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Two Gallants - 'What The Toll Tells' (Saddlecreek) Released 20/02/06



by Jeff Fry

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Two Gallants are not a band to just sit around resting on their laurels. Sometime between a hectic tour schedule in 2005, they duo recorded a sophomore effort to their highly acclaimed 2004 release, 'The Throes'. The result is the expansive collection of tracks that make up 'What the Toll Tells'.

What at first looks like a quick nine-track album, actually clocks in at well over an hour. Many of the songs ebb and flow for well over the standard industry playing time for a single. In fact, their stripped down radio edit of their first single, 'Las Cruces Jail' still comes in at around five minutes. What's more amazing, is that the songs never once get old or drag on for what seems like too long.

Quite the opposite happens, in fact. 'Las Cruces Jail', for example, slowly blows in with a whistling wind. From there it builds into vocalist Adam Stephens' own whistle, only to stop for a second before coming back to punch you in the gut with a wall of drums and the duo's signature craggy vocals being belted out at top level. The song then changes tempo several times and fades out with the wind again before you even know the track time has elapsed, leaving you wanting even more.

The pair had promised a darker, more melancholy when interviewed before the album came out and did not come up short on this prediction. When they are not pulsing through faster numbers, they pour out every emotion they have into the listener's ears with slow-tempo melodies backed by a sparse string section.

This album, much like their first, owes a lot to the early blues sound that rolled through the Southern U.S. in the early 1900's. When listening to the album, you can almost picture yourself on some cattle drive through the plain states, tumbleweeds rolling by, listening to the campfire concert of a traveling duo. This is especially prevalent on tracks like 'Steady Rollin' and 'The Prodigal Son', where Stephens and Vogel roll through the melody like a drunken cowboy telling his hardships.

Many of the songs on the album have been crowd favorites and staples at earlier concerts and have finally made their way onto the album. However, they have all been given new life (and in many cases, new lyrics) to punch up their official releases, making many fans happy for studio versions of the songs they have come to love.

The album deserves repeated listens and is a spectacular follow-up to a great debut. If the Two Gallants continue at this pace, they will soon be the band you wish you'd seen in support of these early albums.

Two Gallants

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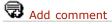


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