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## Album: Two Gallants

### What the Toll Tells, SADDLE CREEK

By Andy Gill

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Two Gallants are the latest debutants for Conor Oberst's Saddle Creek label, a rollicking, rumbustious folk duo whose reinvention of traditional Americana modes sounds utterly authentic, thanks in no small part to their decision to deliver songs with the rowdy punk spirit of The Pogues or The Boggs. Singer/ guitarist Adam Stephens has a singular lyrical gift - my favourite line from the anti-war anthem "Waves of Grain" refers to "the foetus of Christ with a fistful of scars" - and manages to imbue murder ballads like "Long Summer Day" and "Las Cruces Jail" with a raucous, rough-hewn charm that matches their subject matter perfectly, so that the prisoner awaiting execution in the latter is suitably unapologetic as he urges his "sweet Andalucia" not to swallow "the lies they'll feed ya". A few of the tracks drag on too long, most notably the lament for a lost friend "Threnody In Minor B", a funereal waltz burnished with cello, which takes nearly ten minutes to lumber to a conclusion, but sounds more like 20. Ironically, the best track, "Steady Rollin'", is one of the shortest, its trad-blues pastiche boasting a sort of bruised self-esteem that any old-timer would be proud to wield.

DOWNLOAD THIS: 'Steady Rollin'', 'Las Cruces Jail', 'Waves of Grain'