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October/November 2021

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AT WORK

THE WAY DOWN WANDERERS

Band of Brothers

IN THE ILLINOIS RIVER town of Peoria, located about 175 miles south of Chicago, 15-year-old Austin Thompson was laying down the drums in a rock band, while 19-year-old Collin Krause was playing mandolin and fiddle in a bluegrass-folk group. After first meeting, the new friends immediately felt like brothers. Little did they know that it was only a matter of time before they actually *were* brothers—both through music and by law.

“Colin and I legally became brothers a few years back. I met his sister early on in our friendship. That just kind of evolved and we got married a few years back,” Austin—whose



last name is now Krause-Thompson—bashfully admits over the phone. “The Wanderers have had a family vibe from the get-go.”

The Way Down Wanderers officially formed in 2013 and, soon after, they released their well-received debut, *Path to Follow*. The EP is flush with fiddles and other bluegrass hallmarks, as well as some choice

vocals. The band quickly took to the road, sharpening their skills one marathon tour at a time.

By 2019, when they released *Illusions*, it was already clear that they were ready to expand their sonic boundaries. “The title track ‘Illusions’ was one of the more sonically complex songs. It had a really cool vibe to it and there was a lot of awesome stuff going on in the headphones,”

Krause-Thompson muses. “We try to view it from the listener’s perspective and see what we can do to spice up some of these songs that call for more.”

Throughout their latest release, *More Like Tomorrow*, the The Way Down Wanderers’ growth is palpable. The ensemble explore some new, melodic funk territories, while still retaining the warmth so often associated with their trademark twangy sound. “Each album that we’ve put out branches out a little more,” Krause-Thompson says.

On *More Like Tomorrow*, The Way Down Wanderers tackle themes of identity, addiction and parenthood with brutal honesty. “We want people to find their own meaning in the music and whatever else might bring them joy,” Colin adds. “But, for me, the album is about creating and finding personal progress. It is about letting love be that guide on our journey.” *Alex Krinsky*