

Donald Teplyske

ROOTS MUSIC

Tom Phillips and the Men of Constant Sorrow

King of the Broken Heart

www.menofconstantsorrow.com

The next best thing to a personal soundboard recording, this “off the floor” performance is as unadorned as a bar-room table — scarred and battered with a degree of smoothness about the edges.

Phillips — possessor of a voice within the Tom Russell/Dave Alvin spectrum — is in excellent vocal form and his bandmates accentuate the songs with lush fills.

With a western swing groove apparent on most cuts, that Phillips can sing tavern staples with the best of them is never in doubt; he is at his strongest when bringing his own compositions to life.

Lack of Rain sensitively tackles the grittiness of Alberta farming, while *Alberta Song* captures stereotypical — but accurate — images in a light-hearted manner. Phillips sells every song as if breathing the words was keeping him alive.

Donald Teplyske is a local freelance writer who contributes a twice-monthly column on roots music. He also hosts That High Lonesome Sound Saturdays at 8 PM on 97.7 CK-FM. If you know a roots music event of which he should be aware, contact him at fervorcoulee@shaw.ca