

# New Riders of the Purple Sage

*Where I Come From* • (Woodstock)

Originally known as Jerry Garcia's pedal steel offshoot from the Grateful Dead, the New Riders of the Purple Sage have had a long and colorful history. John Dawson and David Nelson teamed with Garcia and a host of talented musicians. Their eponymous debut, released in 1971, remains a country-rock classic. Buddy Cage eventually replaced Garcia and numerous lineup changes occurred over the decades. Flash forward to the surprising 2005 announcement that the New Riders had reformed with a new lineup including Nelson, Cage, Hot Tuna's Michael Falzarano and the lockstep rhythm section of Johnny Markowski and Ronnie Penque (both from Stir Fried).



This album marks their first major studio project and is a tasteful collection of 12 tracks produced by Falzarano. The Riders' sound is built on the twangy twin-Telecaster guitars of Nelson and Falzarano combined with Cage's virtuosity as one of the world's top steel guitarists, wringing tones from his instrument that range from weepy to flat-out distortion. Dave Nelson Band alumnus Mookie Siegel adds keyboards to five tracks, and everyone except Cage sings lead.

Seven of the songs were co-written by Nelson and legendary Dead lyricist Robert Hunter (who co-wrote most of the songs on Bob Dylan's latest record). All of them sparkle with Hunter's wit and imagery. It was Hunter who named the band the Riders of the Purple Sage, Nelson added the "New" later. Especially fun is the Chuck Berry-meets-the Burrito Brothers album closer "Rockin' With Nona." Drummer Markowski's "Higher" is set to join the Riders' agricultural-anthem pantheon alongside "Panama Red" and "Henry."