

ROY'S ROAD

one of music and experience

JUSTIN CRANN

Kevin Roy's last tour as a musician was a series of unfortunate events that reminded him of the importance of resilience.

"I ended up having six separate incidences of damage happening to my car," Roy said of the somewhat disastrous journey. "To be gone for six months and end up having to make a bunch of different damage claims when I got home was tough. I guess it really made me resilient."

For Roy, a former teacher who went on leave from that career to embark on the musical journey he set aside a decade prior, the experience "kind of represents the music industry for independent musicians trying to make a go of it."

"You're going to hit a lot of dead ends and take a lot of bumps and scrapes along the way," he explained. "It's just about keeping your head up and keeping on going."

Roy has been keeping his head up for the better part of the past two years, touring with his country-folk album. He's visited Moose Jaw once in the past, on a "very chilly evening," and "the reception was great," he said.

That's a good thing, because his performances feed on the audience's energy and attentiveness.

"That's one of the really big things, especially in this genre that I play. I often say that I'd rather play in a living room or venue with eight people in it who are actively engaged and listening to my music, than a bar where I'm playing to 100 people and hardly anybody is listening," said Roy.

"Those intimate shows are really my favourite, because you get to connect with and meet new people."

He said that the connections he has made and experiences he's had on tour have "really lit a fire" under him, and are inspiring him enough that when his current tour — to promote his album, *Taller Than The Trees* — ends, he'll be going right back to working on the next album.

That's because next year, Roy is going to have to make another big decision about whether to go back to teaching, or carry forward with music as his full-time profession.

"I want to make sure that I get the most of this time I've been given," he said. "The tough point is going to be next year, when I have to make the choice."

Roy will play 23 Main Street on Sept. 14.



Kevin Roy, a teacher-turned musician, will visit Moose Jaw to perform for the second time on Sept. 14 at 23 Main Street. Photo courtesy A. Kost and S. Tester/KevinRoyMusic.com

[REVIEW]
Roy stands tall with debut album

There's something about the prairie landscape that produces great country and folk artists, and Winnipeg's Kevin Roy is no different.

On his debut album, *Taller Than the Trees*, Roy establishes himself as a talent in the industry with a handful of genuinely enjoyable numbers that the musician himself said draw upon his experiences on the road.

Opening the collection is a song Roy said he wrote a decade prior to the album's recording. Titled *Calgary Skyline Blues*, it's a suitable opener and the harmonica that kicks off the song sets the tone for what's to come.


The title track follows, and it's a slower-tempo ballad powered by some skilled guitar work, earnest storytelling and Roy's fantastically fresh voice. The song soon picks up, and accompanied by backing vocals, Roy tells a familiar country music story in a compelling way that fans of the genre will likely enjoy.

The best song on this album is right at its heart. *February Song* could almost be an anthem for the musician, and it features a particularly poignant chorus in which Roy declares, "I wish I was a poet, but I tend to ramble on."

The album rambles on, as well, and after an enjoyable ballad in *Two Rivers* it closes with what could be the most radio-friendly country song in the collection, titled *The Ridges of Teggau*, which pulls out sounds that would be familiar to any dedicated listener of the genre.


In all, the collection's only shortcoming is how short it is. Roy is a musician who could easily fill a 12-song record with enjoyable material, and while *Taller Than the Trees* was an enjoyable taste of what he's capable of, it will leave the listener wanting more.

Of course, depending on your perspective, that's not necessarily a bad thing.




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