

Ryan Culwell grew up in a forgotten place. His songs were forged in the great void that is the panhandle of Texas—The Great In-Between, a land so desolate that few even thought to settle there until oil was discovered beneath the emptiness.

Solitude seems a comfortable home to Culwell, as witnessed by **Ann Powers of NPR Music** who caught one of his sets at SXSW 2015. “His songs themselves wring grace from plain and often dark details, expressing the realities of class and region in ways that many other writers barely touch,” says Powers. “Here was a working man, a working musician, delivering his best.”

Following the release of this first album in more than 8 years, Culwell remains singular in a crowded field of comparisons. **Kelly McCartney of The Bluegrass Situation** and **Folk Alley** said, “Like Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Rodney Crowell, Nanci Griffith and so many others before him, Ryan Culwell wears his heritage right on his sleeve, right next to his heart.”

Rolling Stone Country said Culwell “is following the through-line between Bruce Springsteen and Jason Isbell... *Flatlands* is like a bleaker *Nebraska* meets *Southeastern*, full of dusty laments about growing up in the Texas panhandle.”

At the age of thirty-one, after moving from Amarillo Texas to Music City, Culwell began playing what he calls “bigger” songs. But he heard the flatlands calling to him, and he found himself writing songs about his roots on the open plains—songs about “what it sounds like to stay,” though he hadn’t. Soon enough, these were the only tunes anyone wanted to hear.

These songs became *Flatlands*, Culwell’s new album out now on Lightning Rod Records (**Jason Isbell, Amanda Shires, Billy Joe Shaver, James McMurtry**).