

Reviews

Latest release by drivin' 'n' cryin' recalls old R.E.M., shows promise

By Keith Spera
STAFF WRITER

Knowing full well that it's been said about at least 100 other bands, I'm going to say that drivin' 'n' cryin' sound a bit like R.E.M.

Or rather, they do sometimes. Or better yet, they sometimes sound like R.E.M. used to sound, back before the "Stand" days.

Saying that a group sounds like R.E.M. is no longer all that descriptive, for it has become the musical equivalent of saying that some sort of meat "tastes like chicken."

R.E.M. has come to be the standard by which all other folksy guitar rock bands are judged, just like chicken is the meat with which everything from rattlesnake steaks to frog legs is compared.

Still, drivin' 'n' cryin' have more of a legitimate claim to that description than most other bands do.

It's no surprise that some of their just-released third album, *Mystery Road*, has an R.E.M. feel to it. Both bands hail from the same part of the country (R.E.M. is from Athens and drivin' 'n' cryin' are from Atlanta, just down the road).

The "R.E.M. office" is thanked on the back of the record. R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck is credited as having played the electric dulcimer on *Mystery Road*. Buren Fowler, drivin' 'n' cryin's guitarist, formerly worked as an R.E.M. guitar technician.

On tracks such as "House for Sale" and the excellent acoustic "With the People," the much missed sound of R.E.M. classics like *Reckoning* and *Life's Rich Pageant* is resurrected.

But then, drivin' 'n' cryin' whips out the hard-rock riffs, all drawn-out and grungy. "Toy Never Played With," "Wild Dog Moon" and "Syllables" could have been on a mid-70s Aerosmith album.

The riffs are right, but vocalist Kevin Kinney is no Steven Tyler. Tyler's raw, hoarse voice can hang with Aerosmith's guitar sound, but Kinney's voice is just too high and smooth. It comes across as strained and extremely unnatural when he tries to go down in the gutter with the guitar.

His voice is suited just fine for the rest of the songs. On "Honeysuckle Blue," he uses just a bit of coarseness, la Jon Bon Jovi, to stand vocally above the song's blend of acous-



Drivin' 'n' cryin' (l to r): Jeff Sullivan, Tim Nielson, Buren Fowler and Kevin Kinney.

tic and electric guitar. He trades notes with a fiddle on the album's opening cut, "Ain't It Strange," coming across at just the right level to complement the fid-

man comin' over tonight," she asks her son in the first verse. Not an unreasonable request, except that this man is "the seventh one in seven days." The obedient son heads out

about Southern living (we hear about the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Chattahoochee river, and old men running and lovers kissing and such).

The *Mystery Road* tunes on which the band tries to be something they aren't detract from the rest of the album. This band is still young, however, and they're still trying to find their niche, so a little experimentation is only natural.

A Rolling Stone magazine poll of college-music programmers called drivin' 'n' cryin' one of the nation's nine most promising bands, a vote of confidence that indicates this band has some people out there who know they can make it.

Judging from the high points on *Mystery Road*, they can. When this band does what it does best, and when Kinney stays within his vocal range, they can come up with rock 'n' roll songs that are full of feeling and emotion, with some not-too-shabby musicianship thrown in to boot.

They're not breaking new ground, but they're planting something pretty good in the old plot.

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tle's strings and give the song an overall mountain-music sound.

Besides R.E.M. pickin' and Aerosmith strummin', drivin' 'n' cryin' also take a stab at sounding like Johnny Cash, with the rolling-train rhythm, tale-of-the-Old-West lyrics and deep-voice vocals of "Peacemaker."

"Straight to Hell" is a fun little tongue-in-cheek sing-along tale of a hypocritical momma and her coming-of-age son.

"Son, won't you go outside/ I got a

club Caravan of Dreams on Dec. 25-26, 1987. *Live* is nine songs of energetic rhythm and blues and rockabilly. This is the kind of album that sounds right at home with recordings by Texas blues legends such as T-Bone Walker and Freddie King.

