



Shakin Pyramids celebrate early rock and roll

by Gisele Marie Baxter
 Review: The Shakin' Pyramids,
Skin 'Em Up
 (Virgin/Cuba Libre VL 2217)

Picture this: You're living in Poland, you've just put in a long day at the Gdansk shipyards or the Solidarity rally in Warsaw, and you're heading for the local dance hall to unwind. Or you're living in Paris, and taking a sunset stroll along the boulevard. Suddenly, these three

lean-and-mean Scottish lads appear, armed with two acoustic guitars and a harmonica, and start pumping out the best rockabilly this side of 1956.

Say hello to The Shakin' Pyramids, a trio of buskers, or street musicians, from Glasgow, who have played both the streets in Paris and a cultural tour in Poland. Singer Davie Duncan and guitarists James G. Creighton and "Railroad" Ken do truly good old rock'n'roll on this debut, **Skin 'