

The songs of Carl Nichols and Johanna Rose are the bridge upon which their influences meet. Just as their harmonies manage to entwine their distinctive voices, the duo's music is also a melting-pot of unique styles. On the face of it they could be seen as a blend of folk and Americana, but that doesn't come close to describing their sound.

Growing up in segregated Milwaukee, Carl was raised in the city's north side on a diet of gospel music and the sounds of Senegal, Mali and Guinea whereas Johanna was born in the east side, before spending her youth in punk basement shows in the Riverwest neighbourhood. A list of the artists that inspire them ranges from Taj Mahal to Django Reinhardt, from Ali Farka Touré to Lucinda Williams. Throw in other ingredients such as the works of Aldous Huxley and the films of Alejandro Jodorowsky and you start to get a sense of Nickel & Rose.

There's also the experience gained from touring across large portions of Europe; in Denmark, France, The Netherlands and Czech Republic to name just a few. It's in this part of the world where they hitched a ride from a group of smugglers in order to cross the Ukrainian border and where they played to 50,000 anti-corruption protesters in the Romanian town of Cluj-Napoca. All of which leads us to the new Nickel & Rose EP, Americana. The five courageous tracks explore the duo's fractious relationship with the genre. On the one hand the inventive melodies and rustic charm pay homage to the Americana tradition but at the same time the themes look at what it means to be a diverse artist in the United States today.

The follow-up to last year's Oh Sweet Love EP, Americana is their most personal release to date. Though recorded in two recording studios over the course of six months, the songs originally came together in their attic home, which doubles up as a practice and recording space, and they share with Johanna's pet snake, Dreamboat. It was while writing this music that they began to question whether or not they belong in the genre they love.

What can't be questioned though is their passion for roots music, their ability to bring all of their influences together in one intoxicating brew and the timeless quality of the songs they make together. They'll leave the classifications up to you.