

Scott Miller relies on spontaneity for new disc

By **WAYNE BLEDSOE**, bledsoe@knews.com
March 17, 2006

It's 1 a.m. Sunday in the studios of WDVX radio. Scott Miller and his longtime friend and former band mate Mic Harrison are working on an unfinished song to premiere on the "All Over the Road" show. Both have just come from separate parties and are amiable in their work. Guitar chords worked out, the two agree on the final lines that Miller scribbles down just before the two combine their voices to sing "Earthly Pleasures (Are the Treasures of This World)" into a single microphone.

It's a bit of spontaneity that might take Miller back to creating his just-released album, "Citation," recorded with legendary producer Jim Dickinson.

A few days later, over lunch at Sullivan's on Northshore Drive, Miller makes a conclusion about the disc

: "If this album is my most successful, I quit! You spend months and years on something, then this one I just went in and did it!"

A native of Swoope, Va., Miller has a long history in Knoxville. After making a name for himself by performing crass songs about sorority girls and sweet songs about "Psycho"-inspiring killer Ed Gein at Knoxville clubs, in the mid-1990s Miller became a founding member of beloved Knox roots rockers the V-Roys. After the V-Roys self-destructed at the eve of the millennium, Miller signed with Sugar Hill Records and dubbed his backing band the Commonwealth in honor of his home state. Protectors of his home state's official title were not so happy with the honor and began sending Miller cease-and-desist letters, which he has ignored for four years.

Miller's first two Sugar Hill albums, "Thus Always to Tyrants" and "Upside Downside," earned critical praise and decent sales, but didn't exactly make Kanye West worry about losing his market share.

"This is the first time I just let everybody do their jobs instead of trying to produce and manage and get on top of everything," says Miller of his new disc. "I just went in and did my thing as hard and good as I could."

Unlike on previous discs, Miller had no backlog of songs to record.

"I rented an apartment in Fort Sanders, put in a table, a typewriter, a recorder and a guitar," says Miller. "Every morning I'd go to Vic & Bill's and have breakfast, then come back, read the News Sentinel, do the crossword and say, 'I ain't leavin' here till I've written something.'"



Scott Miller didn't have time to overthink his new release, "Citation," which he recorded with renowned producer Jim Dickinson.



Miller says that when he called Memphis-based producer Dickinson to ask about possibly doing some preproduction on the album, Dickinson laughed.

"That's not how he does it," says Miller.

Dickinson, who produced the classic discs "Pleased to Meet Me" for The Replacements and "Third/Sister Lovers" for Big Star, prefers to keep the spirit and the music spontaneous.

"He was like: 'Relax. Let it flow,' " says Miller.

The result is a more upbeat disc than Miller's previous efforts.

Miller and the Commonwealth just ended a stint as the house band for "Blue Collar TV," which has just been canceled.

Outside of selling albums to the studio audience, Miller says the show didn't seem to help increase his album sales.

"We tried to lay low and be on time because it doesn't take long for a director or a producer to start screaming," he says. "Still, it was a good experience. I met some cool people."

While he's focused on making "Citation" succeed, if it does no more than keep Miller at his current level, he'll be satisfied. He's married to interior designer Thea Miller. The two live in the Rocky Hill area, and he's happy.

Future plans include an album of country drinking songs with buddy Harrison and a series of concerts for the commonwealth of Virginia, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown.

Miller recently signed a CD for Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine's nephew, who said he would give the disc to his uncle.

"Yeah," says Miller. "I signed it: 'QUIT SENDING ME LETTERS!' "

Writer's note: Wayne Bledsoe is an alternating host of "All Over the Road" midnight Saturdays to 4 a.m. Sundays on WDVX-FM.

