

# cowboyjunkies

Canadian band celebrates 20 years by revisiting its history

RODNEY WILSON | CIN WEEKLY

1987 – 20 years ago.

Ronald Reagan delivered the impassioned demand, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Baby Jessica fell into and was rescued from a Texas well. The Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker scandal came to a head. Prozac was released upon the American public. Of course, most of us were too busy playing the brand new *The Legend of Zelda* on our Nintendos to notice all of this drama.

For the Cowboy Junkies, 1987 was the year the band went from underground talent, schlepping around North America with little to show for it, to overnight sensation. The song that gained the band access to radio stations around the world was its haunting cover of a Lou Reed song, "Sweet Jane," from the landmark album *The Trinity Sessions*.

## THE TRINITY SESSIONS

"We had an album out before that and we sort of got out in a station wagon and toured across Canada, and then we started to do that in the States more," says Alan Anton, bassist of the Cowboy Junkies, which also includes siblings Margo, Michael and Peter Timmins.

"And that was the trip that gelled the idea of *The Trinity Sessions*, because we toured a lot in the South and listened to a lot of great music down there."

For a band that fell in love with American roots music while playing in punk bands in London, the road less traveled always has been familiar ground. So it should come as no surprise that the album that launched the group's now-20-year career was the result of little more than a whim and an afternoon spent in a church.

"With the first album we'd done the single microphone thing in our garage," Anton says. "The engineer who mixed that one said he'd recorded some stuff in his church and the ambient sound in there was great and we should try that out. That's how that came together. It was done in one day, just a quick record of what we were doing at the time. But when we listened back to it, we thought, wow – this is pretty cool."

A moment in time – in Toronto's Church of the Holy Trinity – sealed the band's fate.

"We went from being a really under-

ground, unknown band to being a household name for a bit," Anton says. "And the good thing about it was that it developed an audience for us – with any kind of hype, people aren't going to stay with you. But it exposed us to enough people that, out of those however many million people that bought the record, a fraction of them stayed with us throughout our career, enabling us to be professional musicians."

## REVISITED

The band's decision to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the album (and of the band's existence) by revisiting the experience – a landmark of the band's career as well as for popular music of the past two decades – is a welcome one.

"We were trying to think of things to do, and the idea of going back to the church and doing a DVD there popped up," Anton says. "We thought, we can't just go back and do it like we did it, that would be boring. So we decided to get other people in on it and reinterpret ourselves basically, do it a little bit differently."

The Cowboy Junkies handpicked a supporting band to help it re-record the songs from *The Trinity Sessions* for a new CD and DVD titled, simply enough, *Trinity Revisited*.

"We sort of put together a list of people ... they had to be contemporaries of ours who would have been influenced by *The Trinity Sessions*. And also whose music we admire. We had kind of a short list."

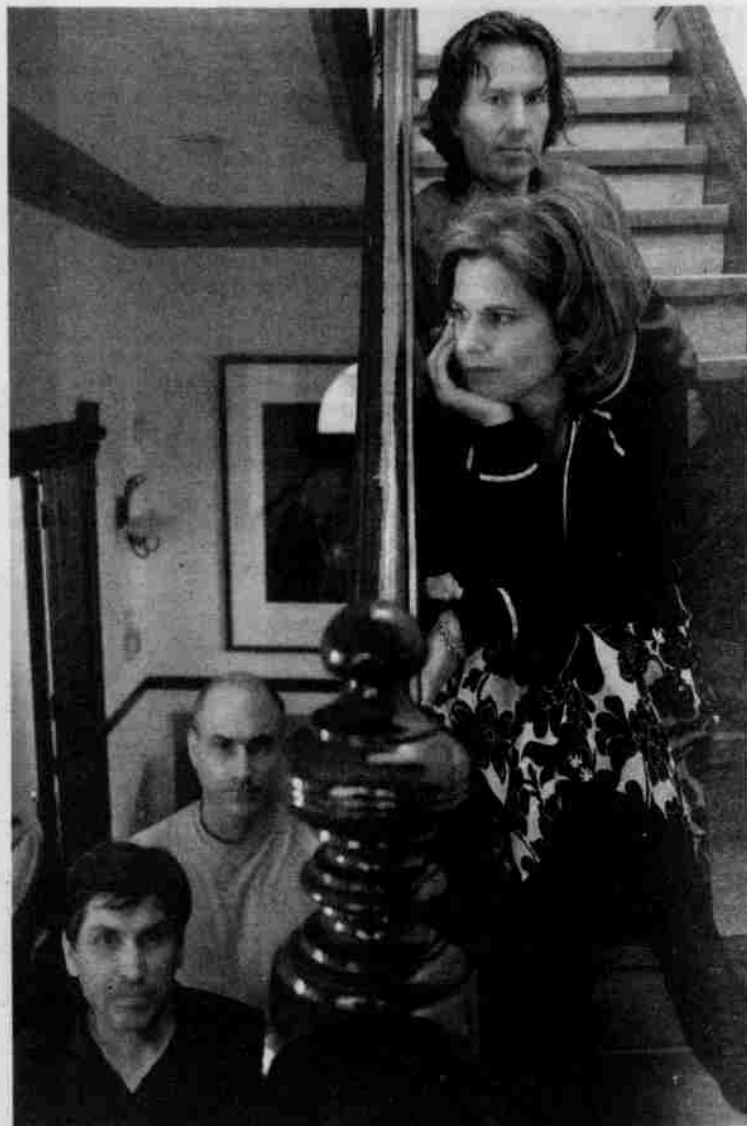
Those on the short list were Ryan Adams, Jeff Bird, Vic Chesnutt and Natalie Merchant – likely familiar names for the Cowboy Junkies fan base.

"Ryan especially was really into it, and Natalie was also great," Anton says. "It was really fun and we actually got to play together and enjoy it."

The true star of the album, however, remains the titular church, and revisiting this space was an almost reverential experience for the band.

"Interestingly, none of us had stepped into there since then – because, I guess, we didn't need to," laughs Anton.

"It was really weird, we walked back in and, as soon as we started playing, we realized, wow, this is why we're here. It sounded so amazing – the ambient feel of the place sounded so great."



The Cowboy Junkies celebrate the 20th anniversary of its successful *Trinity Sessions* by playing the appropriately named *20th Century* this Tuesday.

## JUST THE FACTS

**WHAT:** Cowboy Junkies

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 27

**WHERE:** The 20th Century, 3021 Madison Road, Oakley

**PRICE:** \$30 advance, \$35 day of show

**PARKING:** Nearby lots and on street

**CONTACT:** 513-731-8000, [www.the20thcenturytheater.com](http://www.the20thcenturytheater.com) or [www.cowboyjunkies.com](http://www.cowboyjunkies.com)