

# ARTIST PROFILE **The Wandering Sons**

**T**here are so many bands out there. There are so many musicians trying to break through the concrete walls of obscurity to find their audience, their affirmation, their moment of being heard. Look at any event calendar for our area and you'll find a list of bands, singer/songwriters, jazz musicians and DJs all clamoring for your attention. *Come out and see us. Hear us play. Clap and cheer. But more importantly – come back again.*

As a result, most original bands are going to be compelled to streamline their sound with something that is familiar and easily recognized by audiences. Blues, jazz, classic rock, country, folk, hard alternative – these are the defining genres that bands use to attract fans and communicate what audiences can expect to hear. For the casual music listener who only ventures out into the local music scene on occasion, this is vitally important. They're not going to throw their \$5 into the guitar case of just anyone. And because of this, the local music scene is having a hard time shaking off its repetitive, mimicky and – dare I say it – uninspiring aura.

Now there are some original bands out there that are determined to stand firm before the altar of the mainstream music industry. They view music as an art form, where songs are continuously recreated each time the artists take the stage. Like most original artists who buck mainstream traditions, they transcend several genres of music, making them harder to define for a general audience. But more importantly – as artists – they are dedicated to evolving their craft, and understand that not everyone who hears them is going to appreciate or "get" their art. The Wandering Sons is one such band.

I was introduced to The Wandering Sons by a singer/musician/former neighbor of mine, Adarin Enevoldsen, who is a talented musical rat in his own right. When I first heard them, I thought to myself, there is no way these guys are in their early 20s. A weird reaction, I suppose, but the depth and substance of their songs was compelling and usually found in the work of older artists who've been kicked down a few stairwells. What's more, the band appeared to be veterans in the creation of original music versus young talented artists struggling to find their voice, wrestling to capture their sound.

Lead singer Cory Chisel, who is the band's lyricist and songwriter, points out that the band was serious about creating their own music from the start. The band, whose primary members are Cory Chisel (lead singer), Rick Setser and all-around incredible musi-

cian Dan McMahon, started out as Breathing Machine. In 2004, however, the band changed their name to The Wandering Sons. During that same year, the band released their third album called "Again From the Beginning," a collection of story-telling songs that pulled deep from musical foundations of folk, blues and old-school country.

It was with this album that The Wandering Sons found themselves speaking to a larger audience that was becoming increasingly aware of the emotion and insight of Chisel's words on top of the band's unique sound. The band also caught the attention of the Democratic Party which tapped them to play at the local political rallies for John Kerry during the 2004 election. But with any artist who wakes up to new-found popularity, moving on to something new can cause hesitation, especially when it means possibly alienating an audience who has just discovered them. Chisel, however, understands that evolving the band's music might cause some members of their audience to drop to the wayside.

"Not to be insensitive to the audience," said Chisel, "We don't spend a lot of time focused on that aspect." With the near completion of their fifth album, the band has introduced their audience to some of the new songs and Chisel admitted that he has already received some negative feedback. "I really believe that art is not for everyone. How can everyone understand?" As Chisel went on to explain, the band is exploring "landscapes that not everyone is comfortable with," and one of the things he is most proud to witness in the growth of the band is their decision to "cut the rope and let the boat drift out."

"The music now is as close as it's ever been, [as] songwriting goes, ... to what I'm hearing inside in my head." "If we stay as true as we can to the music," Chisel stressed, "I think people come because of that.... People are drawn to energy." And with a band like The Wandering Sons, one thing you can count on is that you'll never quite know what they're going to do next. But it's well worth the \$5 to find out. As Chisel concluded, "I think it's good to keep people guessing."

## **Current band roster:**

**Cory Chisel (lead singer, guitar)**

**Rick Setser (upright bass)**

**Dan McMahon (guitar, keyboards, everything)**

**Adam Plaaman (clarinet)**

**Mark Powers (drums)**