

**HOUSTON JONES  
MCGRATH'S PUB  
APRIL 2004**

**EVER SINCE I WAS A YOUNG BOY**

On the spur of the moment, galloped on over to the Local, McGrath's Pub for a brew and some notes. Man, we walked into a packed house there on the Island and friends welcomed us over to sit beside them to catch the new wave, named HoustonJones. We came in during a typically extended gospel tune, wedged into the tight space and paid Peter, the proprietor the \$5 door fee. Hell, for 5 bucks in Peter's place we had previously caught the National Fiddle Champion and the National Fingerpicking Champion, so the bet was not a long one for good music.



Let it be said that the septet headed by Glenn Houston on lead guitar and Travis Jones on a Gibson 180 playing rhythm got the entire room dancing, including the undanceable Yours Truly and truly blew the roof off of the place.

My friends and I agreed that we had not heard such musicianship and energy since paying \$40 a head for headliner tix at the Fillmore. These guys are good.

Playing what used to be known as "roots rock" and is now becoming known as a new evolved genre of "Americana" which recaptures the infectious energy of the early days of rock n' roll without pandering to tired tropes, the band branded its own distinctive signature upon a scattering of covers, such as "Hollywood" and "Born on the Bayou", while tossing in a fair sampling of tasty original ballads and rockers. Many bar-bands have striven for that original moment in the tired, heard-that-already atmosphere of pick-up joints and boozy watering holes. Few have arisen with distinction out of garage rock cover band to do what HoustonJones have done, and that is plant their own stamp upon the music in a way that is original, fresh and exciting.

What gives the band such a remarkable push, has to be the combo of Travis' total unassuming, "hell I am just here havin' fun" attitude bound with Glenn Houston's incendiary guitar attack with pick in Standard and open D tunings, wherein he seems to enter a kind of trance-like state of unbeing as he shreds thousands of notes in seconds, putting the most ferocious of heavy metal and bluegrass players to shame with his virtuosity.

In sound, they resemble nothing ever before heard, with traces of a more disciplined Jerry Garcia coupled with a punkish version of Hot Tuna and Box Set combined with elements of John Hiatt, Tom Petty and The Boss without pretense.



It's interesting to note that these guys are not spring chickens by any means, as evidenced by salt-n-pepper beards and a general economy of stage motion created by years of experience. In one semi-humorous moment, the drummer, Peter Tucker, left the stage to rush to the bathroom just before the encore.

Well, they did order three tequilas, two beers, a scotch and a whiskey on the rocks during the last set, to be fair.

In any case, they had the crowd dancing in the aisle and Peter beaming from ear to ear. Their website is [www.houstonjones.com](http://www.houstonjones.com) and they next appear in

San Jose at the Espresso Garden on May 8. Following that, they will be staying local for appearances at Hayward's Bistro, Mountain View's Dan St. Roasting, and returning to McGrath's on the 22nd of May before heading up to the venerable and very excellent Rancho Nicasio in Marin. Be ready for a packed house at Nicasio, where local luminaries of world-wide renown are known for "sit-ins."