

The singer we know

Todd Snider makes another stop in Lexington, his folk-pop-country style intact

By Walter Tunis

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Todd Snider and Cory Branan

8 p.m. Jan. 27 at The Dame, 156 W. Main St. \$15. (859) 226-9005. www.dameky.com.

It's time again to spend another evening with the merry, messy county-folk musings of **Todd Snider**.

For more than a decade, the East Nashville songsmith has been an endearing presence in local clubs thanks to folk-pop meditations that range from the unapologetically goofy to the wryly worldly to the shyly confessional. His songs often suggest the accessibility of country with just enough back-yard humor to set his characters on the road to coincidental fame or misfortune. But in the corners of his best tunes are darker, human sagas delivered with a crackled voice that enforces just how tenuous the emotions behind his storylines can be.

All these themes and devices run through Snider's newest album, *The Devil You Know*. But this time, the party wastes no time reeling out of bounds. The opening song, *If Tomorrow Never Comes*, lights the record's fuse with a blast of Jerry Lee Lewis-inspired piano boogie and a unapologetic celebratory stance in its lyrics. "If tomorrow never comes," belts Snider in a boozy, bluesy drawl, "tonight will have to do."

And so it must. Other delights include the darker, rambling country slant of *Just Like Old Times*, the guitar-fortified title tune, and a wild, half-spoken confessional of rich white kids on a bender called *You Got Away With It (A Tale of Two Fraternity Brothers)*.

Bringing *The Devil You Know* to a quiet conclusion, though, is *Happy New Year*. Heavily reminiscent of the everyman poetics of John Prine, the song presents an odd, acoustic reverie of love and faith sung from the perspective of a reformed "guilt-ridden Catholic boy."

With Snider commanding Saturday night, expect The Dame to be packed and the bar to be doing brisk business. Snider's contingency should note he also will be performing tonight at Headliners Music Hall, 1386 Lexington Road, Louisville (9 p.m., \$14).

Opening both performances will be Memphis songwriter **Cory Branan**, whose music recalls Prine's low-throttle works and Paul Westerberg's more wistful acoustic yarns.