



LEARNING TO DRIVE THE TRUCK

In spite of travails during its gestation (check out the liner notes for details), John Rey Reed's new album, *Learnin' To Drive the Truck*, is a well-rounded, cohesive and imminently listenable collection of work. Infused by the sounds of Southern rock, Western Swing, bluesy grooves, and heartworn balladry, this 14-song collection hits a lot of sweet spots.

The kick-off, "Yellow Moon," has a salty-sly groove that is reminiscent of Delbert McClinton or Gregg Allman. The closing title track rings autobiographical, the tale of a young man being gifted with the clan's wisdom. In between, honky-tonk piano and supple guitar help propel "Ain't No Right Way (To Do the Wrong Thing)" and "Lie Beg Borrow or Steal"

In between are wistful what-if love songs ("It Coulda Been Me"), a po-boy tongue in cheek lament ("Down On Our Luck"), a jaunty country-flavored ode to coping with what life throws at you ("Do the Best With What You Got," with its great line, "Just thank the Lord for indoor plumbing"), and a bluesy, gospel testament ("Faith Is Believin'").

A longtime Austinite who also put in his time in the Nashville songwriters' salt mines, Reed recruited ace musicians from both cities to put flesh on the bones of his original material. The end result is more than satisfying—Reed learned to drive his musical truck a long time ago.

—John T. Davis