

Cowboy Junkies - The Trinity Session (1988)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Mining for Gold (traditional)*
2. *Misguided Angel*
3. *Blue Moon Revisited (Song for Elvis) (Margo and Michael Timmins; "Blue Moon" by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart)*
4. *I Don't Get It*
5. *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry (Hank Williams)*
6. *To Love is to Bury*
7. *200 More Miles (Michael Timmins)*
8. *Dreaming My Dreams with You (Allen Reynolds)*
9. *Working on a Building (traditional)*
10. *Sweet Jane (Lou Reed)*
11. *Postcard Blues (Michael Timmins)*
12. *Walkin' After Midnight (Don Hecht, Alan Block)*

* Margo Timmins – lead vocals * Michael Timmins – guitar * Alan Anton – bass * Peter Timmins – drums + * John Timmins – guitar, backing vocals * Kim Deschamps – pedal steel guitar, dobro, bottleneck slide guitar * Jeff Bird – fiddle, harmonica, mandolin * Steve Shearer – harmonica * Jaro Czewinec – accordion

Who says you can't make a great record in one day -- or night, as the case may be? The Trinity Session was recorded in one night using one microphone, a DAT recorder, and the wonderful acoustics of the Holy Trinity in Toronto. Interestingly, it's the album that broke the Cowboy Junkies in the United States for their version of "Sweet Jane," which included the lost verse. It's far from the best cut here, though. There are other covers, such as Margo Timmins' a cappella read of the traditional "Mining for Gold," a heroin-slow version of Hank Williams' classic "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," "Dreaming My Dreams With You" (canonized by Waylon Jennings), and a radical take of the Patsy Cline classic "Walkin' After Midnight" that closes the disc. Those few who had heard the band's previous album, *Whites Off Earth Now!!*, were aware that, along with Low, the Cowboy Junkies were the only band at the time capable of playing slower than Neil Young and Crazy Horse -- and without the ear-threatening volume. The Timmins family --

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Margo, guitarist and songwriter Michael, drummer Peter, and backing vocalist and guitarist John -- along with bassist Alan Anton and a few pals playing pedal steel, accordion, and harmonica, paced everything to crawl.

That said, it works in that every song has its own texture, slowly and deliberately unfolding from blues and country and drones. An example is the Michael and Margo song "I Don't Get It," ushered in with a few drawling guitar lines, a spooky harmonica, and brushed drums. Margo Timmins doesn't have a large range and doesn't need it as she scratches each song's surface like an itch until it bleeds its truth. This is also true on "Misguided Angel," another original where the verses become nearly a round alternating between her voice and Michael's snaky spare guitar lines to fill an almost unimaginable space. The Williams tune becomes a dirge in the Cowboys' hands. It's a funeral song, or an elegy for one who has dragged herself so far into the oblivion of isolation that there is no place left to go but home. Michael's guitar moves around the changes as bassist Anton plays them; he colors the space allowing for Margo to fill the melodic space spot-on, yet stretching each syllable out to the breaking point. For most, this was the Cowboy Junkies' debut -- Whites Off Earth Now!! was re-released in the States a few years later -- and it established them firmly in the forefront of the "alternative" scene with radio and MTV. As an album, it's still remarkable at how timeless it sounds, and its beauty is -- in stark contrast to its presentation -- voluminous and rich, perhaps even eternal. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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