

## Local country-rock hero Rick Shea & the Losin' End celebrate new album with special guest Brian Whelan at Viva Fresh Saturday

Posted by Bliss Bowen, Sep 14, 2017

### Rick Shea

*"Work's hard to find in the town where I live  
And it all seems to take a lot more than it gives  
They say you're too young or they say you're too old  
Or the job's just been filled, boy, you're moving too slow"*



The wise title track of Rick Shea's new album "The Town Where I Live" depicts a "ragged and old" town where "if you ain't got much choice, man, your choice is real clear." It could be Covina, the bedroom community outside a music mecca that he long ago adopted as his hometown. It could be some dusty industrial city dying off the tracks, or a struggling farm community in the hinterlands. Or it could be ... fill in the blank.

Movingly sung and performed, the beauty of the country tale is in how the veteran country artist makes it feel like it's taken from his own life — or yours. It's one of the hallmarks of Shea's songwriting.

Recorded with his Losin' End bandmates — bassist/harmony vocalist Dave Hall, drummer Steve Mugalian and accordionist/guitarist Stephen Patt — the album's 10 songs display hard rhythmic muscle and the lived-in feel that comes with musicians who've paid dues and hung together through many seasons of change. Shifting easily from country shuffles to bluesier rockers, gospel-inflected ballads and good-time groovers, it's a satisfying collection that demonstrates why the unassuming Shea's songwriting and deceptively masterful fretwork command the respect of better-known peers as well as audiences.

After a lengthy tenure as guitarist in Dave Alvin's Guilty Men band, in more recent years Shea has taken his seat alongside Alvin, Peter Case, John Doe and others on the popular Roots on the Rails tours — train tours that bring together musicians and fans for memorable jaunts up the coast or across the country. After returning from the latest of those tours, where he accompanies friends and also shares his own songs, Shea followed it with a handful of Northern California dates earlier this month.

This weekend he'll celebrate the release of "The Town Where I Live" with the Losin' End and another sterling guitarist and songwriter, Brian Whelan; the former Dwight Yoakam sideman will open the show at Cody's Viva Cantina. Shea's sets will be dominated by songs from "The Town Where I Live," some of which — "Goodbye Alberta," "The Starkville Blues" and "Hold On Jake" — have already become familiar to fans at his live shows. He'll also pull out material from older albums like 2013's "Sweet Bernadine," and don't be surprised if you hear a Johnny Cash cover. Appropriately, the evening will be emceed by LA Barndance legend Ronnie Mack — the man responsible for giving many artists like Shea and Whelan their earliest platforms before LA audiences, and supporting the community that will be well represented Saturday.