

CHATHAM COUNTY LINE IV

RELEASE DATE: 3.04.08

"This record really does feel like our coming out party in a lot of ways," remarks CHATHAM COUNTY LINE songwriter Dave Wilson in his signature deliberate drawl. "Before, we were trying to fit into this one niche because of the instruments we like to play. But now we just look at our instruments as our instruments and it's all about taking that and evolving into the band we are and want to be." Banjo, fiddle, mandolin, guitar and bass certainly conjure certain musical images to mind, and in the past CCL had been content to play the part—a fun loving bluegrass band touring endlessly, summers full of festivals and hi-jinx. But now with the release of their aptly titled fourth album *IV*, Dave and the band are ready to get down to business, "We started the band as a way to hang out and drink beer. Slowly it turns into a career. This record is about growing up and becoming a band."



For their fourth album *IV*, the band is back with producer and Chapel Hill indie legend Chris Stamey after a one-album hiatus. One fourth of the jangle-pop defining dB's, Chris has worked with rock, pop and roots artists as varied as Yo La Tengo, Alex Chilton and Alejandro Escovedo. It was his diverse musical sensibilities that brought the band back to Chris and the church turned studio, Echo Mountain in Asheville, NC.

"We always love working with Chris," says Chandler Holt. "His dedication and attention to detail are second to none and he just made sense for the type of album we wanted to make. This record is a little more pop in feel and everyone knows Chris can make a beautiful pop record with his hands tied behind his back." The Whiskeytown producing alumni knew from the first time he saw the band that this was more than a tribute to traditionalism, he knew the band was moving toward something more. "They have always stayed true to their traditional instrumentation," says Stamey, "but their albums have never been limited by that in any way. There has always been a progression. They've used bluegrass as a jumping off point, a vernacular through which to access all that is roots music, be that gospel, country, rock or pop. That's American music and they are an American band."

Chatham County Line was spawned at Raleigh, NC's infamous Blue House on the corner of Hillsborough and Boylan, when Dave met high-school friends Chandler Holt and John Teer. A long-standing crash pad for Raleigh bands like Corrosion of Conformity, the house had been the scene of sunrise jam sessions for years. The kind of place where a joint was always being passed and there was always a beer to be found in the back corner of the filthy fridge. The sort of house where it wasn't clear who actually lived there and who was just hanging out fighting off a hangover, or working on the next one. Touring bands from Athens to D.C. knew

For additional information, photos or to set up an interview, please contact...

PUBLICITY: JAMES BAILEY at **Yep Roc** 336-578-7300 x244, james@yeproc.com

RADIO: JOE SWANK at **Yep Roc** 336-578-7300 x223, joe.swank@yeproc.com

CANADA: STEPHANIE HARDMAN at **Outside Music** 416-461-0655, X323, stephanie@outside-music.com

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CHATHAM COUNTY LINE [CONTINUED]

about the house and its open door policy, exercising the standing invitation when the previous night's draw wasn't quite up to snuff down the street at The Brewery, or over in Chapel Hill at The Local 506. The ancient wooden floors showed the scuffs and scars of a decade of house parties and loose, drunken jam sessions. But that year, the soft pine planks would take the brunt of an especially enthusiastic flatpicker's stomp. That picker's name? Dave Wilson.

Four albums later, *IV* marks a watermark in Chatham County Line's creative arc. "On this album I wrote a lot of the songs in a very different way from how I have written on other records," offers Dave in reference to a loose jam session-style process. Wilson's basement served as a rehearsal space for him and Tift Merritt band members Zeke Hutchins and Jay Brown to experiment between CCL tours. "They're not in CCL but they're good friends and helped me develop some of my ideas for this album. I would play something and Zeke and Jay would give it a groove." A unique approach when writing songs for a band with no drummer like CCL. "On many of the tunes the mandolin does the work of the drummer. And I like the idea of the listener being the drummer, whether it be stomping your foot or tapping on the steering wheel." It's clear that morphing rhythm-based songs for the instruments in CCL is responsible for much of the album's unique mood.

Songs like the slurring Stonesy romp "Let It Rock" and the speedy blues "I Got Worry" give *IV*, a relaxed boozy vibe not evident on CCL's more tightly strung previous albums. Here the tension lies solely with the searing intensity of "Birmingham Jail." John Teer's usually pitch-perfect high harmonies are broken into shards in the form of a blood curdling scream. The pop structures of "Chip of a Star" mark perhaps the band's greatest leap to date with their first "hook-based" tune and the addition of bouncy pedal steel from bassist Greg Reading.

While rockers do abound on *IV*, it's really the album's ballads that act as showpieces. The flat-out gorgeous "One More Minute" features harmonies from Whiskeytown'er Caitlin Cary. "Sweet Eviction" tells a tale of bitterness amidst a landscape of crawling, veiled gospel.

Its differences and new feel aside, *IV* certainly doesn't divorce itself from what fans have come to know and love as Chatham County Line. "The Carolinian" a tight, traditional bluegrass workout might at first glance seem out of place. But Wilson doesn't see it that way at all, "I just took the best songs and put them on the album. That's it. End of story."

Fade to black.

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