

THE LONG WINTERS

Whether he was waking up in the emergency room with two broken hands or hopping freights to California for a week's vacation, songwriter and Alaska native John Roderick was notorious as a vagabond and hell-raiser in Seattle for most of a decade. He was also a prodigious student, attending and teaching in the Comparative History of Ideas at the University of Washington. Throughout it all he was first and foremost a musician, playing in many bands, including the Western State Hurricanes and Harvey Danger. In spite of years of playing music as both front- and side-man, Roderick never found the right band combination to bring his songs to life.

In the winter of 2000-01, returning to Seattle from an epic solo journey on foot from Amsterdam to Istanbul, he was finally pushed into the recording studio by his more established musical friends Sean Nelson of Harvey Danger and Chris Walla of Death Cab For Cutie, who threatened and cajoled Roderick into putting some of his songs down on tape before he disappeared down the highway or back into the University.

Playing guitar, piano, bass, and organ, John was finally unleashed. Chris Walla provided the production backdrop and John's songs came dazzlingly alive. Eager to help, a number of Northwest indie music luminaries contributed to the record, until the list read like a who's who. The album that resulted from that intervention became the Long Winters' critically-acclaimed **The Worst You Can Do Is Harm** (Barsuk 2002), which was #1 for several weeks after its February release and remained on Seattle's Northwest Top 20 sales charts well into summer.

Necessity is the mother of invention, and the debut record quickly begat a touring lineup when Roderick called on old friends and former bandmates to fill out his new group. The core band included the uncanny rhythm section of Michael Shilling (drums) and Eric Corson (bass) – who tie together Roderick's musical flights of fancy with deft and inventive hands – and the harmony vocals and melodic keyboard work of former Harvey Danger frontman Sean Nelson. Sean has described John's music as the perfect canvas for his harmonic stylings and his friendship with John is at the core of The Long Winters. Sean's and John's voices harmonize with chilling, supernatural beauty, and their performances are spellbinding. Former Velvet Underground bassist Doug Yule once described them as the greatest male vocal duo he had ever seen. Seriously.

The van tours that followed the release of **The Worst You Can Do Is Harm** were – by comparison to his many years of walking, hitchhiking and jumping trains across America and Europe – the most comfortable traveling Roderick had ever done. The band took to the road and relished the experience, and Roderick's thoughts soon turned to their next record. Only days after returning home from months of touring, Roderick was back in the studio recording songs for what would become **When I Pretend To Fall** (Barsuk, 2003). The solid foundation carried by the live band into the studio enabled Roderick to experiment freely, employing numerous guest musicians – there are 26 different players

on the new record – without losing the intensity and dynamic range that had become the hallmark of the band’s live performance.

No longer dividing his time among many pursuits, Roderick is now focusing his experiences into music of incomparable beauty and intensity. Roderick’s writing makes no pretense; his songs contain no braggadocio. Having lived a life half-on/half-off the grid, he speaks in a voice both oblique and deeply personal, sharing insights that few experience firsthand, but that everyone can appreciate.

Having already established The Long Winters as one of the country’s most exciting new bands on the strength of their live shows, Roderick is also increasingly the recipient of a growing critical acclaim for his songwriting prowess. **When I Pretend To Fall** is an astoundingly impressive album, and its release will see Roderick gaining admittance to the first ranks of American songsmiths.

DISCOGRAPHY:

The Worst You Can Do Is Harm (Barsuk, 2002)

When I Pretend to Fall (Barsuk, 2003)

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