

Josh Abbott Band content playing Texas and surrounding states

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By MARIO TARRADELL Music Critic

For a relative newcomer promoting his band's second CD, Lubbock's Josh Abbott thinks like a seasoned troubadour. Abbott, who performs with his four musical mates as the Josh Abbott Band, understands his audience, knows his limitations and seizes the opportunities.

She's Like Texas, the spirited sophomore disc from this Texas country ensemble, blends Western swing, Southern rock and influences from Steve Earle and Randy Rogers into a dozen sturdy tunes. Abbott said *She's Like Texas*, which follows 2008's debut disc, *Scapegoat*, will be the band's ticket to greater Lone Star exposure.

"We think it will take us new places," Abbott, 29, says by phone from Austin. "That freshman album we had, we were still kind of learning the ropes as a band, opening for people, working on getting our name out there and spreading the word. And now with this new album we have two years of touring, and I feel like our name is out there. So now it's a matter of stepping it up and getting to the next level."

Abbott thanks fellow Texas country stars such as Jack Ingram, Pat Green, Eli Young Band and Randy Rogers Band for opening doors. He realizes that he's part of the new breed benefiting from the regional and national success that those guys have enjoyed.

But Abbott isn't ready for the Nashville rat race. He may never be. He independently releases his CDs, and tours Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee and Colorado. That's plenty for him, at least for now.

"I'm touring ... three or four shows a week, playing to big crowds, selling CDs. I kind of like what we're doing now. We get to come home for three days a week. When you start touring the country, that's when you're gone from home for months. I'm not knocking on the national door just yet. I play Texas country music, and while it's neat to get out of Texas every so often, your demographic is the South."

The band calls Fort Worth its home base. From there the group sets out to conquer markets where Texas country music finds its staunchest admirers.

"We want to spread out but not do it all the time," he says. "Texas and Oklahoma are so big that I can play Dallas, Lubbock and Austin, three really good shows, and then come home for three days. Everybody has this take-on-the-world mentality. Nothing is good enough. If you're trying to be big everywhere, you're not going to be big anywhere. Why focus on the entire country? It makes my scope too big. It's not realistic." Plan your life

Josh Abbott Band performs at 10:30 p.m. Friday at Billy Bob's Texas, 2520 Rodeo Plaza, Fort Worth. \$12-\$15. Ticketmaster.