

From sorrow comes honky tonkin'

The country tricks of Tom Phillips and The Men of Constant Sorrow

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Gazing out from under the brim of his cowboy hat, puffin' on a rapidly disappearing cigarette and drinking a cup of coffee as black as tar, Tom Phillips is the suburban version of the Marlboro Man. Even his eyes have that gleam, like someone who has a new magic trick and is dying to show it.

On June 18 at Quincy's on 7th, Tom Phillips and The Men of Constant Sorrow will release their old-time piece of country magic — a self-titled debut album. Joined by Dwight Thompson (electric guitar), Ron Dyck (accordion), Dave Hoffart (mandolin), Scott Lauchlan (drums), Richard Erickson (bass), Charlie Villieux (pedal steel guitar), Tom (on vocals and acoustic guitar) says he couldn't conjure a better experience than this.

"I've somehow, by the grace of God, fallen into the best band that's ever been out there," he says warmly while smiling.

"You've got a seven-piece band, I write the songs, and if we're not playing my songs, we're playing songs by Hank Williams or Merle Haggard or some old honky tonk stuff."

The band began as a weekly jam party for the group of gentlemen until they started to get regular gigs. All of those bar shows and



From jams to club shows to a folk fest to a debut CD — Tom Phillips and The Men of Constant Sorrow

the reputation that followed eventually earned them a spot on the folk fest lineup last year alongside acts such as Gillian Welch and

Alejandro Escovedo. Now, Tom and The Men of Constant Sorrow are the only country band in town that can get away with playing

and packing a jazz or blues bar.

Local legend Tim Williams — one of Canada's great blues players who also has a background as

a country songwriter — produced the 13 Phillips-penned tracks that make up the debut, and his expertise certainly came in handy in achieving the traditional country feel featured on songs like "I Can't Win For Trying," "Ruby Red Heart" and "Smoke Stain On My Window."

There'll be no traditional country at The Night Gallery on Saturday, June 19, but there will be no shortage of good feelings for the Summer Solstice Benefit Concert in support of The Mustard Seed Street Ministry. The event, which begins at 8 p.m., features live music by local acts Belvedere (who recently opened for punk gods Bad Religion), Session, Ekseptions and Nine Miles To Morgan.

All proceeds from the event go to The Mustard Seed, an organization that compassionately responds to the needs of the inner-city's homeless and less fortunate.

Round two of Java Shark's Independent Band Challenge — an event that runs every Thursday night throughout the summer — saw Upshot advance to the semi-finals over the newly re-formed Diesel Fly and newcomers The Electric Horsemen. This Thursday's contestants are Johnny Unite Us, Shrinking Violet and Gun Club.