

GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

Country band BR5-49 mixes punk, honky-tonk

By CHRISTINA FRUOCO STAFF WRITER



Coming to town: BR5-49 - from left, "Smilin'" Jay McDowell, Chuck Mead, Gary Bennett, Don Herron, "Hawk" Shaw Wilson.

Tradition runs deep in the roots of the country band BR5-49. That could mean traditional country, old school punk, or roots rock.

"We take our influences from everything from Bob Wills and Merle Haggard to Bob Marley and The Clash," upright bassist "Smilin'" Jay McDowell told Pollstar magazine. "A couple of us in the band have been right there with all those bands, GBH and Minor Threat and things like that."

Calling from soundcheck in Connecticut, guitarist Don Herron further explained. "We're big music fans in other words. It's not like we sit back and say we only listen to this, Bob Wills, Jimmie Rodgers, and Hank Williams. Some of them (the band members) are really into The Ramones and that."

BR5-49 took those influences and rolled them all together for "BR5-49," its debut studio album for Arista Records, Nashville.

The evolution of the band members' tastes are traced in the honky-tonk song "Little Ramona (Gone Hillbilly Nuts)" where lead singer/electric and acoustic guitarist sings: "She done traded in her Doo (Dr. Martens boots) for kicker boots/Safety pin shirts and men's wear suits/Her hair's grown out and it's piled up high/She only shows her tattoos one at a time/She ain't ashamed of the way she was/She hears old Hank and she can't get enough/Her punk rock records are gatherin' dust/Because little Ramona's gone hillbilly nuts."

"Chuck wrote the thing and he pretty much knew some people like that - even himself. Actually I think all of us listened to this stuff (traditional country) when we first started playing. Our families had a big influence on what we play and what we listen to," Herron said.

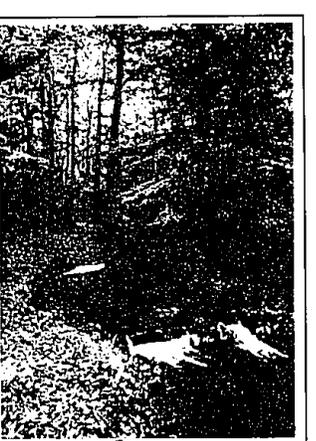
"We went through that adolescent period of wanting to do your own thing but then we realized that mom and dad's music wasn't all that bad. It all comes around again when you're in your (traditional country) when we first started playing. Our families had a big influence on what we play and what we listen to," Herron said.

"It's been amazing really. When we played in

Nashville we had a lot of college people come out to you, know that people who listen to music in general. There's some of them that may not be country fans but they come out and hear us. Then there's people who listen to this stuff. It's pretty neat to see," Herron said.

BR5-49 - which also includes acoustic guitarist/vocalist Gary Bennett and drummer "Hawk" Shaw Wilson - and special guest Charlie Major perform at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 29, at Diamonds and Spurs, 25 S. Saginaw St. Tickets are \$10 for the 21 and older show. For more information, call (810) 334-4409.

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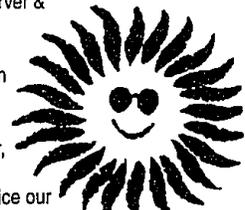
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