

"[The Steel Wheels] travel along a path through the listener's ears and aim directly for the heart."

—*Dirty Linen*

"Thought provoking and introspective ... Simple, yet full of emotion."

—*Americana Rhythm magazine*

"Songs that recall a more familiar time and yet sound fresh and creative."

—*Acoustic Cafe*

"Shenandoah Valley's newest, and brightest, songwriting force."

—*Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine*

"Forces to be reckoned with for a while."

—*9513 Country Music*

"Wagler's voice is a supple instrument with an expressive bite."

—*Bluegrass Unlimited*

THE STEEL WHEELS

Unlike his Amish grandfather who had to form a string band on the sly, Trent Wagler is anything but shy about making music with The Steel Wheels. But like that harmonica-playing grandpa, the band both respects and breaks tradition with every note. Take the title track of the band's new album, *Red Wing*. When Wagler, the band's primary songwriter, heard the tune throughout his childhood while visiting family in Bean Blossom, Indiana, it was always played as an upbeat reel; he thought it was better as a slow, melancholy song, so he reinvented it with his own words. The Steel Wheels recorded it in a Shenandoah Valley cabin hideaway with internationally known folk harmonizers Robin and Linda Williams. This is a quintessential Steel Wheel's project: taking a beloved traditional tune and making it new again, inspiring a wide range of fans.

The Steel Wheels are truly an Americana band, rooted in musical styles that explore the territories between blues and bluegrass, old-time sing-alongs and foot-stompin' fiddle tunes. They are subtle innovators who respect the past but whistle their own tunes, layering in rich textures and decidedly modern energy to forge a new sound.

They fit best among musicians like Langhorne Slim, Gillian Welch, or Adrienne Young and Little Sadie (with whom they've shared the stage) – deft musicians making a name for themselves by creating their own particular permutation of traditional forms. Yet the Steel Wheels share much with new Americana favorites like the Avett Brothers or Old Crow Medicine Show, with charisma that causes toes to tap and heads to nod, audiences hanging on their every word. Like those bands, The Steel Wheels have broad appeal. And they count among their fans former Statler Brother Jimmy Fortune and indie folk darlings Over the Rhine.

The four-piece band is based in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, where multi-instrumentalist Jay Lapp was born and took inspiration from church hymns and folk fests, and where Trent Wagler has been a scene staple for nearly a decade. Lapp was touring with several successful Midwest bands when he and Wagler crossed paths in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and a musical partnership began. The two are joined by upright bassist Brian Dickel and fiddler Eric Brubaker to form the Steel Wheels. The band shines exceptionally in their live shows, and their palpable chemistry translates easily to *Red Wing*. Just listen to the exceptional four-part harmonies that support and



FROM LEFT: BRIAN DICKEL, TRENT WAGLER, JAY LAPP, ERIC BRUBAKER

accentuate Wagler's scratchy tenor, which has been compared to that of Darrel Scott. Brubaker's fiddle, both lively and evocative, suits the band exactly, and Dickel's upright bass grounds the outfit. Jay Lapp's signature mandolin style is remarkable and unmistakable.

Red Wing is a testament to the many forms roots music can take, from the catchy "Long Way to Go" to the gospel-inspired, folky-blues rollick of "Nothing You Can't Lose," a song that makes you want to stand up and say "Amen!" *Red Wing* is punctuated with instrumentals – nearly a lost art – including the luminous "Second of May," composed by Lapp, and two fiddle tunes from Brubaker. Restless yet poignant harmonies in "Dance Me Around the Room" invite the listener to linger with the album. Also noteworthy is "Surround Me," an a capella powerhouse that the band recently performed live on WDVX's "Blue Plate Special" broadcast in Knoxville.

The Steel Wheels have built a following from the East Coast to the Midwest and beyond, appearing at Americana festivals such as the Bristol Rhythm & Roots Festival, Floydfest, Folk Alliance, and Appalachian Uprising. Wagler and Lapp also regularly take a duo show to Ireland and have appeared with Peter Rowan at the 'Ards International Guitar Festival.

In keeping with their music that takes a traditional idea on a modern adventure, Wagler and Lapp's organized a week-long, 300-mile bicycle tour last year. Not only did they pedal themselves through the mountains of Virginia to seven gigs in seven days, they hauled their own gear the whole way, with one bicycle custom-framed for travel and another fitted with a trailer. It's one more example that with inherent skill and energy, trust in the value of simplicity and a marked talent for taking something old-fashioned and making it relevant for today is one of The Steel Wheels' greatest strengths.

The Steel Wheels are currently touring the U.S. in support of the new album.

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