Live has so many great moments it would be difficult to list them all here. For starters, there's the hillbilly rock 'n' roll of "Hot Dog" (a Buck Owens song). The rockabilly guitar lines of Colegrove and Bruton sound as authentic as anything ever put on vinyl in the 1950s.

One of my favorites is the Colegrove-penned "Lips 'n' Fingers Bar-B-Que," an uptempo piece of rhythm and blues in which Colegrove sings of the kind of place where one can go to be satisfied "on red-hot blues or chicken fried."

Colegrove's vocals combined with the band's jump and jive sounds are just right for the kind of place where the food is fried and the music is loud.

Other examples of the Juke Jumpers' blend of blues/rockabilly are "Rocket In My Pocket" and their version of Jimmy McCracklin's "Georgia Slop."

Bruton best shows his guitar skills on songs such as "Somebody's Been Rockin' My Boat" and

Texas tradition of rockabilly, blues comes to life on veteran Fort Worth band's new album, *Live*

Live!
The Juke Jumpers
Amazing Records
***1/2

By Shane Hall
REVIEWER

The Juke Jumpers, with their combination of rhythm and blues, rockabilly and jazz, virtually personify the eclecticism that is Texas music.

For more than 10 years the Fort Worth band has performed its style of Texas rhythm and blues.

The band's lineup consists of Jim Colegrove, guitar, vocals; Sumter Bruton, guitar; Craig Simecheck, keyboards; Jim Milan, bass; Rene Ozuna, saxophone; Robert Harwell, saxophone; and Doyle Bramhall, drums.

Like so many blues bands, the best way to hear these guys is in a live setting. Unfortunately for music fans in Bryan-College Station, the Juke Jumpers have not yet made it down here.

So you can either go up to Fort Worth and see what you've been missing, or pick up a copy of the band's third Amazing Records album, *Live*.

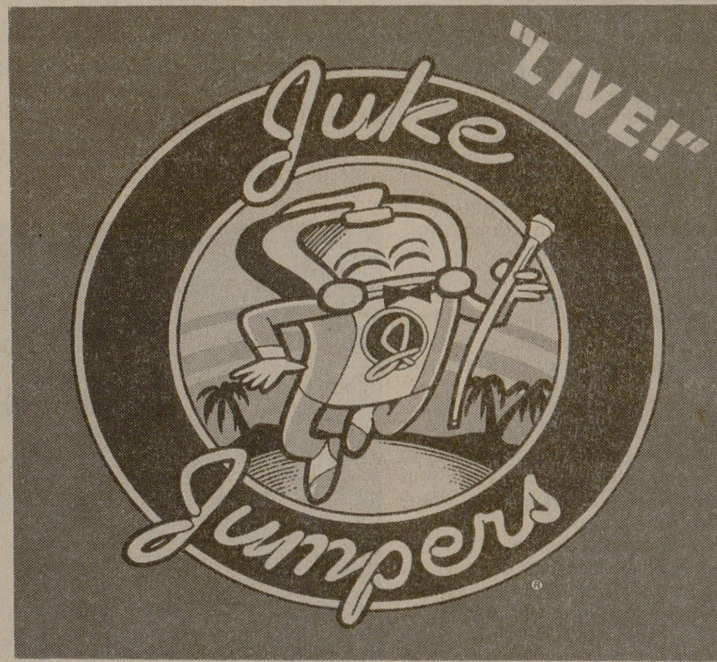
Recorded at Fort Worth night-

the yuletide season blues of "Merry Christmas Baby." On the latter, he plays a fluid, jazzy solo much in the vein of Texas bluesman T-Bone Walker, whom Bruton cites as a major influence.

Live closes with the roadhouse blues of "Bluebird Boogie," the

guys' musical salute to the Bluebird, a Fort Worth blues nightclub with a history that dates to the 1940s.

For Texas music that is a good time from start to finish, *Live* is the album to get.



Swingle Singers bring orchestra to stage, using voices, not instruments

By Suzanne Hoechstetter
REVIEWER

Imagine singing the theme from "Peter Gunn." The tune that was made popular a few years ago by The Art of Noise actually was sung by eight musicians with incredible voices at Saturday night's final OPAS presentation for the year.

