

Cowboy Junkies' music has been referred to as a mixture of Emmylou Harris and the Velvet Underground.



By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Cow punk died, thankfully. No longer do we have British guys in Stetsons and spurs who wouldn't know Merle Haggard, if they tripped over his boots in Muskegon. Today, we have the Cowboy Junkies. The Cowboy Junkies are not imitators. The music is real. When lead singer Margo Timmins applies her ethereal voice to Patsy Cline's "Walking at Midnight," she does so out of respect. Covers of Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," Waylon Jennings' "Dreaming My Dreams With You" along with Cline's "Walking at Midnight" are included on the Toronto band's latest album "The Trinity Sessions" (RCA). As is Lou Reed's "Sweet Jane," who Mr. Velvet Underground himself said was the "most authentic version" he has heard. The ability to perform other great's music is equalled by the Cowboy Junkies' moody but hypnotic original material.

"When you place your material against an old classic," said Timmins, "it takes a lot of nerve. But we do have faith in our music." COWBOY JUNKIES' music has been referred to as a mixture of Emmylou Harris and the Velvet Underground, also as post-modern melancholy. Timmins doesn't deny nor validate such descriptions. Instead, the Cowboy Junkies happily mix in the murky. Country is part of that, so are blues and folk. The roots trip the Cowboy Junkies are, on though, has no stops or an end. "It's a lot more than playing country covers," said Timmins, dismissing the notion the Cowboy Junkies are a country band. "It's a whole lifestyle. We're just urban kids." Urban kids who are searching for the core of what makes a song by Waylon Jennings or Lou Reed click. To help find that, the Cowboy Junkies went with the bare minimum in the studio. "The Trinity Sessions" was recorded on a digital two-track using one microphone. The Church of the Holy Trinity in Toronto was the site.

No overdubs or song edits took place, simply 14 hours of live recording. Producer of "The Trinity Sessions," Peter Moore, suggested the band go into the church. He had similar success recording the Toronto Symphony Orchestra there. Critical raves have followed the disc and a band that only formed two years ago is suddenly dealing with instant success. ALREADY, Timmins said the band is working on new covers for the next album. Rolling Stones' "Dead Flowers" and Neil Young's "Powder Finger" are a couple of tunes that might find their way onto the next album. One they scrapped was Bruce Springsteen's "Thunder Road." Said Timmins with resignation, "I don't know how Springsteen writes his songs." The philosophy behind the cover songs is that it allows people to see what direction the band is headed in, Timmins said. Also, it offers a gauge for the Cowboy Junkies' own material.

Nonetheless, Timmins is careful that they're not misinterpreted. "They're not taken lightly," she said. "We realize we're taking someone else's music and bringing it to life again. We take a great deal of care with someone else's music." When I try to sing someone else's song, I want to express it my own way without taking away from how they originally did it," she added. "That's a difficult balance." For instance, recording Cline's "Walking at Midnight" proved to be a herculean task. The late singer's vocal rhythm was difficult to reproduce. By adding a 12-bar blues format, Timmins put her own signature on the number. Timmins said she was "blown away" when hearing Patsy Cline for the first time. Apparently, she isn't the only Canadian with reverence for Cline. Cline's long has been proclaimed the reincarnation of the late country singer. But any comparisons between Timmins and Cline stops there. BUT LIKE Cline, Timmins can relate to what it's like for a Canadian artist in a quest for success.

Making music is Mack's penchant

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

For guitarist Lonnie Mack, music isn't a science. It's a passion. Anyone who has listened to his latest LP, "Roadhouses and Dance Halls" (Epic), would agree. The album is rich with full-bodied guitar numbers whittled to various musical styles. Blues, rock'n'roll, folk and country — it's all there to sample. Mack said there is no formula or equation. "All you have to do is play old rock 'n' roll the way it was taught and they can call it what they want to," said the Indiana native, who will play Saturday, Feb. 4, at Sully's in Dearborn. "There's too many labels in music just like there's too many makes of cars."



For guitarist Lonnie Mack, music isn't a science. It's "either rock 'n' roll or country."

