



**PAUL WHYTE**  
Reader Weekly

music

# Ryan Van Slooten: The Overhead Low



Ryan Van Slooten has definitely made his mark on the Twin Ports music scene over the years. He has played with local rock bands such as Bione Appetit, The Super Tacks and Rock Brigade. Although Van Slooten has spent years rocking out, the album *The Overhead Low* brings out different aspects of his work. The album certainly has it's moments of rock, but maintains a base of singer/songwriter material throughout the album.

The CD starts off with the song "Rise or Fall," a pop/rock tune where Van Slooten seems to sing about stepping out of a self destructive life style. The song switches between a pretty riff that we find in the Intro to the solid rocking verse and chorus parts throughout the rest of the song. Van Slooten made a music video for "Rise or Fall," making him one of the few acts in the area that even have an official video.

The next track "Gone" is also a song of facing uncertainty but persevering through it. "Bend til I almost break, earning what I can't take, just to keep going on. When good isn't enough, I will never give up, until all hope is gone," sings Van Slooten in the chorus. In the liner notes it mentions that all the songs are "written, performed and produced by

Ryan Van Slooten." He plays the lead and rhythm guitar parts and harmonizes with himself on the album. The beginning of "Gone" has a slick lead part and nuances of lead work that add a nice touch to the overall song.

The song "Disappear" is an uplifting tune that continues on this album's overall theme of overcoming hardships. While the song is another pop/rock song, the next song "October Drive" brings out the singer/songwriter aspect of Van Slooten's work and utilizes what sounds like an acoustic guitar and piano. The lyrics of the song are rather sentimental but beautifully illustrates his "drive." "And it feels like I'm awake inside a dream, the roads are empty, no one's here but me. Though I don't like the cold, right now the worlds my own private sanctuary," sings Van Slooten.

Similar to "October Drive," in the song "Guide Us Home" Van Slooten reflects on his surroundings. The song seems to be about spending an evening on the shores of Lake Superior, "Sitting around a fire we made

with wood drifted into the shore that made it's way here, God knows how, but now it's keeping us warm from the cold water we've been swimming in, our clothes in a trail behind, down to nothing but our skin."

The song "Knots" seems to be a song about overcoming insecurity, "I should go easier on myself, I could really use the break, to rid myself of the fear to make mistakes," sings Van Slooten. There is a neat break down a little after two minutes into the song that brings in the piano and some guitar leads.

One of the songs that stick out towards the end of the album is "Stay Calm," the lead guitar patterns underlying the steady rhythm sounds very cool in the verse parts of the song and the chorus is hard hitting and beautiful. The arrangements of backing vocals are very effective as well.

The final song on the album "Single Out" relies a lot on an inspiring piano part. The song summarizes the overall feel of this album, "Life is

just a series of challenges, and there's not one that we haven't met yet," sings Van Slooten.

What I really like about this album is Van Slooten's use of harmonization, presumably with himself, and the fact that he brings in piano on several of the songs. The guitar arrangements are well done and the lyrics have some depth.

One of the hang ups with the album is that besides "October Drive" and "Guide Us Home," a lot of the album reiterates the message that things might be tough but there's always hope. It's a good message and it seems that Van Slooten wrote the album based on some of his own experiences, but most of the album deals with this in one way or another.

The cool thing about the album is that he recorded this album in his own home studio, "Dadland Studio," pretty much by himself. Van Slooten is a dedicated father of two young children, thus the name of his studio. It took him eight months to complete the album but it was time well spent, the overall sound of the album is terrific and it goes to show that he is also a talented producer on top of being a seasoned musician in the area. The album was mastered by local musician, Allen Cragin at Sair Fecht Productions.

Van Slooten regularly plays gigs at venues such as Sir Benedict's Tavern, Pizza Luce and Thirsty Pagan Brewing and can still be found playing an occasional show with Rock Brigade. Try to make it out and watch this hard working and talented musician

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