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### Pollstar Daily News Service

## The Long Haul: Bob Schneider

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*Bob Schneider has been a staple of the Austin music scene for almost two decades. But even with his veteran status, Schneider and his band have to make a living by touring without huge publicity, radio play or record support. As a solo artist or as a leader of The Scabs, Joe Rockhead and Ugly Americans, Schneider has played amphitheatres (with Dave Matthews Band) and arenas (Dixie Chicks). He's won awards, packed Austin clubs and sold 15,000 copies of an album from a single record store. But, ultimately, he's still quietly slogging it out on the road, selling an average of 350 tickets a show. It's life on a budget, but he's figured out how to live this way for a very long time. That's why Schneider – in likely the biggest feature he's ever seen in an international publication – has a lot to say about how to stick around.*

We just did the Dixie Chicks tour and did really well opening up for them. We got really good responses from the crowds. Then we went back through those markets and I really didn't notice the difference in the number of people who came out to see us play. We'd go to the clubs and maybe five, 10 people from the Dixie Chicks came out to see us. But I think a lot of those people go out to a show every couple years. The Dixie Chicks come, and these folks might go see them, or maybe see U2. It's a once-a-year event. But then there's people who go see live music, who really enjoy it, and those tend to be the people who come see me.

So those people are going to keep coming no matter what. Granted, it's not a lot of people but, if we play Cleveland or Columbus, Ohio, there might be 200 people in the club and 160 of them drove two or three hours because it's the only place I'm playing in the area. I have no idea what's going on with "touring" or what kind of business other people are doing. All I know is I've got a group of people who'll come see me play no matter what.

If you sell 8 million records, you're going to have some money in the bank. And if all of a sudden touring becomes unprofitable, then you're going to stop because you live in a nice house, you married some super-hot girl that you met on the road somewhere – you're set up. I basically make ends meet as a musician. If I stop playing, I gotta get a job at Barnes & Noble, which I don't want to do. So I have a



lot of incentive to keep touring.

And the way that we tour, it's not horrible. We lease a bus, we have a hotel room so we can shower every day, we all sleep on the bus and there's no catering, no fancy treatment. We're breaking down our own equipment at the end of the night, we're cutting corners but it's what we love to do. There's this expression, "I play for free, it's the waiting around that you pay me for." That's really what it is. There's a lot of drudgery that people don't see when you're playing, especially when you're touring. Then you get to play and that can be fun.

It's a great way to make a living. I don't think anybody on this bus besides maybe me would do what we're doing if they sold 8 million records. Maybe, but they'd be doing it in style like Paul Stanley. Everyone would have their own Star bus and we'd be staying in four-star hotels every night.

We sell two-disc performance CDs at the end of the night. It allows me to tour. Before we did this, we relied on tour support and that stopped four or five years ago. Marc Broussard told me about it, so I know he does it and I know some of my friends do it as well because I told them about it. And that's made all the difference for me. We usually charge \$15 to \$20 a show and the production costs at some of these venues are so high that \$15 won't cover it. So we've been selling these discs at the end of the night, which people really love, but it essentially turns a \$15 show into a \$30 show.

The other thing is I'm constantly changing the show from day to day whereas a lot of groups will put on a show to promote a record. Maybe that's the difference: they put out a record, then do a tour based on that record and they kind of go hand-in-hand. They put a lot of money into publicity and they try to knock one out of the park and try to make millions of dollars on a record and touring merchandise. With me, I'm a journeyman and this is what I do for a living. I'm just playing all the time, trying to build up a fan base, trying to get people familiar with what I do. I don't get any publicity. The only press I've ever had was a write-up in People magazine for my first or second record – a little blurb in 2002 – and a mention in Esquire about the same time. I've never been in any of the music magazines. Anywhere I go, a good quarter or half of the audience is from Texas or heard about me when they were visiting there. I'm just very homegrown.

People find me and then, all of a sudden, I'm their "thing." People really love that – that you're their group and nobody else knows about you.

-- Bob Schneider

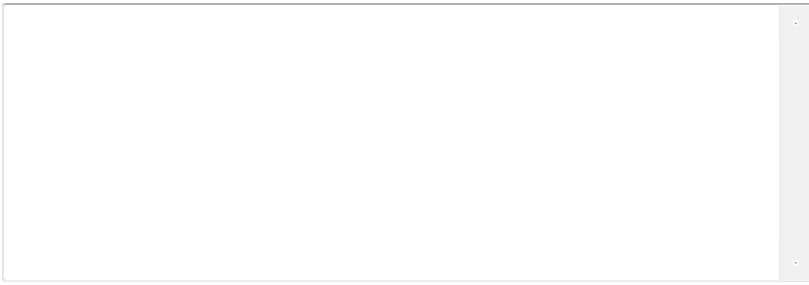
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