Mack on his debut album on Epic has been able to bridge the gap between rock 'n' roll and country. "Hard Life" is a song fit for any saloon south of the Mason-Dixon line, while numbers like "Sexy Ways" and "High Blood Pressure" get the rhythm and blues blood pumping. Mack's lean toward country is understandable. He grew up in rural southeast Indiana, listening to and learning from the music. His mother taught him his first guitar chords at age 6. FROM THERE, Mack heard guitarists like T-Bone Walker and Elmore James on the radio. At 15, he fronted his own band that toured Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. But it wasn't until he was doing session work with the likes of James Brown, Hank Ballard and blues guitarist Freddie King that Mack really began patenting his soon-to-be-revered guitar style. When Mack cut his own records for Fraternity Records out of Cincinnati, electric guitar instrumentals like "Memphis," "Wham!" and "Chicken Pickin'" were considered at the forefront of the new rock-blues era of the 1960s. One reviewer later labeled Mack's album, "Wham of That Memphis Man," a classic. That piqued Elektra records interest enough to sign Mack in 1968. He made a couple of albums and did some session work with the label's other top property at the time, The Doors. Mack also worked as an arts and repertoire man for a time but gave it up. "That wasn't my gig," he said. His gig has always been playing music. In the mid 1970s, Mack signed with Capitol. After a few crit-

ically acclaimed albums, he hit the roadhouse circuit in Texas and Canada with another upstart guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. The two later cut an album, "Strike Like Lightning," in 1981 for Alligator Records. "WE BOTH played blues and rock 'n' roll," Mack said. "I'm sure he learned some stuff from me at first. But I learned a few licks from him, also." Vaughan, along with Eric Clapton and Duane Allman, have all credited Mack as an influence in their rock-blues guitar styles. Mack said he hasn't even hit his peak yet. "I'm still learning new stuff," he said. "I'm playing things now I wasn't able to play a couple of years ago." Many say his latest album is his best work to date. The first cut off "Roadhouses and Dance Halls" perhaps sums up Mack best: "Two Rock for Country, Two Country for Rock." But he's not too far off for some recently found national success. Along with the album, Mack has been a hot commodity on the club circuit. He's also scheduled to be a guest on "Saturday Night Live" in March. Mack has paid his dues. This latest wave is something he's just taking in stride. "We'll be out there just doing it," he said. "There's not a side of me that wants to be a superstar. I just want to play music so people can have a good time." Lonnie Mack will perform on Saturday, Feb. 4, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.

IN CONCERT

- **DOG SOLDIER**
Dog Soldier will perform tonight at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.
- **POSSUMS**
The Possums will perform tonight at Rick's Cafe, 308 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.
- **COWBOY JUNKIES**
The Cowboy Junkies will perform Tuesday, Jan. 31, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.
- **CARUSO**
Caruso will perform Wednesday-Saturday, Feb. 1-4, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.
- **EKK-A-MOUSE**
Eck-A-Mouse will perform Wednesday, Feb. 1, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.
- **THE DIFFERENCE**
The Difference will perform Thursday, Feb. 2, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.
- **SOUP JAM**
Jugglers & Thieves and the Jam Rag will present, "Soup Jam," a benefit for St. Christine Soup Kitchen and St. Patrick's Food Program, Friday, Feb. 3, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Bands performing will include jugglers & Thieves, Funhouse, Trash Brats and Robt Roy. Doors will open at 9 p.m. The first band will go on stage at 10 p.m.
- **RAGGAMUFFIN**
Raggamuffin will perform Friday, Feb. 3, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, off Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For more information, call 975-8555.
- **THE SUSPECTS**
The Suspects will perform Friday, Feb. 3, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.
- **SENSITIVE BIG GUYS**
Sensitive Big Guys will perform with special guest, Mr. X, Friday, Feb. 3, at Psyche's Lounge, 3022 Canfield, east of Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 872-8924.
- **SOCIAL FABRIC**
Social Fabric will perform Friday, Feb. 3, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. For information, call 245-9760.
- **3-D INVISIBLES**
The 3-D Invisibles will perform Saturday, Feb. 4, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, off Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For more information, call 975-8555.
- **MARTHA REEVE**
Martha Reeve will perform Saturday, Feb. 4, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.
- **WALK THE DOGMA**
Walk the Dogma will perform with Broken Yoyo on Saturday, Feb. 4, at Alvin's, 9756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 833-2222.

- Here are the top 10 songs receiving air play on WAYN-AM, campus station of Wayne State University.
- 1. "Kissability," Soke Youth.
- 2. "Diana," Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.
- 3. "State," Radon Acid.
- 4. "Cult of Personality," Living Colour.
- 5. "Wrong Again," All.
- 6. "Persuasion," Inside Out.
- 7. "Birth, School, Work, Death," Godfathers.
- 8. "Punk Rock Girl," Dead Milkmen.
- 9. "No Fun," Vertical Pillows.
- 10. "So American," Jank Monkeys.

