

## Review: The Steel Woods honor southern rock tradition

By Scott Stroud | AP May 22



The Steel Woods, "Straw in the Wind" (Woods Music/Thirty Tigers)

Fame Studios producer Rick Hall maintains that southern rock was born the day Duane Allman goaded Wilson Pickett into covering the Beatles' "Hey Jude." Allman proceeded to tear down Hall's Muscle Shoals, Alabama studio with a series of guitar fills that spawned a half-century of imitators.

Over time that sound made its way from the Allman Brothers and other pioneers to Nashville's country scene, where its sway remains obvious today.

Into this landscape come the Steel Woods, a Nashville band that bills itself as a hybrid of styles, from Americana to bluegrass to rhythm and blues. But they make no bones about being "steeped in the ethos of southern rock," which is obvious from the first steely twang of their debut album, "Straw in the Wind."

This is, above all, a Southern rock album — and a good one.

The album blends styles but draws its strength from power chords and soaring guitar solos set firmly in the southern rock ethos. Compelling vocals by Wes Bayliss wouldn't be out of place on an early Marshall Tucker Band album.

Whether on a galloping murder romp called "Della Jane's Heart" or the ballad "If We Never Go," the Steel Woods demonstrate with gusto that this genre isn't played out.

So no, the Steel Woods may not open new doors here the way Allman and others did way back when. But they do walk through the door in style.