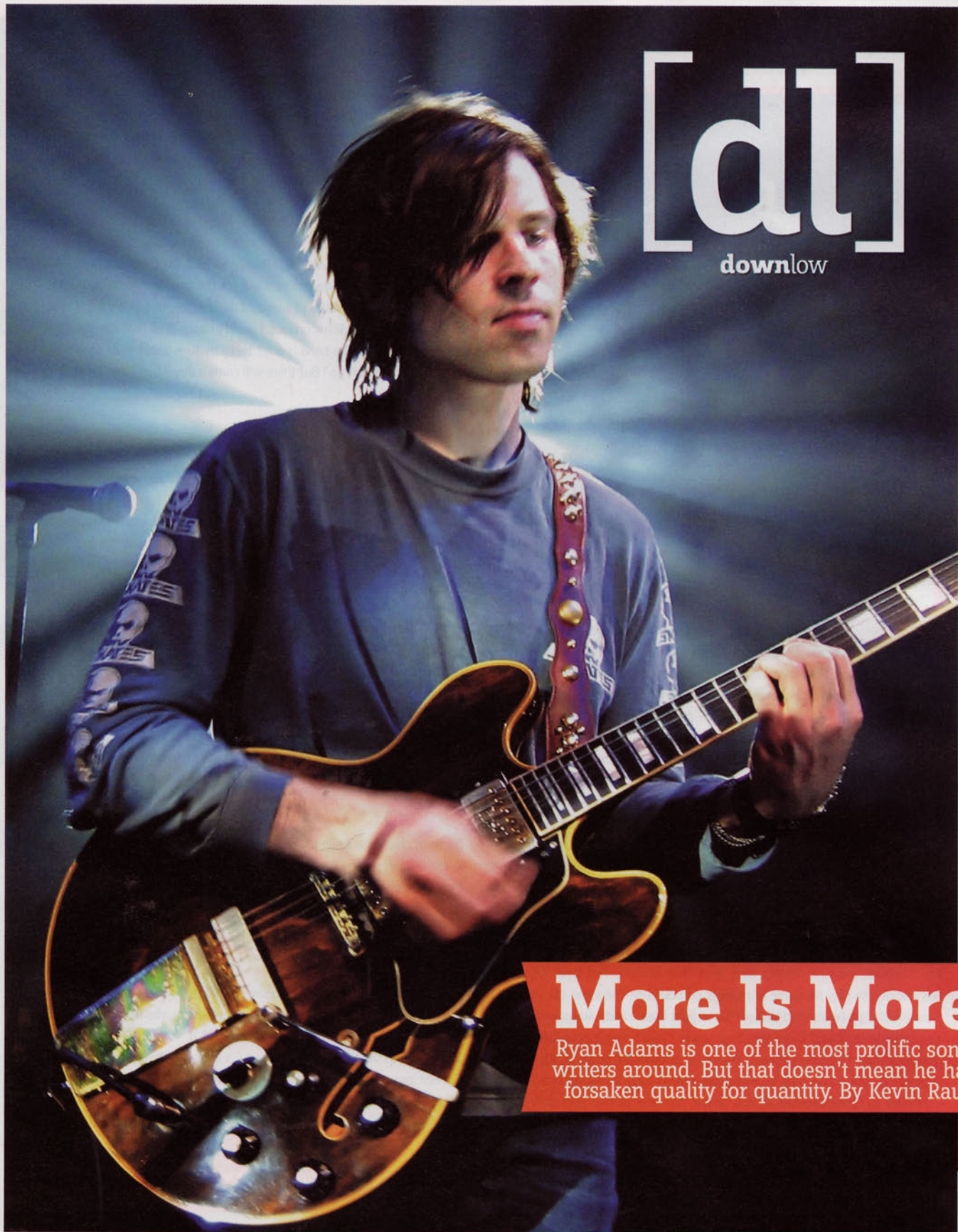


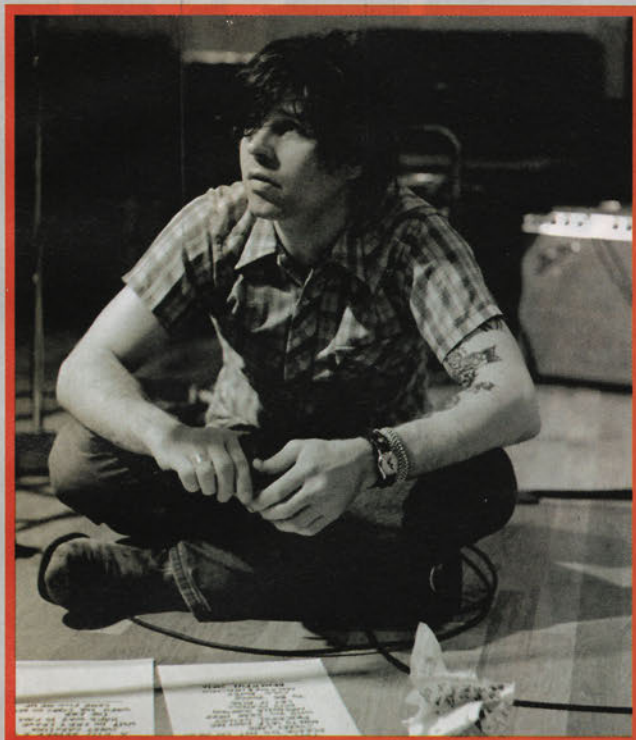
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## More Is More

