



<http://www.thedailytimes.com/Weekend/story/Carolann-Ames-just-along-for-the-ride-down-that-Americana-highway-id-021893>

## Carolann Ames just along for the ride down that Americana highway

By Steve Wildsmith ([steve@thedailytimes.com](mailto:steve@thedailytimes.com))

March 21, 2012



The first time San Diego singer-songwriter Carolann Ames saw strip-mining in progress, she didn't know what she was looking at.

"We were on a trip into North Carolina and Kentucky, and the whole trip, we were driving through the Blue Ridge Mountains," Ames told The Daily Times this week. "We came to an area where they were strip-mining, and I had no idea what was happening. I was asking, 'Are they building a mall out there?'"

The ugly truth of the coal-mining removal process, juxtaposed against an Appalachian backdrop of breathtaking beauty, would provide the inspiration for her most recent album, "Laurel Canyon Road," released earlier this year. The title comes from a road sign on that particular trip, and the inspiration is lifted from the people she met along the way.

"I wanted to capture the beauty and sadness that they have to do that to make their living there," Ames said. "It was just something that struck me as so amazingly beautiful. Somebody, I think, described it as a protest song, but it's not really. I just wanted to capture the sadness of the area and the beauty."

Therein lies the magic of "Laurel Canyon Road," and Ames' music in general. She's not trying to make a statement as much as she wants to paint a picture. There's a breezy, warm feel to the album that swirls around her sweet alto, lifted up by the trio of musicians who back her up on record and on the road. And while the "Americana" tag is overused these days, that's just about the only description that fits of her music, she acknowledged.

"For sure, it's very acoustic-based, but I don't really know what else to say about it," she said. "Someone

who wrote my bio was describing it in all of these ways — country, pop, bluegrass, Celtic, R&B, Texas swing, all of this stuff. I was like, really? I don't know what to call it other than Americana. It has a lot of American influences on it."

Apropos, of course, for a girl born in Wyoming, raised in Texas, educated in Oklahoma and currently residing in California. She grew up surrounded by music, learning the piano starting at 6 years old; however, a rebellious streak compelled her to reject her classical instruction and embrace a more contemporary style. By the time she was 15, she was writing songs on the guitar and channeling her angst into music; it proved to be such a relief that she knew music would be a part of her future.

She majored in it at the University of Oklahoma and upon moving to San Diego started singing in a duo. Conscripted into fronting a blues band, she cut her first record, "Out of the Blue," and followed it up with 2002's "Shakedown" and 2005's "Shades of Indigo," which saw her moving toward a more acoustic-based sound. The latter record also included "West Virginia," a song that won her the grand prize in the national John Lennon Songwriting Contest. Her fourth album, "So Long Abilene," was nominated for Best Americana Album in the 2009 LA Music Awards, and the record got her noticed on the Americana circuit around the country.

"I'm just kind of taking it all in," she said of her increasingly visible profile. "I'm excited that I've gotten a lot of great reviews, but I think I'm just kind of along for the ride and enjoying it. I'm just trying not to bore myself. I like to be experimental with key changes and time signatures.

"I don't want to write something someone else has written. Fortunately, Steve (Peavey), Ken (Dow) and Melissa (Harley) can do anything. I can throw them a random idea, and they make it sound amazing."

## **IF YOU GO**

### **Carolann Ames**

**WHEN:** Noon and 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 28; 9 p.m. Thursday, March 29

**WHERE:** Noon Wednesday on the WDVX-FM "Blue Plate Special," broadcast live from the Knoxville Visitors Center at 301 S. Gay St., downtown Knoxville; 8:30 p.m. Wednesday at Remedy Coffee, 125 W. Jackson Ave. in Knoxville's Old City; Thursday at Barley's Taproom, 200 E. Jackson Ave., Knoxville's Old City

**HOW MUCH:** All shows free

**CALL:** WDVX at 544-1029, Remedy at 335-0967, Barley's at 521-0092

### **Related Links**

**[www.carolames.com](http://www.carolames.com)**