COUNTRY

- Here are the top 10 songs receiving air play on WCXI-AM 1130.
- 1. "Song of the South," Alabama.
- 2. "Let's Get Started," If We Gonna Break My Heart, Statler Brothers.
- 3. "Spanish Eyes," Willie Nelson.
- 4. "I Sang Dixie," Dwight Yoakam.
- 5. "Chase of Heart," The Judds.
- 6. "That Old Wheel," Johnny Cash.
- 7. "Don't Waste It on the Blues," Gene Watson.
- 8. "Don't You Ever Get Tired (of Hurling Me)," Ronnie Milam.
- 9. "Highway Robbery," Tanya Tucker.
- 10. "Deeper Than A Holler," Randy Travis.

REVIEWS

BEST OF THE BUBS

— various artists

In the fall of 1987, Musician Magazine asked unsigned bands across the country to send in two songs. A year and 2,000 tapes later, "Best of the BUBS" (Warner) is the final result. And, indeed, what a result. Judging by the 10 bands featured here, American music will be at the forefront for a long time to come. Groups appear to be getting back to their roots for the most part, honing simple melodies that have a certain honesty about them. Thankfully, we are spared any heavy metal rehash or punk sploofies. This is just well-played, and at times, thought-provoking music. Part of the credit for that goes to judges Elvis Costello, Mitchell Fromm, Mark Knopfler and T Bone Burnett. And they all had no problem coming to an agreement on the best song on the compilation—"Frost Porch" by Lonesome Val out of New York. Stunning is an apt description for this Patsy Clineque number, which



LITTLE PIGS, LITTLE PIGS

—Angry Red Planet

Cynicism and energy are brought forth here for quite a lethal mix. Yes, it may be said that Angry Red Planet is a line in the first number, "Ghost of the Crab Nebula," gives a hint. "When I was a little boy, up in my momma's womb/I didn't want to leave that place for all this doom and gloom..." Hey, we never said "Little Pigs, Little Pigs" was a party album. Angry Red Planet plays loud and fast and then fast and loud. There's not much variation in the musicianship here. Punk, yep, that's what they call it. Except Angry Red Planet really has something to say here. Maybe it's blind patriotism ("Rockyride") or just growing old ("Pasture Time"), but it's all here. Life, yep, that's what they call it. But, hey guys, intelligent lyrics are one thing. It would be nice if we could hear them being sung all the time. Without liner notes, the average Joe or Josephine would be lost in



space listening to this disc. For one, the snarling guitars certainly add spice, although they become overbearing at times. They also tend to drown out the vocals, which are not exactly Frank Sinatra at the Copa anyway. Nonetheless, the rest with which this band tackles its music is to be commended. The approach, if anything, is quite refreshing. The more one listens to this disc, the more it will grow on him. Maybe it's a lyric here or a guitar line there, but in the long haul "Little Pigs, Little Pigs" stands out. Good, yep, that's what they call it. — Larry O'Connor

HIT SINGLES

— various artists

Fresh from its 40th anniversary party, and flush with the success of its seven-volume history of rhythm and blues set, Atlantic Records continues sweeping out its closet with this two-volume set spotlighting its pop hits — running the gamut from Bob Dylan to Debbie Gibson. The first volume, including material from the mid-'60s through early '70s, is the more indispensable of the pair, if only for its three Rascals hits, "Good Lovin'," "Groovin'" and "People Got to Be Free." But any set that also includes Darius "Mack the Knife" and "Splash Splash," Dusty Springfield's "Son of a Preacher Man" and Blues Image's "Ride Captain Ride" is a welcome addition — even if it also includes Nino Tempo and April Stevens' dippy "Deep Purple." Much less valuable is volume two, which covers the 1980s. The sole hard-to-find gem is Phil Collins' "Against All Odds" movie theme and that song's value depends upon one's opinion of Collins.



Still, INXS' smoky "Need You Tonight," Foreigner's "I Want to Know What Love Is," Genesis' "Invisible Touch," even Gibson's "Footloose Beat" are first-rate pop rock. And each, of course, was a major hit. The best news, however, is that Atlantic is planning to release a three-volume history of the label's hard-rock releases and follow-up rhythm-and-blues and soul collections are planned for this year. And musical highlights of last year's Madison Square Garden birthday bash may yet surface on an official company release. Once disdained of its past, Atlantic now celebrates it. And for those who grew up listening to Atlantic's rock and soul, the party goes on. — Wayne Peat