

FLAGPOLE

The Corduroy Road

Door-to-Door Americana



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It seems nothing went as planned for The Corduroy Road this year. When the duo of Drew Carman and Dylan Solise entered dreamLab studios in Winterville, GA, they expected to emerge with a full-length album. Instead, The Corduroy Road came out of recording with an E.P...along with a record deal, a full band and plans for a nationally distributed full-length. Maybe planning is overrated.

"We really wanted to make an album that had some low end on it, with some drums and bass and more of a rhythm section," says Carman. "That was our original intention - just to have those guys play with us on the album...but it just worked out so well that we asked them if they wanted to join the band...it didn't take a lot of convincing."

While bassist Ethan Payne was eventually replaced by Tim Helms, drummer John Cable stuck with the band, and the fuller sound has already made an impression on

local audiences, particularly on new local label Mule Train Records. The label caught wind of the dreamLab sessions just a couple months ago, and what they heard sounded like pure potential. After catching The Corduroy Road opening for The Packway Handle Band at Georgia Theatre, the label was won over completely.

So, instead of finishing the record in Winterville, Mule Train provided the resources necessary to record a full-length with highly acclaimed producer John Keane which is due out in late January. In the meantime though, Carman really wanted to give something to the fans who have waited over a year for a Corduroy Road release.

"The only time [our fans] could hear us with a full band was at a live show, so we decided to take six of the songs we recorded at dreamLamb and release it as an E.P."

While the release, simply titled *E.P.*, is just a taste of what's in store for The Corduroy Road, it's easy to under-

stand why Mule Train jumped on board so readily. Although rooted in classic Americana, with lots of foot stomping, banjo plucking and pedal steel, The Corduroy Road also has a knack for endearing pop sensibility. It just takes one verse of swaying to the acoustic rhythms before you are singing along the next time the chorus rolls around. It's the kind of music that practically begs for a sing-along, with Carman and Solise's rich, organic harmonies leading the way.

It's an energy that Carman says the band really embraces during a live performance. "We try to make the audience as much a participant in the music as we are. The energy that we get from the crowd is what feeds us and what makes us have a good show."

Even as a folk duo, The Corduroy Road's live show had been described as embodying a punk rock attitude. "We do a lot of screaming, sweating and jumping around and breaking of strings," says Carman. "We try to move the show with a high energy, and it's a lot easier now that we have a drummer and a bassist, too. Before, I about blew my knee out stomping. I started mic-ing a piece of wood that I put down underneath my foot because I put a hole in a stage at a show in Kentucky."

Where did this unbridled enthusiasm for rootsy rock come from? Well, perhaps you could say it's in the water - or at least, that's where Carman found it.

After college, Carman worked for an engineering firm in Lexington, KY that sent him out to Eastern Kentucky, going door to door conducting water surveys.

"I experienced a lot of really old time mountain music, roots, bluegrass stuff, in Eastern Kentucky back in the mountains," he says. "I was going into these peoples' houses and talking to them and running water tests, and so many of them were musicians, too. So I would get to hang out with these old time guys that were like musical heroes that nobody knows about. They had these old pre-war Gibson banjos that were probably worth like 10 grand or something. They were just so awesome; I started picking up some techniques from them... sometimes spending all evening talking, playing music with them and drinking moonshine."

When Carman first started The Corduroy Road with long-time friend Solise, the duo kept things very traditional - with Carman strictly on claw-hammer banjo. But this new E.P. signifies a new chapter in the band's development, with the addition of the electric bass and drums taking the music in a more rock-oriented direction. With the rising popularity of folk-inspired rock bands from Okkervil River to the Avett Brothers, it seems like The Corduroy Road is picking up speed at just the right time.

Carman agrees: "This is a really good time to be playing the music that we play."

Michelle Gilzenrat

WHO: Bill Mallonee, The Corduroy Road

WHERE: The Melting Point

WHEN: Friday, Oct. 24

HOW MUCH: \$10