Ryan Adams is one of the most prolific songwriters around. But that doesn't mean he has forsaken quality for quantity. By Kevin Raub





**T**here is an industry joke out there, and it's that singer-songwriter Ryan Adams needs an editor. In the seven years since the collapse of Whiskeytown, the maverick, turbulent alt-country band he formed in North Carolina in 1994, Adams has pumped out nine records, including three in 2005 alone. There's a problem with the punch line, though: Every single one of the albums is good.

There is, perhaps, no other contemporary songwriter whose catalog features a more varied juxtaposition of genres from album to album than Adams's does. There's a clear-cut Liam Gallagher-influenced sneer one moment (2003's *Rock N Roll*) and a drawn-out Hank Williams lament the next (2005's *Jacksonville City Nights*), with extended moments of classic pop and rock thrown in, just in case you were getting comfortable. Since Adams usually chooses to stick with a particular genre within each album, it wouldn't be entirely surprising if there were a few people out there who think there are different artists sharing the stage name Ryan Adams.

But his latest effort, *Easy Tiger*, billed as a solo album but featuring his band, the Cardinals, marks a distinct stray from that formula. This time out, Adams has decided to play his game of musical potpourri on the same CD. He begins treading in deep countrified sludge ("Goodnight Rose") and follows with a folksy pop romp with Sheryl Crow (the first single, "Two") and, a little later, with a '70s rock frolic ("Halloweenhead"). Again, all of them are good. So it's true that Adams's prolific muse may be relentless, but as long as his assorted arsenal continues to be replenished at this caliber, the only editing necessary will be that of music critics' praise.

**You and Stephen King are big fans of each other's work. How did he come to write your press bio?** It was actually just a shot in the dark. I'd been looking for someone to write the liner notes for a future box set of unreleased

material and was interested in having someone unusual write it. I pulled Steve's name out of a hat, thinking it would never happen. One day, he just called me up and started asking me questions for the bio. It was all very intense and kind of awesome. We talked for about half an hour, and I hadn't even finished my lunch. When I arrived home, he already had it written.

**This album is billed as Ryan Adams, though the Cardinals play on it. How do you distinguish between the two?** I don't, really. It's label stuff. I don't fully understand it. The vinyl says Ryan Adams & the Cardinals, which is kind of great, but I guess it makes more sense for the label to have it be a solo record. I don't think it was politics of personal destruction, but, in my mind, it sounded very much like a Cardinals project. I wasn't happy with [the decision to bill it as a solo record], but the band is a lot more mature about stuff than I am. They were just like, "Let it go." But there will come a day when I don't have to answer to stuff like that.

**You have been accused of being too prolific. Might it have to do with not flooding the market with Ryan Adams & the Cardinals records?** I don't really know what's wrong with that. It doesn't make any sense to me that someone could find fault in that I make too much music. I have never, nor will I ever, succumbed to the pressures of what the world considers to be a reasonable rate of production. It's not a painting. It doesn't take up space. It's just music. I'm playing it anyway. The only reason to record it is to document the idea. I can't imagine what's so wrong about having a lot of ideas.

**You sobered up this time around. How did that affect your approach to writing *Easy Tiger*?** Sobering up had more to do with me, in that I wasn't wasted. All my album work and writing have always been done sober. Very little has ever been done under the duress of any kind of drug. I just didn't write that way. Music looks, to a lot of people, like nothing but fun, and like once you know how to do it, it'd be like tennis, and you just do it. It's not really like that. It's not light work to do it enough to remember it in its correct form.

**Do you think that your music elicits moods or that people reach for your CD when they are in a particular mood?** My simple answer is that I have no frame of reference. I can see the music only from one angle — as the creator of it. It's like people see the songs as grown-ups, and I've been there since before they were born. It would be very presumptuous to pretend like I would know what other people think about it.

**When someone tells you their favorite Ryan Adams song, does that say a little something about that person?** I rarely hear that. I don't think in any way that it's necessarily a hip thing to say you're into my music. I'm just saying that, as someone who knows, if I wasn't me, I would maybe like the stuff that I did, but I wouldn't necessarily be bragging about it. I haven't really given anybody any reason to think that listening to me is a hipster thing to do. That being said, I'm not saying I'm not pretentious. I'm just not pretentious enough to pretend that I think that I'm cool.

Three songs from Ryan Adams's *Easy Tiger* — "Two," "Everybody Knows," and "These Girls" — are featured on American Airlines' in-flight audio network. Tune in to Harvest, which is on channel six or eight, depending on the aircraft.