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## SCOTT MILLER AND THE COMMONWEALTH "*Citation*" *Sugar Hill*

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IN "FREEDOM'S a Stranger," which evokes a particular Bryan Adams tune so strongly that Scott Miller jokes it should be called "Summer of '89," the Virginian-turned-Tennessean plays homage to another obvious influence on his rootsy, aggressively American music: Bruce Springsteen. In this tale of remembered back roads and back seats, Miller and his girlfriend find salvation via 8-track: "If the Boss had been a preacher," he sings, "he could have led us to the Lord."

Springsteen has been purveying this sort of nostalgia for so long, and with such success, that he has grown beyond it. Miller, who began recording 10 years ago with the V-Roys and now fronts the Commonwealth, still exudes an appealing innocence: Frankly, he sounds too young to remember 8-track tapes. The songs on "*Citation*" offer easygoing sentiments to hard-driving country-rock. In "*Jody*," he acknowledges that he's being cheated on while he's away on military duty but shruggingly informs the cuckold, "Enjoy it all while you still can / 'Cause at the end of the game she's got my name / and I'm gonna be her man."

When the politics get more external, his vision is less clear: Neil Young's "*Hawks and Doves*" comes off like simpleminded patriotism. But Miller seems to know that few things are simple: He prays for victory in the war, in the raucous "*8 Miles a Gallon*," so he can feel less guilty about his ride. This fine example of the muscle-car-as-art bootkicker-music genre, celebrating "democracy, gasoline and worldwide rock 'n' roll," offers an alternative fuel source he finds in great supply: "Invent a big engine / Make it run on [expletive] . . . buddy, it'll never quit."

-- Pamela Murray Winters

