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The Bitter Roots will make you Listen

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The Bitter Roots: Ben Koostra and Jeff Stetson
<http://www.myspace.com/bitterrootsmusic>

What you hear is what you get when it comes to The Bitter Roots' self-titled 2009 release. In a world where artists rely on auto-tune and digital editing to create the perfect track, The Bitter Roots choose to record on to analog tape. According to their MySpace, "If it took 54 takes, it took 54 takes."

The Bitter Roots' music is their own unique blend of soulful vocals and guitar-driven rock. The smooth melodies lay effortlessly over drum lines that make it impossible to resist toe-tapping or head-bobbing along.

Lyrically, the album covers diverse and loaded topics, from censorship and personal freedoms to homosexuality, to the United States' involvement in foreign affairs. Somehow, though, singer Jeff Stetson does not come across as preachy. In fact, there are often instrumental breaks in which it feels as though Stetson is merely waiting to hear what his listener has to say before he continues.

Fall of the Empire is the stand out song of the record, and would be considered their first 'single'. A thinly veiled commentary on the United States' political agenda, *Fall of the Empire* showcases The Bitter Roots' tight harmonies, as well as Stetson's guitar skills as it both opens and closes with an R.E.M.-reminiscent solo. Stetson's voice does not overpower the music, but rather blends with Ben Koostra's drum lines and his own acoustic guitar to create a full, textured sound.

The album as a whole flows well, one track moving easily in to the next, showing that Stetson and drummer Ben Koostra put serious thought into making a cohesive record, rather than just putting together a collection of songs. If you want a sampling of what they have to offer, *Sweet China Baby*, *Fall of the Empire*, and *Lindsay* are an excellent starting point.

The most compelling aspect of The Bitter Roots' debut record is the raw, live sound. Listening to the album, it is easy to imagine yourself sitting in the back of a dimly-lit club, nodding along as you sip your Jack and Coke. Maybe they are not the band you came to hear, but they will definitely make you listen.

To learn more, or to listen: [MySpace](#) or check out their [website](#).