

It's a Wednesday night at Toot's a smoky bar in one of the most working-class areas of Knoxville. Mic Harrison and members of the High Score are pumping money into the jukebox. The music that pours out afterwards consists of Conway Twitty, CCR, Jerry Lee Lewis and Roger Miller. If these guys could drink this music they would, but tonight beer will have to suffice.

After, Mic scrawls down the titles of the group's new album and High Score bassist Vance Hillard looks it over and comments "This ain't white collar music."

Definitely not. But it is music that anyone who's ever held down a job and relied on music for spiritual release can relate to. Harrison's new album "On The Right Side of the Grass" is about the kind of characters who know that any day that you can look forward to a soft bed rather than a dirt nap is a blessing. When Harrison sings about having nothing but "a pocket full of sawdust," the former sawmill employee knows exactly what he's singing about. The subject of "He Gets High" is that guy every one has worked with at least once: the man who "never missed a day of work" and never spent a day completely sober either — "he gets high, but he gets by."

Were the payoffs of pure fun not so rewarding, Mic Harrison and the High Score might not be one of the hardest working Americana acts on the road.

For every winter spent thawing the van windshield with a handheld hair dryer just one or two electrons away from blowing the van's fuses, for every plywood stage that collapsed during a show, for every wrong turn or lost piece of equipment, there is a show where both the band and audience feel that musical glow and for a couple of hours everything is right with the world.

Harrison grew up in a small West Tennessee town called Bradford and played in a high school band with buddies Carl Bell and Jeff Abercrombie (future members of the band Fuel) and Jeff Bills (who went on to co-found the V-Roys). When the V-Roys needed a replacement for departing member John Paul Keith, Harrison was the first person to get a call. With both Harrison and Scott Miller contributing songs and lead vocals, the band became a favorite of singer-songwriter Steve Earle who made the group his first signing to his E-Squared Records. With the group Harrison recorded two acclaimed studio albums and one live disc. After the break-up of the V-Roys in 1999, Harrison recorded one record with the Faults and then joined power-pop greats Superdrag. When Superdrag split up in 2003, Harrison concentrated on his solo work. His 1999 album, "Don't Bail," had been made as a side project, but for 2004's "Pallbearer's Shoes" Harrison was able to focus all his attention on his own music. And, by the time "Push Me On Home" arrived in 2007, Harrison had permanently combined forces with the High Score (Robbie Trooper, Brad Henderson and Vance Hillard) - a band on their own and perfect partners in crime if ever there were.

Good times, hard times, Bonnaroo and Mucklewain, honky tonks, spilt beer, dead deer and misadventures at a certain place called Claremont in Atlanta (don't ask) all followed. Sometimes it's a wonder that Mic Harrison and the High Score have managed to stay on the right side of the grass at all.

Listen to this music and you'll be glad they did.

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