



Interview: Heidi Duss Foto: Marco Duss

Interview with The Roys, Nashville, 07.06.2011

Q: What does Bluegrass Music mean to you?

A: Lee: For me, it's the Tradition. It's really where the American Music began. You can go back to Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, the Grateful Dead, when you listen to those classic Rock Bands, it's that Music, even today, translated into Bluegrass Music. I hope that the Music itself is not lost. In the hype and everything else that goes on with the Music today. it's in it's rawest form and it is cut and dry, you can't hide behind anything, its acoustic instruments and it is real. It speaks of everyday life. Sometimes you worry that it is going to get lost, that it is going to be a thing of the past. There is such a great influence of new Artists coming in and more and more younger people that are playing Bluegrass Music. I'm just so proud to be part of it.

Elaine: Yes, for me too, I think there is so much Tradition in Bluegrass and even Country Music. For us, I think it's important that we stay true to that, people are really hungry for it, they are looking for it now. It's just exciting to be part of it. I think, if we're doing what's in our Heart and Soul, I hope it is working and that it comes across in the music on our new album. Once people hear it, they'll love it and I'm excited about that.

Q: Who influenced you most?

A: Elaine: For me it's Dolly Parton. I was introduced to her when I was five years old. As I got older, I learned a little more about Dolly Parton and I loved her even more because her Heart and Soul is truly sincere. I did get to meet her and she was everything I thought she would be. She could sit here with us and she just would fit in. That's what I love about her. She's an incredible Singer, Songwriter, Musician, but her Heart and Soul is so pure. She's my favorite. I love her.

Lee: For me, obviously Grandma and Aunts and Uncles that played rootsy music when I was growing up. But professionally it's Ricky Skaggs, he's my biggest Musical Hero. I remember living in eastern Canada, there was a Sunday Night Bluegrass Show which ran from five to nine PM. That's how I got introduced to Mac Wiseman, the Osmond Brothers, Ralph Stanley and Bill Monroe and all those Greats. So it was a mixture of hearing Ricky Skaggs for the first time and me really wanting to know more about the Music. I would hear them talk about Doctor Ralph Stanley and I would ask, who is that. I would search him out, find it and get hooked on his Music. It's just a whole Variety of people that have influenced me, but Ricky is the main reason that I play today.

Q: Can you tell me a little about each song from your CD "Lonsome Whistle"?

A: Lee: It's a big collection of songs. The title Track "Lonesome Whistle" is a song Elaine and I wrote while on the road. We were in Maine, had a night off and it was early. We were at the Motel and I went over to her room to talk about this project that we were cutting in the next couple of weeks. She kept saying we really need an up-tempo song, it was just one of these things where we had an idea and worked with it. It turned in many directions and ended on this. We played it for Andy Leftwich, who co-produced Lonesome Whistle with us, and he felt it would be a great song for the Album. Rural Rhythm Records(our label) heard the song and immediately said this needs to be the title track.

Elaine: I wrote the "Trailblazer" with Dolly Parton in mind. I was stuck in traffic one day behind a Trailblazer SUV and some Trailers and I thought of Dolly Parton right away. I went to a writing session and brought up the idea, that I'd like to write this about Dreamers, because Dolly Parton came from nothing and look where she is today, she's still doing so much. There is hope for all of us and I wanted that song to be about the Dreamers. Anybody that has a dream, should never give up because, I'm living proof sitting here today that dreams do come true.

