

HOUSTON JONES

MCGRATH'S PUB

SEPTEMBER 11, 2005



TOCCATA IN SWING

Dropped in to McGrath's Friday night to join a packed house and hear our local faves, Houston Jones who are now touring to promote their newest CD, "Three Crow Town". Well, well, well, seems our boys have gone uptown with a full-fledged touring bus and all the works after capturing Best of the Bands at the massive Strawberry Festival up in the hill country. Accolades are pouring in from all the serious critics and it will not be long before our little group has outgrown the \$5 a night gigs on our modest Island.

They've moved from doing innovative covers to performing their own material almost exclusively, but still punch out some ripping "high octane Americana", gospel, roots rock and country, all seasoned with their own distinctive style as cooked up with Glenn "Houston" Pomianek on lead guitar and Travis Jones on rhythm guitar and vocals. Their latest CD features more of the quieter side of this sometimes rambunctious band, but there are still some tasty instrumentals written and largely powerhoused by Pomianek who sounds at times like he is channeling Django Reinhardt, especially on the "Toccata in Swing". Chojo Jacques assisted with production of the CD and his wonderful mandolin and fiddle fill out the sound on the release as well. He was also present Friday night along with a keyboardist.

And yes, Travis still sings the true story, "Joanie, the Jehovah's Witness Stripper."

Given the current taste for the developing genre of "Americana Roots" music in the aging and largely Caucasian population that appears to be discovering it has a culture worth examining after all, bands like Houston Jones stand to do very well. Bordering Country music, but without any of Nashville's present and past affectations or narrow attitudes, Houston Jones manages to gather together Irish folk songs, ballads, gypsy music, roots rock, Little Feat, gospel tunes, bawdy shanties, and whatever happens to have been lying around in the dust bins of memory, to inject everything with vigorous flat-picking and howling, sighing, crying, snarling, soothing vocals. And when Chojo pulls out his mandolin, amazing things happen. Friday night, he used a glass slide and a bit of

wah from the amp to create some really mesmerizing stuff. It is almost impossible to come up with a vocabulary to describe what these guys do, as it appears nobody else does it quite the same way, from Glenn playing guitars left-handed and strung "upside down" to Chojo using a glass slide on an electric mandolin and ripping out long, wonderful multi-octave solos. It shouldn't be possible, but it is.

All we can say is, go see and hear them for yourselves.