

# THE ROYS

You know it when you hear it – a song or sound that strikes a rare balance between brilliantly fresh and disarmingly familiar. Maybe it's the deeply resonant imagery of the single "Grandpa's Barn," the arresting sibling harmonies on "Raining On The Roses" or the searing guitar of "We're Gonna Get There."

That instant of discovery – "Where did this come from?" – is what every music fan craves. And while new country duo The Roys are turning heads with their Pedestal/Nine North debut, those bolt-from-the-blue reactions are the product of a hard-earned education and a lifetime of musical devotion.

Ten years ago, promising recording artists like Lee and Elaine Roy would have been signed to a major label and the idea of releasing an album independently would have been ridiculed. Of course, some odd years ago The Roys were signed to a major label. And today, nobody's laughing about independent country music. Not anymore.

"This album represents years of trial and error and finally feeling like we have it right this time," says Lee. "It's the album we've always wanted to make, but were never given the chance."

"It's a new beginning," Elaine adds. "We feel like we're meant to do this, and even though it's been kind of a crazy journey, we wouldn't change a thing about where we are now."

Born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts to French-Canadian parents, Elaine and Lee showed an early affinity for music, a natural pull that only intensified when the family moved to New Brunswick, Canada.

"We were in a little town called Coal Branch," Elaine says. "If you blink, you miss it. I had already been singing and we were both constantly listening to country music. Our maternal grandparents, aunts and uncles were very musical. They'd play guitar and fiddle and step dance. We were always so excited about family gatherings."

While Elaine took guitar lessons, Lee taught himself to play drums on barrels and buckets, eventually adding bass, guitar, mandolin and keys to his repertoire. "I remember saying, 'I don't feel good,' and as soon as the school bus passed I was banging away on the drum kit," Lee says. "Mom would throw me in the car and take me to school."

The family eventually moved back to Fitchburg, forcing Lee to give up the bluegrass band he'd formed. Without their musical support system, the siblings turned to each other, forming a virtual four-piece with a drum machine and bass tracks. That pairing eventually led to another move.

"I remember being five years old and knowing that I wanted to be in Nashville singing," Elaine says. "I didn't even know what Nashville was. I'd hear Dolly Parton on the radio and think there were people somewhere in a room singing, and that's what was coming over the radio."

Long before they moved to Nashville, The Roys had a pretty good grasp of where...and what...Music City was. Their first run in town seemed to be a clear path to all their dreams – they were young prodigies signed to one of Music Row's powerhouse labels and working with one of country music's marquee producers.

Creatively, however, the situation wasn't all they'd hoped. "Any time we got involved with labels it was, 'Here's what you should cut and here's what you're going to cut,'" Lee says. Eventually, their label was scared off by a potential legal entanglement, and The Roys were dropped.

Still, they continued writing songs, meeting with labels and plying their craft as much as Nashville allowed. "It was always about playing music, but we were in Nashville and couldn't," Lee says. "Believe it or not, there's so much talent in Nashville, it's hard to make a living there as a performing musician unless you're on the road. So we said, 'You know what? We can go home and make money playing music.'"

And that's just what they did, returning to Fitchburg and recharging themselves on the pure joy of creating and performing. "For the first time in a while we could sing what we wanted and be who we are," Elaine says.

"We went back to our local clubs and started building that fan base. But one day Elaine called and said, 'I love this, but I feel like we're meant to do this on a different level.' I prayed about it. Either I'm meant to do this or God needed to take this out of my heart and soul. End it for me."

Instead, doors began opening. Not always the right ones, but openings nonetheless. "Every time it seemed like a door was closing, we'd get a call," Lee explains. The most significant was the one producer Kenny Royster walked through.

"He's a vocal coach and a great producer who's done a lot in this town," Elaine says. "We met with him and he said he'd been waiting his whole life for that special act to come through the door and we were it."

Returning to Nashville, The Roys focused intently on their opportunity. And they were able to apply years of experience. "When we signed our first deal, I was 18," Lee says. "I was like, 'Put me in a bus and put me on the road!' Knowing what goes along with that now, I'm not sure I could have handled that. It would have been really cool to be out at the bars every night, but I could have really gotten caught in that party life."

Now, the emphasis is squarely on the task at hand. "Music is my addiction," Lee says. "We gave up good jobs to come back here and take another run at it. Six figure jobs."

They centered their efforts on creating their own music their way. But when they got close to finishing their album, they faced a decision. "We've had several offers in the last year," Lee explains. "They've all said, 'We think you guys are great. We can put you on the slate for 2010.' If you think we're good enough, why wait?"

So The Roys formed Pedestal Records and aligned with former Sony executive Larry Pareigis' Nine North Records for promotion. In the wake of independent successes by Emerson Drive, Taylor Swift and Tracy Lawrence, the playing field is suddenly swinging in favor of the indie. And The Roys aim to take advantage.

Their first and most important leg up is in the music. "From track one to track 12, we stand behind this 100 percent," Lee says. "This represents us, from the bluegrass sound to traditional country to more contemporary sounds."

Finally, The Roys are in a position to do what they've spent their entire lives preparing to do. "Everybody has a calling in life," Elaine says. "Ours was inevitable from a very young age."

Lee adds, "We're just your typical 15-year overnight sensation."