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A Directory of Local Albums Reviewed by Seven Days
DUANE CARLETON, ONCE LOST, THEN TORN DOWN
(Higher Road Records, CD)

Have you ever had to listen to a new CD several times before you really got what it was all about? Well, Rutland singer-guitarist Duane Carleton's latest offering, *Once Lost, Then Torn Down*, probably falls into that category.

If you can get past the fact that a couple of the cuts resemble John Mellencamp's recent Chevy truck jingle, you'll discover an album full of well-crafted, radio-ready tunes. That's not exactly a ringing endorsement, but stay with me.

Carleton is an able guitarist, and his vocals are sometimes reminiscent of Warren Haynes of Allman Brothers and Gov't Mule fame. But the funny thing about *Once Lost* is that, for all its guitar-driven bravado, the best numbers are relaxed, country-rock ballads. These tunes truly shape the character of the record.

As its title implies, the disc deals with themes of loss and longing — particularly for a simpler way of life that's fallen by the wayside. Carleton lets you know exactly where he's at on songs such as "Small Town Heroes" and "Looks Like Home to Me."

He positively pours his soul into "Faraway Canyon," a sad yet pretty meditation that could crack the hardest of hearts. "Looking back to faraway canyon / I can go back in my mind / There are some that live there forever / I know I'll see them again sometime," Carleton sings. Such disarmingly beautiful lyrics are par for the course on this CD

Carleton's voice sounds great on most of the tunes, and the musicianship is equally strong, especially in the guitar department. The mellow twang of George Schacher's pedal steel nicely complements Carleton's own playing, as do the contributions of his sidemen.

What really makes the album stand out, however, is Carleton's honest and skillful songwriting. He's got a keen ability to create songs that linger in your memory long after the disc has stopped spinning. And that's what makes *Once Lost, Then Torn Down* more enjoyable with each listen.

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