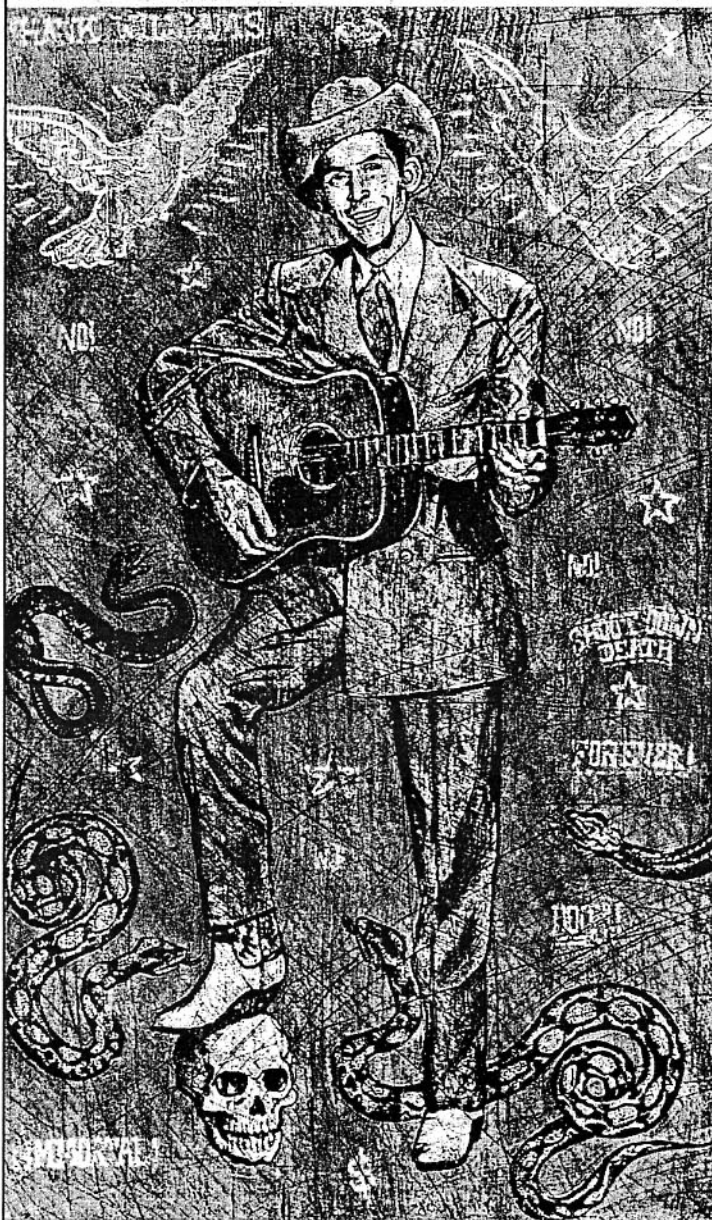


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BURLINGTON, VT

STARLINE RHYTHM BOYS:

'Good 'n' country bounce'

The classic Seeburg jukebox anchors a room at Billy Bratcher's house, accompanied by a vintage Merle Haggard poster. The jukebox tunes give this shrine its true meaning: Charlie Feathers jousts with Bill Monroe, Kitty Wells, Louis Jordan, and the Orioles. The music of all these artists echoes in the sound of the Starline Rhythm Boys.

Upright bassist Bratcher, lead vocalist/guitarist Danny Coane, and lead guitarist/harmony vocalist Al Lemery capture that sound on *Better Luck Is A Barroom Away*, their debut disc on Tin Town Records. Produced by Sean Mencer of rockabilly band High Noon, the album has the warm presence of George Jones' Bradley Barn sessions.

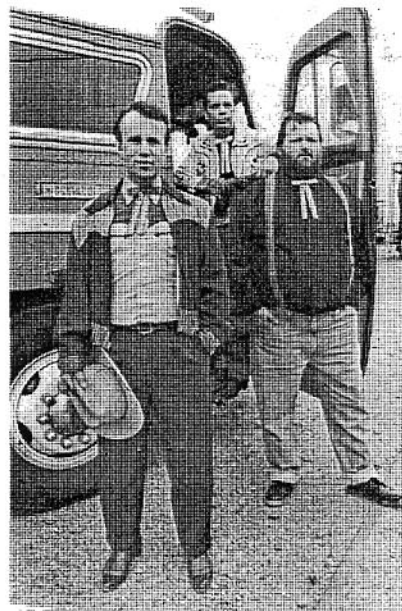
The Bratcher-penned title cut rings like an instant classic, with Coane and Lemery recalling the Bakersfield heyday of Buck Owens and Don Rich. Other guests on the album include Cartwright Thompson on pedal steel, Gene White Jr. on fiddle and mandolin, and Gary Primich on harmonica. Rose Lucas, billed as the "Starline Rhythm Girl" in the credits, takes a lead vocal turn on "Life's Heart Is Unfair".

Bratcher wrote six of the sixteen songs, with Coane chipping in one tune. The rest are covers from the likes of Johnny Paycheck, Lattie Moore and Don Gibson. One cut was co-written by Pat Gallagher and Leroy Preston, the latter a veteran of *Asleep At The Wheel* who now resides in Vermont and contributed liner notes to the album.

Though Bratcher spent some time in the '90s touring with Texas neo-traditionalist Wayne

Hancock, his creative zeal was first stirred in the mid-1980s by Jack Smith, a Rhode Islander who still frequents Northeast haunts with his Rockabilly Planet band. "It was real music and I was inspired to live it and write it," Bratcher says.

Lemery and Coane share similar perspectives. Lemery forsook Hendrix and Cream to embrace his father's favorites: Merle, Buck and Eddy Arnold. Haggard's guitarist, Roy Nichols,



THE BOYS, ON THE BUS

caught his ear, as did the Kentucky Colonels' (and later the Byrds') Clarence White. But it was Commander Cody's Bill Kirchen who really turned him around. "Kirchen had such an old-fashioned sound, but with a modern ring to it that I really liked," Lemery recalls.

Coane picked the banjo, then switched to guitar as a teenage bluegrass inspired by clear-channel AM radio broadcasts from the Wheeling Jamboree and Cincinnati's Wayne Rainey. He soaked up Flatt & Scruggs, Red Smiley and the Osbornes when they toured Vermont.

"The bluesy, good 'n' country bounce of Jimmy Martin grabbed me, and I always liked the stuff with a Harlan Howard feel," Coane says. "The soul of the music in the '50s and '60s was the lyrics. Nowadays you have to filter out a lot to find that." — TOM AYRES (1330 North Ave., Burlington, VT 05401)