

Press-Citizen

"Avalon"

JD Malone & the Experts

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JD Malone has been a fixture on the Philly scene since 1993, spending a decade fronting pop-rockers Steamroller Picnic and a few duo years with Gerry McWilliams before convening The Experts in 2009.

The aptly-named Experts form a loose-limbed yet muscular pub-rock crew, deftly manhandling country-rockers, heartland stompers, Southern boogies and closing-time weepers.

Add Malone's startlingly multi-faceted voice (its incarnations include a gritty Boss/Mellencamp rasp, an agreeable twang, acrobatic falsetto swoops, and spot-on dial-ups of Michael Stipe, Jimmy LaFave and the BoDeans' Sammy Llanas) and you've got the makings of all-night roadhouse heroes.

Blistering workouts of Fogerty's "Fortunate Son" and Petty's "I Should Have Known It" attest to their cover capability, but this generous 18-track, 79+ minute showcase offers 14 examples of Malone's enviable songwriting skills.

Opening with the Springsteen-esque "Silver From," the album bristles with attention-grabbers--"Still Love You" and "Leave Us Alone" and "Avalon" tap that BoDeans gothic vibe, "She Likes" sizzles like early Allmans, "Sweet Evil Things" and "Emerald Lake" evoke LaFave Dust Bowl-ers, "Ballad of Mr. Barbo" is center-cut R.E.M., "Do What You Can Do" is prime-time Jayhawks, and the gorgeous sing-along "Just Like New" is positively unshakable.

Great stuff.

--Jim Musser