

# UNDER THE RADA



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## Blitzen Trapper:

*American  
Goldwing*  
(Sub Pop)

Blitzen Trapper is walking with a little more twang in their step on their sixth full-length. As the Portland-based sextet ages, so does their sound. *American Goldwing* may as well have been released in the early '70s along with The Allman Brothers Band's *Eat a Peach*. The stories here are the stuff of swamp rock legend: Characters are drinking too much whiskey late at night, fantasizing about loving or leaving the finest women in town, returning home, and piecing together the wonders of the natural world.

Eric Earley, the band's songwriter and frontman, has always piled his literary influences on heavy, drawing from Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, the Bible, and old mythology. Never before has it fit so cleanly with the sonic undertones. "Love the Way You Walk Away" mesmerizes with subtle harmonies, swirls of pedal steel guitar, and choruses that swing as easy as a spring breeze. Earley sums up detailed narratives with such clever couplets as, "When you find what you're looking for/you want it less," without turning up clichés.

"Street Fighting Sun" takes a page from Jack White's menacing guitar lurches. It's pure grime, heaving with powerful stamina through groove after groove. Otherwise, Blitzen Trapper is more focused on the country drawl of the harmonica, steady putter of percussion, and the occasional old-timey piano tinkering. It makes for a solid album, if a fairly uneventful one. Nothing on *American Goldwing* is as memorable as the title track on 2008's *Furr* or as adventurous as anything on last year's *Destroyer of the Void*, which found the band injecting prog rock into their folk rock cannon. Blitzen Trapper has once again succeeded in crafting an album that fits with classics. But standing between The Allman Brothers Band and Creedence Clearwater Revival is a high task, and this time, it gets a little lost in between. ([www.blitzenrapper.net](http://www.blitzenrapper.net))

••••• 6/10 By Danielle Sills