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Dead Men's Hollow

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Historical Bluegrass

One night as **Dead Men's Hollow** rode home from a gig in Paw Paw, W. Va., singer/rhythm guitarist **Amy Nazarov** began to softly sing a new tune that she had composed. Something about the cool night air and the exhilaration that the members felt after the successful show encouraged Nazarov enough to share the song with the group. "There were some moments of real magic up there," one fan said to Nazarov. Anyone who's seen DMH or heard its latest album, *Death Must Be a Woman*, will appreciate the fan's sentiments. The members of this bluegrass band are all accomplished musicians, but what sets them apart is their deep appreciation for the history in and around their Washington, DC. home base. They are masters of setting historical findings and musings to song, and the string arrangements are reminiscent of early Fairport Convention—accompanied by luscious harmonies and lilting lyrics. Some songs are jaunty, others are melancholy, almost all are haunting. "There are points where the harmonies fall together with the fiddle," says Nazarov. "Sometimes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up."

www.deadmenshollow.com ● Nancy Dunham



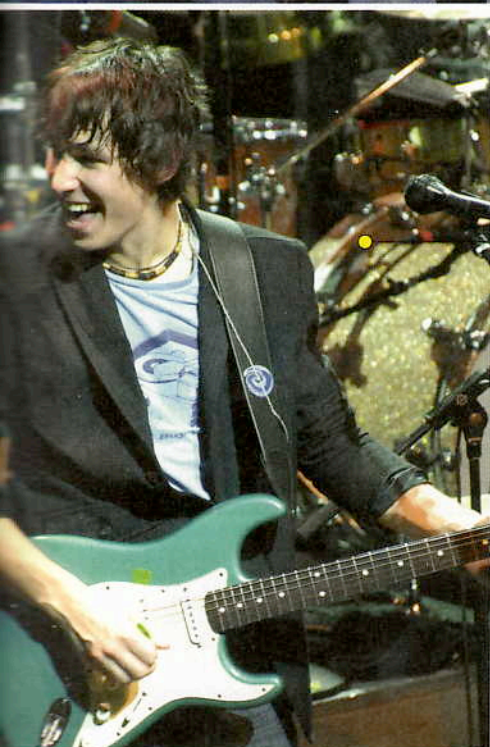
Highly Kind

GADSDEN, ALA.

Southern Rock on the Rise

At times, **Highly Kind's** debut *Don't Wake Albert* seems to have it all: hot licks, cool grooves, well-structured songs, emotive vocals and an innate cohesiveness. With **Duane Trucks** (Derek's younger brother) on drums and percussion, the pedigree is certainly there as well, but singer/songwriter/guitarist **Albert Simpson** is the key to this quartet's classic delivery (keyboardist **Trey Evans** and bassist **Kevin Scott** round out the band). **Johnny Sandlin**, the Capricorn records producer and A&R director who was intimately connected with The Allman Brothers Band early on, brought his expertise to the project and augmented the lineup with backing vocals, percussion and various other auxiliary instruments. **Randall Bramlett** contributes piano, vocals and two songs including the album opener, "Don't Wake Elvis." Sandlin also brought in young virtuoso guitarist, **Josh Gooch**, who makes his debut here playing lead and slide. "I'm more impressed with Josh Gooch than any guitarist I've heard in a long time," says Sandlin. "During the sessions for the *Highly Kind* album, he reminded me of Duane Allman—the way he absorbs things. He's like a sponge." www.highlykind.com ● John Swenson

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Davy Knowles & Back Door Slam

ISLE OF MAN, UNITED KINGDOM

British Guitar Hero

Davy Knowles was raised on natural talent and educated by raids of the family record collection on the tiny Isle of Man. This isolated locale—in the middle of the Irish Sea—led to **Back Door Slam**, a road-hardened blues rock band featuring the guitar heroics and sublime songwriting of the young musician. "The last couple of years, touring has been the best education I've ever had," says Knowles. "When you're around people like Peter Frampton and Warren Haynes who are better than you, stuff rubs off." Indeed, besides recently opening for Jeff Beck, Knowles' new album with Back Door Slam, *Coming Up for Air*, is co-produced by Frampton. The alchemic reaction delivers an outstanding set of 10 songs ranging from sweet, acoustic imagery to dynamic electric magic to the sense that Knowles can not only write and sing the blues, but also play a mean guitar, too. "Peter has this amazing ability to immediately put you at ease," explains Knowles. "It was scary playing guitar in front of him, but the guy is so nice that it worked out really well." www.backdoorslam.com ● Randy Ray