

Having spent the last three years playing with artists such as James McMurtry, the Eli Young Band and Walt Wilkins and The Mystiqueros, Austin Collins has undoubtedly been playing in the likes of some incredible talent. Still, he refuses to simply sit back and conform his musicianship and songwriting to what others want. Lucky for us all, that approach seems to be working out for the best. For the past three years Collins and his three band mates have been effortlessly amplifying their fan base venue by venue. Playing throughout the state and beyond since his 2005 debut album *Something Better*, Collins has been bringing in a multitude of fans, old and new, to each show. He has played gigs everywhere from the House of Blues, historic Gruene Hall, Austin City Limits, and even sold out Stubbs BBQ for the release of the first album.

With the release of his sophomore album *Roses are Black*, I am now awaiting Austin Collins mania to reach full force. I was actually worried this album wouldn't live up to the first, but leave it to Collins to surpass my expectations and to outdo himself. It's obvious when listening to the album that this four-piece band knew what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it. With some of the most honest, long overdue songwriting I've heard in quite a while, true rigid musicianship, and the talented Will Johnson from Centro-Matic working as producer; there is no doubt in my mind 'Something Better' is waiting for Collins after the release of this album.



Roses Are Black

Austin Collins

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'Take me back and put me in the throes/of your hard-wood nights and your dirty clothes/ under the eaves of your cocaine episodes/I watched it all burn down' is how the album starts off and how it won me over in the opening track "11 Months". The candid lyrics depict a scene from the lives of anyone who has been in a toxic relationship where, unbeknownst to you, it was over before it even began. If you're looking for something a little more rock, you're in luck. "Witching Hour" and "Eight Dollar Thrill" will supply you with some stellar lyrics and the rock sound you crave to back them up. *Roses are Black* is the title track from the album and lucky for us, Collins doesn't always practice what he preaches. In this case it's what he wrote for the track. 'You go with what's easy 'cause it makes you feel safe', it's presumably what most of us would do, given some glimmer of talent, to make it in this business. Without copying out or compromising talent, Collins and his band have delivered a solid second album all the way around.

Roses are Black bracingly gives Austin Collins fans what they have patiently been awaiting and more. It is the true grit of his songwriting and the intensity behind his voice that leaves me listening in awe throughout the entire album. Roses might be black to Collins but this album is nothing less than gold.