

## Mp3 Habit Trail - Drifting On Off Of The Shoulder



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Folky dirt, oblique lyrics, noisy energy, and an original, off-kilter balance between lo-fi songs and vintage country-rock. 11 MP3 Songs in this album (40:23) ! Related styles: COUNTRY: Honky Tonk, FOLK: Anti-Folk People who are interested in Tom Petty The Knitters Buck Owens should consider this download. Details: After almost a decade since the release of their last full-length recording, Habit Trail has returned with a new album, *Drifting On Off Of The Shoulder*. A collection of original songs in a vintage country-rock vein, the album represents a long-delayed return to the studio for Habit Trail, the name under which songwriter and guitarist Dave Novak has released his varied musical projects since the early 1990s, when Habit Trail was a crucial part of the emerging Northwest indie scene in Portland, Oregon. The material highlighted on this new album is just as raw and creatively off-kilter as the 1990s lo-fi gems *Fear Your Ear*, *Exile Is Now* and the classic 4-track recording *Rabbit Tail*, but *Drifting On Off Of The Shoulder* accompanies a changing approach to songwriting and a powerful new group of musicians. Since Novak relocated to New York City for graduate school at the turn of the millennium, Habit Trail has slowly been honed into a solid country-rock bar band whose live shows in downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn have built a following with their eccentric but surprisingly original songs, delivered with drunken panache. The new album reflects a unique alchemy between the rootsy musicianship and smooth emotional delivery of country and the folky dirt, oblique lyrics, and noisy energy of Habit Trails earlier incarnations. While tracks like *Deserted Heart* and *Mr. Daniels* shimmer with a sparkling classic country-rock sound (delivered with the help of pedal steel guitarist Bob Hoffnar), songs like *Juiced* and *Bottle ring* with a loose punky intensity, perhaps best captured by the bands stripped-down reinterpretation of country punker Exene Cervenkas *Good Luck* (expertly chanted by Jen Gherardi). Novak describes the challenge of writing country songs as a way to get to the heart of what makes a

great pop song: The country stuff I'm most interested in is extremely commercial -- they're hit songs, from a time when country was just part of what was happening in pop music, what was on the radio. But country songs are in a more controlled form than what rock songs became later on; emotionally, you have to say a lot within a very strict verse-chorus structure. To write a country song that feels real, you can't just go back and recreate those classic records -- you've got to tread a new path through really well-worn images and places, to let the bottles, and bar rooms, and jukeboxes, and highways form their own little world. Like Habit Trails past DIY releases, *Drifting On Off Of The Shoulder* is a solo recording project, but its detailed and carefully-constructed sound reflects the creative mix Novak found in Columbia University's arcane mix of analog and digital equipment at the institution's cold-war era Prentiss studio, where EMT plate reverbs and Ampex tube mixers interface with Pro Tools and modern preamps. While the band often played the basic tracks live, the recordings were largely constructed piecemeal using the classic analog gear. Novak explains, I wanted to capture that sound that comes from assembling things slowly like you do on a 4-track cassette, but in a freer studio environment with more solid equipment -- that slightly awkward and unbalanced feeling you get from so many great 1960s-era recordings where the basic tracks were made live, but drive another layer of sound that floats around on top. When you get that kind of organic mix between experimentation and familiarity in the music, the songs sound mysterious the first time you hear them but they're classics by the time you've heard them twice. The effect of this balance between sonic craft and first-take looseness makes *Drifting On Off Of The Shoulder* a diverse and varied listening experience, ranging from gorgeously warm and resonant ballads to vintage-radio honky-tonk to cracked-up, beautifully sloppy rockers. As he continues with other projects - including a forthcoming book on Japanese Noise Music -- Novak is currently working on a new Habit Trail album, with core members Toby King, Tim Pearson, Jen Gherardi and Josh Pilzer, that promises further explorations in song forms and in recording techniques, and is tentatively scheduled for release in summer 2009.

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