellette. "After that I played drums in the Control Group, the Jack McCoys, Hip Tanaka, and various other local bands. About three years ago, I started fiddling around with the guitar and did a 4-track album by myself, under the name Campaign Finance Reform." Some of that early work was crafted in the country music tradition, but most of it fit squarely in the folk or pop genres, or some combination of the two. Ouellette went on to form a

three-piece rock group named Trustus, with Pollard on drums, that drew comparisons to Pavement. At that point, Ouellette found that his songwriting had taken a decidedly country turn, which did not fit in the context of Trustus, and that he wanted to explore that. Thus, The Beau Roland Band was formed, and came to include Jeremy Eagle on drums, Betty Widerski on fiddle, and Josh Buckley on lead guitar. "I suppose we are out of the mainstream, only because we haven't been playing very long," said Ouellette, whose favorite song on the album is "Adenine." "Most bands around Boston, depending of course on how you define 'mainstream', are not in the mainstream. I don't think it really affects audience reactions much, maybe just the size of the audiences themselves. I guess we're counting on people coming to see us precisely because our sound isn't something people around Boston have been saturated in." In an example of cart-before-horse, the album was recorded (in the summer of 2004 in Allston) before the band ever played a live show. Which could have been considered a shame, had not the results of those efforts turned out the unique blend of despair, hope, and easy storytelling that marks Ouellette's songwriting and composition when brought together with the fiddle, the banjo, and the steel guitar. "I think my inspiration, what makes me want to write a song, is the challenge of conjuring up a certain feeling in the listener, something maybe they've experienced but have perhaps forgotten," he said. "I primarily write songs to make sense of my own memories; to organize all those snippets of sensory data, feelings I can't place, or places I vaguely remember but are so far away as to be otherworldly." "Or I'll have these little bits of memories of a particular year, or occasion, but they're disjointed," he continued, "so I'll write a song around them and tie them together so they make sense. I think it helps me make sense of my past, and you must do that before you can move forward. I think I'm primarily a visual person, and a lot of my songwriting is about translating that into music." The Road to Wichita features a primarily acoustic set of twelve original songs and one Flaming Lips cover ("You Have to Be Joking") that happens to be one of the first songs Ouellette taught himself to play on the guitar and he describes as "sad in a non-specific sort of way." To answer any questions: No, the original version isn't country, but it certainly lends itself to the transposition. "I've been a fan of the Flaming Lips for a long time," said Ouellette. "I love their spirit, songwriting, and Wayne's vocal vulnerability. The song just seemed to work on this album." And work it does, though the Beau Roland Band's originals offer more than enough aural transportation to stand alone. From the darkly sweet lyrics of "She Was a Hard Living Woman" and "Tryin'" to the condensation of the ennui of our age in "There's a Contrast," where phrases like "flat broke and homeless in seventy

dollar jeans" inspire long daydreams, the album has the startling ability to silence the world's background noises. The tempo leans toward the slower end of the spectrum (with the notable exception of the twangy, rolling instrumental "Hallelujah") and a gentle softness that balances the relative emotional rawness of the lyrics, but is never underwhelming. Rather, the songs capture the nuances of far away landscapes that, for many of us, will forever remain a mystery. And, according to Pollard, that almost visual aura is one reason that the Beau Roland Band can be country music without being mired in the genre. "When I was little," he said, "if you attached the title country to it, it was a sure fire way to lose my attention. Now, I just hear the songs. That's what it's like to play in the Beau Roland Band." For him, getting to know the differences between the writing styles of Waylon, Merle, or Willie has been the most exciting part of the project. "Playing these songs and developing a band to perform them with Phil has really opened my eyes in terms of the kind of country it is trying to pay homage to," he said. But who, then, is Beau Roland? According to Ouellette (who was nearly named Beau and whose middle name is Roland), it is easiest to frame Beau Roland as his alter ego or the man he could have been. Which is a thought that seems to reverberate throughout the album -- not so much in the lyrics themselves, but in the overall mix of themes that could again be said to constitute the experiences of anyone who has ever hit the road. "As long as I can remember," said Ouellette, "I've created things to make sense of the world, to give relevance to my life, and to occupy my time. I hope people get this from my songs. At this point, though, I'd love it if our songs just made people shake their asses a little." In the end, The Road to Wichita (and the Beau Roland Band in general) deserves not only a second listen, but a third and a fourth and so on. Like the white lines on the road of possibilities that start out as tiny dots on the horizon only to disappear behind you in the blink of an eye, it leaves in its wake both satisfaction and desire. "I used to drive the highways of Arkansas listening to Simon & Garfunkel live in Central Park," Ouellette said. "Now every time I hear "Homeward Bound" or "America", I'm right back there. I'd love it if my music ever meant that much to someone; I'd consider that a great success." People who are interested in Willie Nelson Gram Parsons Loudon Wainwright III should consider this download.

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