

Reviews

Deer Tick

Deer Tick Vol. 1 & Vol. 2 PARTISAN



John McCauley is like Springsteen in a hipster flannel shirt or Petty on a punk kick. From the beginning, the

Deer Tick singer-songwriter has functioned at the extremes of his personality—from the alt-country rumination of *Born on Flag Day* to the raucous, hard-partying garage-rock of *Divine Providence*. The band made a genuine breakthrough with 2013's *Negativity*, shelving their tales of drunken barroom antics in favor of primal breakup ache, fleshing out their arrangements with horns and harmonies. The band's sixth album, double-LP *Deer Tick Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*, is split into two distinct halves—an "acoustic" first disc and amped-up second. But there's more to savor here than a basic rehash of their Jekyll and Hyde approaches: *Vol. 1 & 2* exhibit the broadest lyrical and stylistic range in their catalog, filling in the gaps between twang and distortion. On "Sea of Clouds," which opens the softer side LP, the band layers acoustic guitars with choral vocal harmonies and moaning, melodic bass; a highlight from the second disc is "Wants/Needs," which straddles the punk/power-pop border, as **Robert Crowell's** clomping clavinet steers the track down a slightly funkier path. Six years ago, McCauley reached his creative low point by mining his fractured psyche on garage-rock throwaway "Let's All Go to the Bar." Here, he flips the sentiment on its head and ascends to a pinnacle with "Look How Clean I Am," a raggedly catchy garage-pop nugget, which makes a mockery out of sobriety showboating. The maturity—and clarity of purpose—is staggering. *Ryan Reed*