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Angela Faye martin delivers another kind of Mountain Music

Written by [Bibeka Shrestha](#)

Forget Asheville. Forget cities altogether. Angela Faye Martin's impressive first full-length album "Pictures from Home" could only have materialized deep in the mountains.

With no shortage of characters and inspiring natural beauty, the Smokies have served as an ever-giving muse for Martin

"I wouldn't have written these songs in a city," says Martin, a self-professed bird worshipper who raises chickens at her Macon County home.

"Pictures from Home" is an understated affair, clearly carrying the influence of its producer, Mark Linkous of Sparklehorse, who achieved indie fame for his noise pop.

Martin caught up with Linkous through a mutual friend in Clay County who repeatedly insisted that the two meet. Linkous at first agreed to do only two demos, but later decided to produce the entire record.

References to moonshine, dirt mountain roads, and the woods are sprinkled throughout the haunting album with its mysterious tings and fuzzy distortions.

Martin aptly classifies her music as "surreal folk rock pop." Songs range from eerie to rockin', always with an emphasis on Martin's literary songwriting, which reveals the solitude of her surroundings.

"This area is one of the loneliest places of any place I've ever seen anywhere," said Martin. "I think that's conducive to being able to write, the mountains separating everybody so much."

Martin thoroughly appreciates that quiet — when she can get it. She once yelled at a cardinal chirping noisily outside her window while she was trying to write.

"Even this is a little bit much," said Martin, looking out on Sylva's Main Street during a joint interview with her newly-formed band.

The Scarlet Oak Sway features Chris Cooper on lead guitar; Jeremy Rose on bass; Jeff Southerland on keyboard; and Adam Wolesslagle on drums.

The band's name comes from a phrase in "Wicked Girl," a song on Martin's EP, "One Dark Vine."

Since the band was not involved in the recording process, live performances have been like a work in translation.

Linkous played most of the instruments in the studio, utilizing such whimsical-sounding instruments as the farfisa, the pling-plong, and the optigan.

Lead guitarist Cooper has worked earnestly to imitate those quirky sounds.

"Chris put a lot into figuring out how to make subtle sounds that are in the album, rather than just playing guitar," said Rose. "He does a fantastic job using the sounds off the album."

Martin scoured the mountains in July and August looking for musicians to back her up at a CD release party in late September.

She tracked down Southerland at his Riverblaze Bakery in Franklin, which now serves as the band's rehearsal spot. While Southerland grew up playing music, he hadn't touched a keyboard in 10 years. Luckily, Southerland was able to pick up right where he left off.

Finding a talented drummer was another challenge for Martin, as there seems to be scarcity of percussionists in the area. But Wolesslagle signed up with Martin just in time, despite being in three other bands already.

"Every time there's a band, he's invited," said Rose, who is a songwriter himself and plays with Wolesslagle in another band, Shiner Minors.

What started out as a one-gig deal lasted much longer. The band currently cooperates with Martin in arranging new songs, though Martin continues to take the lead in songwriting.

"It's terrifying bringing a new song to four guys that know what they're doing," said Martin.

Band members' impact has gone so far as to turn Martin's country song into a dance track.

When she's not pulling the band together for a rehearsal, Martin is busy lining up shows and publicizing her album.

"I'm trying to be my own record label right now," said Martin.

So far, Martin and The Scarlet Oak Sway have performed in Asheville and Chapel Hill, and have planned shows in Cherokee, Knoxville and Atlanta.

Despite the regional tour, Martin said she hopes to achieve success at home first.

"I hope that people don't have to wait for Asheville to tell them it's quality," said Martin.
