

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Blue light special

Wade Bowen & West 84 take the show on the road with Farewell to Sanity tour

By Kim Katopodis
THE BATTALION

Wade Bowen was born and bred in Texas. So was his music. But don't let these facts put Bowen, or his music, in a box.

Sometimes his music has a honky-tonk feel to it, sometimes it is more rock inspired. Usually, the line between the two is blurred and what remains is a sound that needs its own genre apart from the usual "Texas music" mold.

Wade Bowen & West 84 will play at Shadow Canyon tonight along with Stoney LaRue and Django Walker as part of their "Farewell to Sanity" Tour.

No one band is the headliner of the tour, but that's just one thing that makes this tour distinct, said Chad Kudelka of Austin Universal Entertainment.

"The bands will determine who is playing first, second and third each night before the show," he said. "The lineup will not be announced to the public. That way none of the bands are perceived as headliners or openers."

Another difference can be found in the number of bands playing. Two bands typically tour together and play for about an hour and a half to two hours each.

Bowen, LaRue and Walker each play for one hour. This time constraint can really challenge the bands to give the audience their best music and most upbeat performance, Bowen said.

Wade Bowen & West 84 formed their band at Texas Tech University in 1998.

They started out as simply West 84 but later changed their name to Wade Bowen & West 84 because they thought it had better

mass appeal.

Three of the band members knew each other from their hometown of Waco but hadn't played together until college.

Bowen said his music is constantly evolving. During his college years, he was heavily influenced by Willie Nelson, Robert Earl Keen and Jack Ingram.

"That was where my true love of writing came from," he said.

Country was his first influence, so his first album has a more heavy country sound compared to the band's newest release, "The Blue

"This album just defines what we do onstage. It is as raw and real as you can possibly get on an album... There's mess ups, mistakes, bottles breaking, drunken screams, stupid comments, etc, and that's what makes it fun."

— Wade Bowen
Singer and songwriter of Wade Bowen & West 84

"The Blue Light Live" shows the evolution of Wade Bowen & West 84. The album takes the listener on a journey through the band's previous albums.

"Honky-tonk country just got boring," said Bowen. I still love it though."

Out of that boredom grew a new style

and sound.

Both his records and his shows have a new attitude. Wade Bowen & West 84

found that since they first started, the audiences have begun to crave a different kind of show.

"I enjoy the rock stuff live," Bowen said. "People are wanting a more upbeat rock show than a few years ago."

Some of Bowen's inspiration comes from unlikely sources.

"Sometimes I listen to artists that I wouldn't normally listen to in order to get new ideas for my music," Bowen said.

Bowen's goal is to never be a cliché. That goal encompasses the feel of the band's live shows.

That's why Bowen encourages people to see them live again if they have only seen them once, because the show changes every night.

Those who are unfamiliar with the "Texas music" phenomenon should be satisfied with texastroubadors.com's definition of Texas country versus Nashville country from Bowen.

"It's a more acoustic sound, a more country sound, and it's raw.... Nashville artists write for the nation and with a nationwide appeal. Texans write about what they grew up on, and



PHOTO COURTESY OF 36D MANAGEMENT

Singer/songwriter Wade Bowen in concert. Wade Bowen & West 84 play at Shadow Canyon tonight

as far as the sounds, it's two completely different sounds, and everyone who listens to it knows that."

Many Texas country bands flock to College Station where their sound is generally well received.

Name recognition (famed country singer Jerry Jeff Walker is Django's father) will draw crowds to Shadow Canyon, but they will stay for the original sound of all three.

Those who like traditional, two-step country may want to skip this one. But music lovers seeking new sounds and a fun live show should plan to be at Shadow Canyon tonight.

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