The Swingle Singers gave a performance that ended the season on a high note — sometimes an unbelievably high note.

The Swingle Singers is a group from England that specializes in scat singing, a technique used by many jazz musicians when they sing meaningless lines like, "Do be do da ma da."

Many of the songs combined barbershop-style harmonizing with jazz. The Swingle Singers sing the lyrics to classical, modern and folk songs, and they sing the instrumentation to each piece.

For instance, when they sang "El Paisenito," an Argentinian folk song, two Swingle members sang the lyrics while the other six each "played" one string on the guitar.

If you closed your eyes, it really sounded like a guitar, but this energetic show was as fun to watch as it was to listen to.

The performance was one of pure entertainment that the performers seemed to enjoy as much as the audience. The fast-paced show included dancing, acting, comedy, and of course, singing. They barely paused between songs, and the show ended all too soon.

The group has performed with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Houston Symphony Orchestra, but Saturday's performance was a *cappella*.

It was like watching a human symphony. The most entertaining piece was Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture," the final song of the night. Singer Andrew Busher got the audience laughing when he introduced the number by saying, "I'm sure you'll be relieved to know we've shortened it a bit. We've also had to do some special arrangements since Tchai-

kovsky wrote it for a symphony...and a brass band...and canons...and church bells." Since Rudder Auditorium had no symphony or cannons that night, the Swingle Singers made up for that lack by singing those parts.

The singers reproduced the violin section by wagging their tongues up and down between their lips. They "swished" to create sounds like cymbals. The bell tolling gave Busher a chance to get another laugh from the audience when he acted like the Hunchback of Notre Dame while creating the bell sounds.

When all these unusual musical methods were combined it really sounded like a live symphony was playing instead of eight vocalists. The audience was on its feet before the overture was finished.

After a minute or two, the Swingle Singers reappeared onstage for the encore, which was a medley of American folk songs arranged by the groups founder, Ward Swingle.

The program included a variety of songs from all times and genres. The first half of the featured mostly classical and folk songs. The first song was Mozart's overture to "The Marriage of Figaro." A few minutes later they sang "Coventry Carol," an English folk song that allowed the group to show off their talents for harmonizing.

The songs progressed to some by more contemporary composers like Irving Berlin's "Putting on the Ritz" and "It's a Lovely Day Today!" in which finger snapping made the sounds of a tap dance routine.

After intermission they sang "Fool on the Hill" and "Lady Madonna," both by the Beatles. The guys in the group then gave a special performance of "Naturally" by Huey Lewis that was arranged by Swingle member Ben Parry.

All the Swingle Singers members have conservatory training. Members Parry and Jonathan Rathbone arranged most of the music for the group.

The concert was a perfect finale for the 1988-89 OPAS season. With songs by Mozart to Berlin to the Beatles, there was something for everyone to enjoy.

'Hope and Glory' looks at war from child's comic perspective

"Hope and Glory," a 1987 Academy Award nominee for best picture, will be Tuesday night's feature in the MSC Aggie Cinema international series.

Directed by John Boorman ("Excalibur," "Deliverance"), "Hope and Glory" is a humorous and moving look at World War II through the eyes of a child.

The film follows the experiences of the Rohan family, an English family coping with the war. For Billy Rohan and his younger sister, Sue, the war seems like a party. Billy and his friends collect shrapnel, play in bombed-out houses and smash up any intact objects in them. For them, the war provides an outlet for fun.

In a scene near the end of the film, we see the children jumping

for joy and cheering at the sight of their school, which is on fire after being hit by a German bomb.

A scene where the Germans bomb London sums up the child's eye view of the war. In the dark background we see homes wrapped in flames.

Dawn, Billy's older sister, calls for him to "come see the fireworks."

However, in showing the war through a child's eye, Boorman never forgets war's truly tragic nature. We see homes destroyed and families lost. Overall, however, "Hope and Glory" is a lighthearted look at life during the war. There are numerous comic moments that make for an enjoyable experience.

"Hope and Glory" will be presented Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium. Admission is \$2.50.

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