

# [Lucid Culture](#)

## GREAT MUSIC THAT'S NOT TRENDY

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## [A Surprising Jerry Garcia Tribute from One of His Heroes](#)

In 1964, Jerry Garcia and some friends took a road trip east to hear bluegrass music. Among those bands was the legendary Jim & Jesse & the Virginia Boys, whom they got to see more than once on that trip. Almost fifty years later, that band's mandolinist [Jesse McReynolds](#) has recorded an album of Grateful Dead songs – some circles just won't be broken. Still vital at 81, McReynolds doesn't sound anywhere near his age, vocally or picking-wise, alternating between long, soulfully expansive solos and the incisive, edgy playing that's influenced literally generations of musicians. Here he's joined by a crew including the New Riders of the Purple Sage's David Nelson on guitar, Randy Brown on bass, Stu Allen on acoustic guitar, Shawn Apple on drums and assorted other players. For those who find the concept of this album absolutely mystifying, the real shocker is that it actually works. Which it should. McReynolds got into the Country Music Hall of Fame on the first ballot: his presence here brings out the best in the supporting cast, who don't waste any notes throughout a surprisingly varied mix of bluegrass, oldtimey Appalachian folk and straight-up, mellow Americana rock. On his solos, Nelson does an impressive job evoking Jerry's signature, meandering, scale-based style without going completely over the top.

McReynolds characteristically nails the emotion of every vocal here: the plaintive lament vibe of Black Muddy River – which perfectly captures the folk song feel that Jerry was going for – along with the lonesomeness of Bird Song – an eight-minute version with terse interplay between mandolin and acoustic guitar – and especially the bitter cynicism of Loser, done here far more tensely and faster than the original. Likewise, The Wheel gets a counterintuitively vigorous treatment, layers of hypnotic electric guitar against McReynolds' long, spiky, gently wintry staccato solo. Some of these songs evoke the Dead on the Reckoning album, especially a swinging version of Ripple. Others rock out a lot more than you'd expect from this crew, notably a darkly pedal steel-tinged Stella Blue and a violin-fueled Fire on the Mountain with yet another devastating vocal from McReynolds – he really *gets* these songs. By the time they get to Deep Elem Blues, they're completely in their element: McReynolds makes it clear that it's a cautionary tale!

Not everything here works: a brand-new co-write between McReynolds and Robert Hunter sounds like a mid-70s outtake, and the big anthemic concert singalongs Franklin's Tower and Deal swing and miss when they try to the energy up a notch. But their version of Alabama Getaway is a knockout, done

as a straight-ahead country shuffle rather than trying to imitate the second-generation Chuck Berryisms of the original. Who is the audience for this? Deadheads, obviously, as many as are left after all these years. And for that matter any fan of the new crop of Americana bands, from Mumford & Sons to Deer Tick. The Dead may be history now, but the music never stopped. This one's out on the independent [Woodstock Records](#) label.

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## About

Our mission: to spread the word about great music that's not trendy.

Created in April, 2007 as the online presence for a somewhat notorious, now discontinued music and politics e-zine, Lucid Culture is as much a resource for adventurous fans of music and the arts as it is a necessary antidote to the reactionary, lockstep conformity that pervades much of the blogosphere. We celebrate the kind of edgy creativity that was for centuries part of the public consciousness, but which the entertainment-industrial complex and its evil twin, the corporate media, did their best to push to the fringes. Our goal is to lead the way in returning it to its rightful place in the public eye. If you're really interested, here's a [somewhat tongue-in-cheek interview](#) with one of Lucid Culture's founders.

One of our primary goals is to provide an accurate overview of what's available to audiences in New York, this multicultural city we call home, without stooping to political correctness. We also endeavor to give equal time to women artists without being obvious about it. In addition to live music, we also regularly review cds, art shows and the occasional book, film or DVD. We haven't yet used the blog to post recipes or cute cat pictures, but...you never know.

If you missed American Idol last night and are wondering who got the boot, you won't find the answer here. Nor is this the place to go for the latest news on Aimee Mann or Gogol Bordello, wonderful as they both are. Lucid Culture is where you might discover the next Aimee Mann or Gogol Bordello before they get really popular. Like the music, art and artists we cover here, we fly pretty much under the radar. It gives us a lot of freedom and a certain exclusivity – you might even call it cachet. We're happy to share it with you.

Lucid Culture offers four essential resources:

- A [NYC live music calendar](#), which when we post it extends several weeks ahead. We've been putting a new one up about once a month, with pretty much daily updates.
- Regular reviews of live shows and albums.
- A fairly comprehensive, detailed, constantly updated guide to [New York area live music venues](#).
- And a [myspace page](#), which we haven't paid much attention to lately, but still encourage you to use as your own personal online listening room. As we continue to discover good bands and artists, we'll add them to the page. No twitter, no facebook – sorry, we don't think the first one's necessary and the second one is just plain scary.

Why the focus on live music, as opposed to recordings? At this point in history, with the internet enabling independent artists to sell directly to the public, the major labels will soon be finished (at least as far as new product is concerned). Likewise, the majority of the indie labels will soon be toast (although there are a few specialty labels who seem certain to continue to thrive). For these reasons, live shows are where pretty much everything is happening right now. By all means, please continue to support your favorite independent bands and artists by buying their albums and merch, if you have the money, and going to their shows.

We also have access to an archive of over a thousand concert reviews dating from the early 1990s, most of which are previously unpublished, which we put up from time to time when we don't have anything new ready to go. If you're a musician, artist, filmmaker, writer, etc. and you think you have something that fans of edgy music and the arts might enjoy, contact us at [lucidculture \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:lucidculture[at]gmail.com).

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