

# Mp3 The Snakehandlers - Country Rock Is Neither



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A mix of rock energy, punk attitude and country songwriting that is as unique as the players themselves. 6 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Country Rock, ROCK: Punk Details: Country Rock Is Neither, proclaims the title of The Snakehandlers CD. Its a statement that the band stands to prove wrong. All my Country heroes were rock stars and obviously Rock And Roll has been shaped by strong personalities. Why is it that when you put the two together, people tend to dress like farmers and stare at their shoes on stage? says lead singer Bryson Jones. The Snakehandlers formed out of the underground but richly populated LA Cowboy Rock scene in late 2001. Jones and drummer David Raven had been playing in a loose collective known as the Sin City All Stars at the monthly Hollywood club, Sweethearts Of The Rodeo, where they morphed and twisted classic Country music into something a bit more suited to the atmosphere of late-night LA. One night a guy in a vintage cowboy shirt with a telecaster and matching vintage-clad beautiful woman, stepped onstage and introduced himself as Easy Pickens. Joel Sigerson had arrived and a partnership was born. Jones had been playing Gramfest, a yearly tribute to Gram Parsons, for a few years out in Joshua Tree, CA and slowly finding his own take on Cosmic American Music, updating it with current influences and attitudes. After a particularly affecting trip to the desert, Jones started to write again, after a five year break from his own music. He called up Raven, Pickens and two old friends from years back to try a new take on mixing musical styles and The Snakehandlers were formed. Bassist Reeve Downes and Bryson had formed a roots-rock band years before with another refugee from the rock world, Brian Forsythe, on guitar. After that band broke up in a blaze of dis-function, incarceration and addiction worthy of a Behind The Music episode. Reeve and Brian stayed in loose touch and played in various LA Blues and rock and roll projects together. When the call came, they were ready. You dont have to call Brian, was the quote from Downes when he was called to join the band, hes

in, we've been waiting five years for this call. Wounds were healed and the players were in place. The band took their time to develop a sound and recorded with several engineers and producers at Dusty Wakemans Mad Dog studios. The sound that developed was raw and energetic but still had all the touchstones of classic Country music. If it was too country, they revved the guitars, if it was too rock, they added steel guitar. What resulted was a mix of rock energy, punk attitude and country songwriting that is as unique as the players themselves. The production tends toward lo-fi and most tracks are cut live with little fiddling after the fact. Their cover of the Flying Burrito Brothers apocalyptic classic, Sin City captures the feel of old and new, blended nearly perfectly. The band's upcoming indie release will be produced by a collaboration of a few friends and the band themselves, recorded in everything from million dollar studios to living rooms. Whatever works, whatever it takes is their credo when recording. Seeming miracles have followed them on their path. The day of their first show, a cover story in Billboard told the story of the LA scene and ran a photo of, and quotes from Jones. More press followed and slowly things built. In Spring of 2004 a chance meeting with a DJ in Los Angeles led to the band being added to the playlist of Watusi Rodeo a weekly roots show hosted by Doc Holliday. That play, led to The Snakehandlers cover of Sin City being added to regular rotation on LA's hottest new modern rock station, Indie 103.1. Doc saw us at Sweethearts, dug what he saw and played us says Jones. To have a band added to a major market radio station before their album is even recorded is unheard of. Shortly thereafter the band was asked to perform on Discovery Channels highly rated, Monster Garage." Shilah Morrow, from Sin City Marketing and the Sweethearts Of The Rodeo club, tells the story. The producers called me needing a Country band that could hang with the Hard Rock and Metal bands that they normally book. I told them to stop looking. I had the perfect band. She referred The Snakehandlers and the band had a couple of days to transform the old tune Ive Been Workin On The Railroad into a something a little more exciting, just as they'd done with Sin City and tons of other old country and rock classics. Covers are a way for us to show where we are from musically. We grew up on rock, punk, blues, country, everything really, so we want our music to reflect that. Says Pickens. This was our own Monster Garage creation. Over the last couple of years their association with the LA Country scene has served them well. There are a ton of bands coming up in Hollywood that combine their love for classic Country with rock attitude and showmanship. Keith Gattis, Austin Hanks, Waylon Payne Mike Stinson, Shurman and more artists and bands are playing shows together, performing at loose jams like Sweethearts and supporting each other in the

press. Record deals are being signed and everyone seems to be on the move. Its a strange feeling, like having a real family around you. Says Jones. If one of us gets ahead, we all do. Bands share equipment, musicians and the stage in a spirit of cooperation that isnt often seen these days. Stars like Dwight Yoakam and Lucinda Williams have weighed in in support of the scene, by having the bands open their shows and mentioning Jones and others in the press. With records pending from themselves and several of their friends, their first taste of radio airplay and upcoming television appearances, it should be interesting to watch the next few months in the development of The Snakehandlers. Bryson closes with this thought on their unusual take on Country music and the bands future. I want to take this music to people who normally wouldnt have listened to Country or roots rock. Bands have tried, but no ones really put it over the top. If we have to shake a few trees on the way up, so be it. Guitarist Pickens is more direct in his statement when he talks about comparisons to previous Alt-Country or so-called Americana bands. Call our music whatever you want. Say whatever you like about us. Just spell the name right in the paper" Oh yeah, by the way, its one word, not two... The Snakehandlers.

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