

## **The Starline Rhythm Boys**

***Honky Tonk Livin'*, 2002**

### **Tin Town**

**This Vermont trio's 2000 debut, "Better Luck Is a Barroom Away," was one of the best-kept secrets of that year; sounding not unlike High Noon performing Wayne Hancock songs. Not surprising, considering the band's ties to both acts.**

**The band's sophomore release is even better. The lead-off track, "Masquerade For Heartache" is reminiscent of the band's approach on the first album; about four-fifths honky-tonk and one-fifth rockabilly, an approach that also serves them well on a few other numbers like "One Small Favor."**

**Still, the band varies the formula occasionally, adding a few other instruments here and there and fiddling with styles where appropriate. "Give Me a Double" is reminiscent of Buddy Holly, while "Smart Thinkin'" is a powerful rockabilly number. The cover of Tiny Bradshaw's "Walking the Chalk Line," with its muted trumpet, is reminiscent of bassist Bill Bratcher's old employer Hancock (who contributes an unreleased number, "I'll Keep Movin' On"). And a few numbers like "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "Where They Ring That Bell" recast the group quite nearly as a very credible bluegrass band.**

**Best of all, though, is "Temptation to Ask," a medium-paced shuffle with a classic melody and soaring vocals from vocalist Danny Coane and the band.**

**The production by High Noon guitarist Sean Mencher is top-notch; warm without necessarily sounding retro, and rich without sounding cluttered or fussy, with Mencher also turning in some fine nylon-string guitar work on "The Tavern Parking Lot" and lending them his "Prelude to the Blues" (which also turns up on the new High Noon album).**

**Quite probably the most infectious indie country album you'll hear this year.**

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**- Jon Johnson**