



Though **JD MALONE & THE EXPERTS** have just released their freshman record, "Avalon" (itsaboutmusic.com), these are not some just-outta-da-water musicians. Their - er - expertise is obvious. They call themselves country rock, but they're more electrified country. While residing in Pennsylvania, they sound like they could be from Nashville, stepping of the stage of the Grand Ol' Opry (they let in electric gee-tars these days, don't they?). While following somewhat in the C&W formula, the band stretches that as far as they can, so the sound is



identifiable, yet they don't appear cliché. They start off strong with "Silver From," and end on a ballad with "Emmit Meets a Demon" (the CD has 5 more songs than the online download, but more on that later. Much of the music concerns a man's relationship with a woman, both in the height of passion and the "remember when" stage. There's no cheatin' or lyin' or other country chestnuts, just the natural progression of a twosome, which is refreshing in itself for the genre. There's a couple of lyrical gender traps Malone (the writer) gets caught in, especially with "She Likes Me" ("And / She's like me / She's my girl / She's my baby"), which is actually a good, catchy melody, just a bit treacle at times. Mostly, however, he uses lyrics well, such as in "Sweet Evil Things" ("You believe what you wanna believe / But I know of / Sweet evil things"), "Just Like New" ("Hey the city lights don't make a great skyline"), or "Do What You Can Do" ("I hope that when you think of me / You smile unmistakably / And I will try to do the same for you"). There are some really great songs here as well, such as the last one I mentioned and the title track. It is true that there are a couple of songs that definitely would fall into the country rock category (see, I told ya I'd get to it), both of them the only covers: one is a countrified "I Should Have Known It," done originally as a rocker by Tom Petty, and a very loyal homage to CCR's "Fortunate Son." Also included with the CD is a 37-minute DVD of their rehearsals, which includes a few full songs. This may be their first, but hopefully they will release more material into the world.

