

Opening Act

The New Royal Nashville Couple

When Jason Isbell met his wife, Amanda Shires, she was playing fiddle at a club in Athens, Georgia. At the time, he was a local hero in the boozy country-rock group Drive-By Truckers. "I made him sign a Polaroid," says Shires. Now, that photo hangs in their home outside Nashville. They haven't had much downtime here lately; Shires just released an excellent new LP, *To the Sunset*, and Isbell has carved out a place as one of rock and country's most vivid storytellers since leaving the Truckers in 2007. Though the first couple of Americana rarely write songs together, they aren't afraid to critique each other's work. "We ask each other a lot, 'Is this too much?'" says Isbell. "Trust me, you don't want to hear the lines of mine that were too much." **JOH FREEMAN**



Shires and Isbell at their Tennessee home in August, before launching separate solo tours this fall