

## **Carolina Road - Back to My Roots**

### **Review by Joe Ross**

Rural Rhythm RUR-1088

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It's been about four or five years since I reviewed Carolina Road's two album releases on Tom T. Hall's Blue Circle Records label. I found the hardworking band from North Carolina to be fully dedicated to presenting a traditional bluegrass sound with a copious amount of personalized contemporary charisma. Now associated with Rural Rhythm Records, this is the band's second release on that label. While the band has experienced a few personnel changes on guitar and bass over the years, the stability in this group are still Lorraine Jordan (mandolin, vocals), Josh Goforth (fiddle, vocals), and Ben Greene (banjo, vocals). They bring strength and solidity to the table. The band's newest members are Tommy Long (guitar, lead vocals) and Eddie Biggerstaff (bass). Both have plenty of experience and fit right in.

Lorraine or Tommy had a hand in the songwriting of three numbers (Back to My Roots, Granny's Garden, Cold Carolina Snow), and the title cut states recalls the country road, whippoorwills, hilltops, meadows, summer breeze and simple things from our pasts and upbringing. The rest of their set comes from a wide variety of suitable writers for their style such as the Louvin Brothers, Clyde Moody, Mack Magaha/Don Reno, Randall Hylton, and Tom T. and Dixie Hall. Of special note are those two songs (The Hills of Home, Sing a Bluegrass Song) from fellow North Carolinian A. L. Wood, an expert banjo player and singer who recorded with his Smokey Mountain Boys on the Rebel label back in the 1970s. The Halls' "A Light in my Window, Again" was inspired by Kentucky Governor Paul E. Patton's speech at the Bill Monroe homeplace dedication in Rosine, Ky.

"Back to My Roots" indicates that Carolina Road is still proud of their traditional music foundation, but the band's character and persona are much deeper than solid presentations of a few old traditional numbers. They also have an affinity for newer tunes from contemporary writers. It's a propulsive and potent combination. Carolina Road doesn't have the intensity of Monroe's high lonesome, but they have great familiarity and knowledge of the style. They comfortably and successfully incorporate many elements of the traditional sound, capture the heart of the genre, and tap into its soul with their accomplished musicianship. (Joe Ross)