

# God Wears a Stetson.

... Texan. British. Anglican. Priest. Left-wing. Country. Music. Twang.



## Back in the Saddle. Again.

By William Ingle-Gillis

TExR makes a return. Thank you guys ... listeners, artists, and labels ... for your patience as I've juggled two day jobs and the radio station. Time for some long-awaited updates and reviews.

And time for heartiest congratulations, too: Steve and Lynne of the Austin band, **The Victor Mourning**, got married on the 23rd of October and have just returned from a honeymoon across the western states. (I've been following this on Twitter.) Don't know if it was actually designed as a tour of roots-music shrines, but they certainly seemed to hit one or two on the way.

They're also hitting a few rootsy notes of their own on their album, out earlier this year, **A Handful of Locusts**. This is thorough-going backwoods hick-music in all the best senses of the term. In fact, the VM describe themselves as "dark Americana, hillbilly noir, gothic country, dark twang, the half barbaric yawp of ancestors who would shame you if you met them", and it's not a description I can fault. Nor can I their music. Mind you, if you're looking for something to bring down the honky-tonk's roof, you're gonna be better off with someone like Aaron Watson, 'cause this ain't it. But what it is ... is soulful, reflective, simply haunting melodies and mournful vocals (appropriately enough) with incisive lyrics and traditional instrumentation. In [my last blog post](#), I recounted my mama's regret that I was born too late to see a proper Baptist tent revival and sing all the good, old-fashioned tub-thumpin' hymns. But, frankly, this is the music that reprobates like me would have been out singing instead of getting saved, anyway.

— November 7, 2010, Texas Exile Radio, Wales

<http://stetson.texas-exile.org/?p=652>

## Music

AUGUST 13, 2010

### Texas Platters

BY DOUG FREEMAN



#### The Victor Mourning

##### *A Handful of Locusts*

The Victor Mourning consciously steps its aesthetic in a bygone era, exhumed in fiddle, guitar reels, and haunted folk ballads and conjured by the sepia-toned locust artwork prophesying plagues. Despite the harrowing starkness of biblical brimstone and Southern Gothic outcasts that shade the local trio's debut LP, the veteran prowess of the folklorists and production from Erik Wofford give the songs an expert contemporary polish that bridges the centuries. Stephen Lee Canner's vocals crawl with an eerie Appalachian twang, and from the opening Icarus reworking of "Zachariah" to the tortured domestic madness and "Omie Wise" allusion of "This House Is Filled With Sickness," his songwriting rakes through the heritage of rural apocrypha and apocalypse with death and the bottle ever at hand. Tim Kerr contributes button accordion to the desperate shanty of "Patagonie," but Jad Fair's vocals on closer "Grasshoppers" quake with the ultimate rumination of wrack and ruin.

★★★★

<http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Issue/review?oid=oid%3A1068405>



Judging by their press one-sheet alone, **The Victor Mourning** are one of those bands that MM tends to like a lot. It talks of performing dark, thought provoking, starkly haunting songs that tell the tales of grief-torn outcasts, of confidences betrayed, of piracy, and murder.

It goes on to mention a song about a man who eats nothing but locusts and Campbell's soup, another about a traveling albino, and an unexpected version of the ancient Greek myth of Icarus set in the hills of rural Arkansas.

The proof as always is in the listening though, but with classic storytelling, soaring vocals, and melodic fiddle, what's not to like? The band creates music with an old time feel filtered through a modern sensibility, at once both relevant and true to its ancient roots.

We have two tracks for you to sample; the downcast *Taste My Hand* and the spritely backwoods jig of *Zachariah*. Both are from the band's debut album *A Handful Of Locusts* which was released a few days ago and is available to order here. It also has some of the best cover art we've seen this year.

- June 17, 2010 Mad Mackerel Music, Oxon, England

<http://madmackerel.wordpress.com/2010/06/17/introducing-the-victor-mourning/>



## **A Sound Assessment: The Victor Mourning live @ Taylor Books Charleston, West Virginia**

**Written by Dr. Tim  
Saturday, 27 March 2010**

A sight that brings such great pleasure to my weary eyes: a large and extremely attentive crowd at Taylor Books this past Friday, the lot of whom managed to still their gaping maws long enough for the Victor Mourning to be heard unplugged. The Austin, TX based trio kept the audience captive for a solid two hours with a delicate yet rugged blend of fiddle, banjo, guitar, and vocal harmonies.

The somberly dressed group sported a refreshingly unique sound. Far removed from the upbeat, shit-kickin' quality that often pervades Appalachian folk music, these tunes were mournful (hence the name), pensive, and decidedly introspective. Basic but haunting chord structures were augmented by solid banjo lines, sprinkled with the occasional counterpoint, and soulful, melodic fiddle leads. Brittle, gorgeous vocal harmonies rode not on top of but in midstream with the rest of the sound.

In between songs, the group was jovial and gregarious, perhaps a necessary antidote to their western gothic garb and sorrowful tunes. The group's leader, guitarist/vocalist Stephen Lee Canner, was especially charismatic, winning over the audience with anecdotes and easy conversation. And such is the atmosphere of Taylor Books that permits such effortless intimacy betwixt performer and audience.

Canner's voice truly was the lodestone of the band, morphing effortlessly from his speaking voice—which was curiously unaffected—to his singing voice, a heavily accented, wavering, warbling beauty that, like a prized steed, would transport one, with great dispatch, anywhere one wished to go.

Evenings of all-original acoustic music happen, I'm sorry to say, too infrequently in Charleston, so next time these guys come through, check 'em out: Doctor's orders.

<http://www.kvlive.net/index.php/music-leftmenu-112/538-music-a-sound-assessment-the-victor-mourning-live-taylor-books>