



Selections from
ROAD ATLAS

1998-2011

*This CD is a collection of recordings culled from the eight tour-only CDs created and self-released by Calexico from 1998 - 2011. These CDs were sold only at Calexico's live performances, but never in record stores. In the fall of 2011, all of the Tour CDs were issued as a limited edition vinyl box set. Included in the box set was a book which contained extensive liner notes by Fred Mills. Below is an excerpt from Fred's writings which provides additional insights into the tour-only CDs and the vinyl box set from which this **Selections From Road Atlas 1998-2011 CD** was derived.*

*Excerpt from **ROAD ATLAS** Foreward*

You hold what the members of Calexico describe as their *Road Atlas*, and as a kind of alternate musical history of the band, it makes for quite a trip. Not that the group's "official" releases—the Calexico albums and EPs on Quarterstick/City Slang, along with numerous remixes, contributions to films, and collaborations with folks such as Victoria Williams, Iron & Wine, DePedro, Neko Case and Rainer Ptacek—aren't richly rewarding. But it's not until you take in the entirety of the group's sprawling discography that the sights, smells, textures and timbres of the Calexico experience fully reveal themselves. (Hold that thought.)

In another era we might have called these albums Official Bootlegs, a slightly winking term somebody in the music business coined to designate releases that the artist's label viewed as promotional in nature and therefore carried a certain degree of record collector cachet. However, with the advent of the internet and the ubiquity of indie labels, not to mention the DIY imperative of being as self-reliant as possible, the Official Bootleg became the Tour Album, with bands pressing up records they could sell from the merch table (and if any were left after the tour, through the website). It ain't a shabby way to supplement the income flow, and fans just go nuts for these often limited edition titles.



Calexico was definitely ahead of the curve when they founded their Our Soil, Our Strength label in order to release 1999's *Road Map*; apparently they'd gotten the idea from the Dirty Three, with whom they toured in the late nineties, and they subsequently turned the concept into an artform. While Tour Albums are, nowadays, pretty much considered business as usual for bands, alongside the buttons, teeshirts and beer cozies you can buy at shows, you'd be hard-pressed to find many artists who can claim eight such releases, each vastly different from one another. Plus, as you're about to discover—or already know, if you own the original eight CDs—each title reveals, in its own way, a unique facet of the shifting, evolving Calexico personality. The quality of composition and musicianship across these records is as high as that evidenced on the regular ones, and it's perhaps a point of pride among Calexico founders Joey Burns and John Convertino that Christof Ellinghaus, their boss at City Slang, was so impressed that he wanted to put them out in Europe on his own label. "Calexico never intended these albums to be in the shops," notes Burns. "We told him we wanted to maintain these albums to be released for fun, for the fans—and for ourselves."

By way of a personal note, then, I'll just add that I was living in Tucson when *Road Map* came out, and I remember Joey dropping by the place I worked at to give me a copy. My collector antenna twitching, I sensed it was something different. I was right, for tour releases such as this are the band-fan equivalent of a secret handshake. Those who know that handshake and share in the ritual will forever enjoy a special bond.

Fred Mills, Asheville, NC
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