

Miller Hits Town for a Solo Gig

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Knoxville-based singer-songwriter plays Grey Eagle on Sunday night

by Amy Jones, take5 correspondent
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With the same kind of charisma and Southern charm that has made Steve Earle an alt-country hero for decades, and the songwriting sensibilities of a young Townes Van Zandt, singer-songwriter Scott Miller has finally found his groove.

"I feel really good," Miller said from his Knoxville, Tenn., home. "It's the first time I looked forward to a new year (of playing music) in a long time. I think I just have all the right people around me now.

"Fresh from a late 2006 release called "Citation," Miller plays solo at the Grey Eagle on Clingman Avenue Sunday night. He answered a few questions the other day.

Question: So you sound different, maybe the most liberated that you have ever sounded in these interviews.

Answer: It's so nice to be back, to be the captain of my own little ship again. I think I can finally see the benefits of what I'm doing. I've been doing it long enough to say the word career now, don't you think? My career feels like it's moving in the right direction.

Q: You say "back" as if you went somewhere.

A: I mean that thing with television, as the band for Blue Collar TV. (Miller played live in the studio for the Jeff Foxworthy series on the Comedy Central network.) It was awful. Those are not my people. I can see why they are all so uptight. Three hundred people work their butts off to get 30 seconds of television. It's not for me.

Q: You must have been missing those smoky bars.

A: Yeah. The thing about touring is, you've just got to put your head down and go. After about 72 hours under your belt with no bills coming in, no dogs to feed, when the phone isn't ringing, you kind of catch your groove.

Q: And you're leaving the Commonwealth (his band) behind this trip?

A: Playing solo supports my band habit. It also helps with writing, just running the songs through the wringer. I mean, any great song should sound good on a guitar before it gets to the band. You know, I'm always on the quest for the perfect song.

Q: For a guy who makes such loud rock music (along with the Ralph Stanley-style country stuff), yes you have always seemed so song-centric. Name one song that you think has been written perfectly.

A: "The Tennessee Waltz." You can see the whole story behind it. It's short but it's got the perfect melody.