



Craig Andraesen/Daily Nebraskan

Jason Ringenberg delivers a blistering harmonica solo during Jason and the Scorchers' appearance Tuesday night at the Drumstick.

Scorchers' country heritage energizes honest music style

By Tish Mockler and Donna Sisson

A tidal wave of energy hit the Drumstick when Jason and the Scorchers took the stage Tuesday night.

They only played for about an hour and a half, but covered a lot of ground — ripping from one song right into another in an almost suicidal race against time. When time ran out, the band exited and left a frenzied crowd screaming for more Jason.

Jason and the Scorchers is a hot rockin', rollin' band from Nashville, Tenn. The band includes Jason Ringenberg on vocals, harmonica and acoustic guitar; Perry Baggs on drums; Warner Hodges on guitar; and Jeff Johnson on bass.

In an interview before Tuesday's show, Hodges exposed some of the things that have helped create the Scorchers' music and style.

The music they play is high energy rock 'n' roll, with a heavy country influence.

"Instead of using a blues approach like the Rolling Stones, ZZ Top or J. Geils, we approach it from a country standpoint," Hodges said. "Rock 'n' roll simply comes from country-western and the blues," he said.

"We tote the American flag and the tradition," Hodges said. "Rock 'n' roll really hasn't supposedly been America's for a long time.

"We're proud to be from here, we don't have to have a bunch of plink-plinka synthesizers to make rock 'n' roll," he said. "I think Americans are ready for some straight-ahead, honest, real music, and that's what we'd like to think we're doing. It is straight from the heart and we'd like to keep the integrity in our music."

Much of the Scorchers' country inclination comes from their upbringing, which Hodges said is very important. "It's not a conscious 'let's be country,' influence as much as it's just embedded in our hearts and souls," he said.

"Jeff and Perry are native Nashvillians, which is something you just don't see — there's no such thing as a native Nashvillian. Everybody there moved there or moved away — they migrated. Nobody's from there. (Jeff and Perry) were raised on country music in Nashville, which is a country music city, their whole life," Hodges said.

"I played with my parents (Ed and Blanche Hodges, who played with such notables as Johnny Cash and Lefty Frizzell) from the time I was nine years old 'til I was 17. We played stone cold country music three to four nights a week," he said.

"The stuff gets deep-rooted in you. When I was a kid, I despised country. It was slow and boring and it didn't move

me, but through the course of time, you realize how much this stuff influences you," Hodges said.

Ringenberg was raised on country music in Illinois and played in country, bluegrass and rockabilly bands. He was also picked up on the feeling of the South, Hodges said.

"My quote for the day on that is: 'American by birth, Southern by the grace of God.' If you want to know what the South is like, all I can say is go down there," Hodges said.

"We want people to know where we're from, and we're going to let them know, but we don't want to be automatically labeled as country music," he said. Therefore, they dropped the "Nashville" from "Jason and the Nashville Scorchers."

In places such as Japan and Australia, the record stores would see the Nashville monicker and put their records only in the country bins, he said. While they would like to see country fans buy their albums, "It's a rock 'n' roll record," Hodges said.

The Scorchers have released two extended play records, *Reckless Country Soul* and *Fervor* which was initially released on the Praxis label. They welcomed an EMI contract because they needed a bigger label to get their music out to more people, Hodges said.

Besides their song writing, their high energy level was one thing that got them the record deal with EMI, Hodges said. "A lot of bands have one or two members that are energetic, but you never see a band where the whole band is bustin' ass from front to back," Hodges said.

Overall, Hodges said they prefer the stage to the studio because when they stay in the studio too long, they start to stagnate.

"All my life, I've just wanted to get out and play music," he said. "Twenty-three hours a day you wait around to play that one hour that you love doing."

Jason and the Scorchers' plans include touring in Europe and working on a full album for release in January. They are taking time so all the songs on the album will be good ones. With the price of records these days, they want the albums to be worth every cent paid for it, Hodges said.

As for playing in Lincoln, Hodges said it's a fun place to come to get wild and crazy. "The Drumstick gave us a place to play out this way, back when nobody would give us gigs," he said.

Anybody who missed the show or who just cannot wait until the Scorchers return, can take comfort in the fact that they will be back.

Ringenberg said that no matter how famous they get, they'll always come back to Lincoln.

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