Lee: "Coal Minin' Man" is a song that I co-wrote with one of my good buddies here, Matt Rogers. He brought the idea to the table. He's from Eastern Pennsylvania, and there's a lot of coal mining in that area. He wanted to write a bluegrass song, first and foremost, and he said, "When I had this idea, I knew exactly who to bring it to, because I know you love bluegrass music." We both felt very strong that we didn't want to paint the negative side of coal mining, which all too often is the only time that coal mining is brought to the forefront is when there's a tragedy. We wanted to write this in a different perspective, just the perspective of coal mining man Joe who gets up and goes to work every day, and coal mining woman Jane who gets up every morning and goes coal mining, and doesn't reap the glory of media, or the thanks or the congratulations. So we just got together and started writing this, and it was just a really fun song to write. And when we got in the studio it really took off, and kinda

popped its head up as being one of the strong songs on this album, and Rural Rhythm heard it and fell in love with it and just thought it would be a great first single, and the rest is history.

There's also a song on the Album, when people see the title, they kind of go 'hmmm'. That song is called "Give a Ride to The Devil". The opening story is about an eight year old boy that decides to take a pack of gum and he didn't have any money, so he stuck it in his pocket. An old Guy taps him on the shoulder and said, „you know, if you keep doing that, the Devil will run your live one day.“ That s pretty much what the whole message is, that if you let the Devil ride once, he's going to take control.

I think the CD has a really a good variety of songs for everybody, because there is some straight forward Bluegrass stuff like "Nothing I Can Do About it Now", which is just a typical --Woman left me, got on a train and went to the next town. Then we have some that are really endearing to a lot of people like "High Road", that's just a great message.

Q: How do you feel about winning the ICM Awards two years in a row?

A: Elaine: That was incredible, it's the Inspirational Country Music Awards and what they stand for is for more Inspirational Songs for their listeners. Our Music just seems to fit that Genre. They started playing our Music and they thought we where really good, so we got nominated. When we were in the top ten for Duo, I thought that was so cool. Then the nomination came up and we where in the top five which meant we were really nominated. We were so excited about that. That was in 2009, we were sitting in the audience at the Show and we thought we're not going to win, but what an Honor that they're even going to call our names along with these people. So when they said "and the winner is The Roys", we were just clapping until someone behind us said, you got to get up there, you won. We were just so shocked and honored, we just could not believe it. In 2010 we were nominated again, and again we were just in awe. The Competition was a little bit tougher and we thought, if this is not our year, it is ok, we won it once and it's wonderful. And lo and behold, they called our name again. For us, it just helps us to continue our journey. Someone is patting us on the back saying we love what you're doing, keep doing it. Be true to who you are and God will open those doors,. and He has.

Q: How do you feel about your career so far?

A: Elaine: It's nothing that we ever dreamed of.

Lee: We just never had this on our radar. One thing with us is that we cherish every moment. It does not matter if it's a really small crowd, or a huge crowd, or a really big Festival, Fair or Venue or a small one. We cherish every moment, everything that comes our way. We love seeing that people want to read about, see us and watch our Shows. We just take everything as a really big Blessing at the moment. We can't wait to see where it s going.

Q: Do you have any special plans for the Future?

A: Lee: To keep making Music and to keep spreading our Music to as many people that want to listen. We hope to go overseas and hope to introduce our Music to the people over there. Keep writing songs that people want to hear. We have a great band and we love being on the road with them, we love seeing the excitement in their eyes.

Elaine: For me, and I think for you too Lee, our lifelong dream is singing in the Grand Ole Opry. We have not done that yet, but we keep praying and hoping for that. Hopefully, one day we can do that. But we have done so many things, that we never even thought of . You know, sometimes it is very frustrating, but I ve come to learn that it's in God's time, not my time. He will give us what is right at that moment. I think for us, that keeps us grounded. We appreciate everything that we get and we just love what we do. We are so blessed.

Q: Anything you would like to tell the readers that I did not ask?

A: Lee: They can check us out at "theroysonline.com", we hope they like our music, we love getting e-mails, they can go to our Website and e-mail us directly. We do answer every e-mail that comes in. We are also in Facebook and Twitter. We just love everything we do and we thank everyone that supported us, by e-mailing us, buying our CDs, coming to our shows or calling the radio stations. It is because of the Fans, that we get to do what we love.