



**Get Back**  
**By David McGee**

With new vocalist Tommy Long adding his baritone left to the proceedings, Carolina Road has an easy time making good on the title of its second Rural Rhythm album. Much like Randy Travis and John Anderson, the two vocalists whose styles surface most clearly in his, Long lets the song come to him, never oversinging or straining for effect but simply letting the stories unfold at a leisurely pace as he recounts them with powerfully felt emotion. The tenderness he brings to the warm memories permeating the graceful lilt of “Granny’s Garden” (one of his two original songs here), with a nice assist from the heartfelt fiddling of Josh Goforth, might remind some fans of an early Travis gem of similar bent, “No Place Like Home.” The quiet determination he brings to Tom T. and Dixie Hall’s “A Light In the Window, Again” (with bracing harmony support on the choruses from Carolina Road’s beloved founder/mandolinist Lorraine Jordan) adds an epic dimension to the Halls’ story about Bill Monroe’s wanderings from and return to his Rosine, KY, home, a theme especially resonant on this Carolina Road outing.

Indeed, the strut and warm harmonies of “The Hills of Home” bespeak the joy of hearth and family the lyrics express; the hard charging, banjo-driven “Sharecropper’s Son” recounts the hardscrabble life of itinerant but close-knit farming families; the album opening “Back To My Roots” breaks fast out of the gate behind Ben Greene’s furious banjo work before Long enters telling of treasured memories of “the simple things from my upbringing” en route back to his point of origin, with a big assist from Goforth’s exuberant fiddling; and the celebratory “Lee Berry Rye” is a bit of rarity, a construction song, if you will, joyfully extolling the road gang’s laborious task of cutting a road through a mountain before winter roars in, with Goforth (fiddle) and Greene (banjo) seconding the narrative’s urgency with sizzling instrumental work.

***Carolina Road at the Gettysburg Bluegrass Festival, August 2011, ‘The Hills of Home,’ from the band’s new Back To My Roots album.***

To balance things out, the band explores treacherous ground in matters of the heart. “Cold Carolina Snow,” with Jordan’s mandolin chop a steady, driving force over which Greene and Goforth fashion dramatic, intense solos, is an unsparring account of the murderous aftermath of an adulterous affair, a deadly tale hardly softened by the tune’s upbeat ambience. A Don Reno-Mack Magaha co-write, “I Know You’re Married But I Love You Still,” is a gem of a western swing-influenced heartbreaker featuring Jordan’s poignant mandolin and some aching Jordan-Long harmonizing on a story in which the complications are evident from the title alone--Jordan’s high, keening harmony part, in fact, evokes the sound of Ira Louvin, whose co-write with brother Charlie, a humorous, driving love ditty called “Bald Knob, Arkansas,” is centered less on place than on the singer’s endearing commitment to the gal of his dreams (“I’ll love her till I’m bald-headed too”), with the ebullient soundscape shaped by frisky mandolin and banjo work from Jordan and Greene, respectively. Murder ballads, love songs, engaging reflections on the faith and love of family and treasured friends--Ms. Jordan and her buddies are getting back to their--and this music’s--roots in multiple ways, all of them compelling. One heck of a journey, it never gets old.