

# The Trews – Acoustic Tour Bio

Sometimes the most exceptional and rewarding things are things you don't see coming but are open enough to embrace. Take The Trews' highly acclaimed acoustic tours, for instance.

Though the Toronto-based foursome made its name dishing intense, hooky, melodic rock and roll that won fans and critics worldwide – not to mention heaps of awards and countless radio hits pulled from a clutch of live and studio albums and EPs – The Trews discovered, serendipitously, that turning down the volume actually dialed up the heft.

Rewind to early 2009 and Toronto's legendary Glenn Gould Studio where our guys - singer Colin MacDonald, guitarist John-Angus MacDonald, drummer Sean Dalton and bassist Jack Syperek – acoustically cut a collection of fan favourites, rarities and three new songs before a live audience that, not to put too fine a point of it, kind of lost its mind.

By the time The Trews issued the *Friends & Total Strangers* CD without fixes or overdubs and alongside an accompanying DVD, the supporting tour dates were already hotly anticipated from coast to coast. This, after all, was a different but no less commanding Trews: looser, more relaxed, heavy on the vocal harmonies and with all the familiar songs but sketched in charcoal instead of ink.

"We had no idea the acoustic shows would be so popular," confirms songwriter/guitarist and producer John-Angus MacDonald. "It was something we just did because it came to us like second nature. We had written songs that way – sitting around together and strumming guitars with everybody singing. We hadn't planned to tour but the reaction was a lot bigger than expected.

"I think the idea of everybody singing became the real hook of the thing. Add in Sean playing the hand-drums and it really helped to reinvent the sound. It wasn't just electric music played quietly; some songs sounded totally different by the time we had re-arranged them in that format."

Indeed, songs that had been wallflowers in The Trews' electric set suddenly bloomed, notably a pair of tracks from 2005's celebrated *Den of Thieves*. "The band really liked 'The Traveling Kind' but it always seemed to be the song where people at our electric shows would go grab a beer," MacDonald laughs.

"I think that was because the vocals were just too buried whereas acoustically we are able to showcase the harmonies, really bringing the tune to life. Same with 'Montebello Park.' I guess the more vocal-driven tunes suffer a bit played at lightning speed and thunderous volume."

These days, the acoustic shows bookend a career still laser-focused on rock but - more than a decade in and with most of the boxes on the wish-list checked off - can comfortably accommodate new ventures and fresh ideas. And the shows bring added benefits: more diverse audiences and a chance to play theatre venues in markets often underserved by marquee artists.

"We grew up in Antigonish Nova Scotia; not exactly a mecca of touring bands," MacDonald says. "When something finally came through town, we were just floored. We went out and loved every minute of it, so we know what feels like to be playing smaller towns both as audience and as performer.

"And I do think these shows have grown the fan base at both ends – people who know us as a rock band and people who don't. We notice people a bit outside the age group of our usual fans turning up

because we're playing more intimate settings where people aren't necessarily into having beer spilled on them or being crushed up against the stage," he howls. "I think in that setting the music has a little more reach to it, and goes down a little easier."