

photo Angela Wheelock

"Too Slim" prepares for varmint dance.

Country bumpkins entertain

Riders in the Sky
The Bellamy Brothers
Jubilee Auditorium, Nov. 9

review by Christine Koch

The buckeroos and buckerettes who filled the Jubilee Auditorium last Wednesday evening to take in the country music double feature appeared to find the concert a howling success. The progressive country rock of the Bellamy Brothers, and the flawless harmonies and silly, sometimes earthy, humour of Riders in the Sky, were calculated to please and did.

Riders in the Sky is a trio of "lonely old cowpokes," from Nashville, composed of Too Slim, bass player, Ranger Doug, guitarist and self-designated "idol of American youth," and Woody Paul, fiddler and the "high school graduate of the group." With a certain amount of tongue-in-cheek and burlesque humour these boys follow the tradition of such singers as Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. In song and act they look back to a time that never was - except in the movies. Their mournful vocals and instrumentals, accompanied by coyote howlings and sounds of the cattle herd, evoke a nostalgic yearning after the golden days of the West. Their repertoire includes such chestnuts as "Ghost Riders in the Sky," "Ride with the Wind," and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds."

But there is much more to their act that just singing. Ranger Doug delivered an impressive yodelling solo, and Woody Paul proved himself not only "King of the Cowboy Fiddlers," but also "King of the Clothesline" with his lariat tricks. The highlight of their show, however, as far as the crowd was concerned was Too Slim's "varmint dancing," accompanied by Woody Paul playing "Turkey in the Straw." Abandoning his bass, Too Slim literally "got down" and executed a rabbit dance, possum dance, armadillo dance, and three-toed sloth dance, to the delight and hilarity of all.

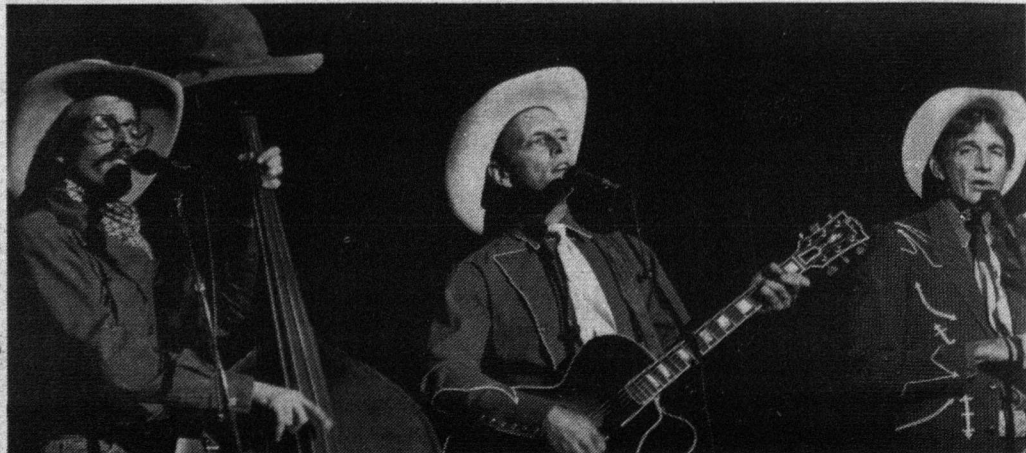


photo Angela Wheelock

Riders in the Sky

Though they had less to offer, the Bellamy Brothers in the second set were greeted with even more enthusiasm. This duo from Florida, on tour with a five piece back-up band to promote their latest release, *Strong Weakness*, has its claim to fame more awards for top hits than any other country and western group to date. Though billed as country, their music borrows heavily from pop, rock, and even reggae.

Starting with "Let Your Love Flow," the Bellamies worked their way through most of their greatest hits, including "Sugar Daddy," "They Could Put Me in Jail," "I Love you For All the Wrong Reasons," and "You Ain't Just Whistling Dixie." What characterizes most of their lyrics is unoriginality and a certain mindlessness. With love and, or, sex as their almost sole subject, the Bellamies have nothing new to say, and simply repeat the cliches and trite truisms of other mediocre love poetry.

Despite attempts at clever word play, such as in "If I Said You Had A Beautiful Body, Would You Hold It Against Me?" and the oxymoron of "Strong Weakness" (sexual desire, of course), this level of wit does not extend beyond the song titles. The song title "I Love Her Mind" implies a concession to female intellect, but we are disappointed to discover that the singer admires her mind only for the new ways of love-making it devises.

As for the actual performance, the Bellamy Brothers seem to labour under the fashionable misconception that louder is better. The music was very poorly equalized, with David Bellamy's lead singing nearly overpowered, and his brother Howard's harmonizing all but drowned out. Their melodies, especially at this excessive volume, appeared undifferentiated. In fact, one might take David's injunction to the audience as his rule of the trade: "C'mon, make a lot of noise," he said. That, basically, is all the Bellamy Brothers did.

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