

The Rocky Fortune not just lucky

musicpreview

The Rocky Fortune

With *40 Thieves and National Frost*
Saturday, 22 September at 8pm
Velvet Underground

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Arts & Entertainment Writer

In the fertile, black dirt of the Prairies, many things grow. Wheat springs up to feed us; trees tower skywards to give us shade; and bands like The Rocky Fortune continue to mature and refine their own deeply rooted sounds.

The Calgary-based band has recently sprouted into a full five-piece with the addition of a couple new members on bass and keyboards. Todd Gesshue, the vocalist and guitarist, states the importance of the newly added defence of a full band.

"After we put out [debut album] *Sway* and our bass player left the band, it was like we went for five years playing short-handed," Gesshue explains. "It was like being two men short-handed;

You got no blueline. We've got a great blueline [now], which feels good. It feels like we can do a lot more."

Not only are there new band members, but the Rocky Fortune have a new album to celebrate as well. The band spent the last summer honing their sound for a new disc, *Back of the Bee-side*, and according to Gesshue, the Fortunes were ready to make it count.

Not that there was much to fix from *Sway*, but there were a few specifics: the whole record was recorded in analog, and all tracks were done in a single take, many of them the very first one. That might seem foolhardy, but when you're a small band trying to afford studio time, being concise is an asset.

"[In the past] we've limped in, and we've had engine problems and all these things, but when it was time to go into the studio, I realized that it was time to fix our machine," Gesshue says. "You're paying big bucks in a studio, so ... you get it done right."

Touring extensively in the past has allowed The Rocky Fortune to build up steam and make a name for themselves, having been named Best Song Finalists

in the 2006 Calgary Folk Festival Songwriting Contest. One might expect that think that they would be preparing for a winter tour to support the new album. However, a new tour isn't the case for these boys; they're taking a few months to rest and accomplish some personal goals that were put on the back-burner in the name of the band.

Gesshue sees the time off as a welcome change, as the life of a fulltime musician can start to weigh one down.

"I'm studying to become an arborist," Gesshue says. "It's making me a better writer. I found that [playing in a band fulltime] made me too narrow-minded. I wasn't learning anything new, and I was missing out on a lot of real life experience."

After putting in so much work, The Rocky Fortune are ready to have a stompin' good time—especially now that they've grown to their ideal size. Just don't let Gesshue hear you call them an alt-country band.

"We're constantly being tagged alt-country, [but] if you actually listen to our records, that's preposterous ... it's [more] like old folk music."



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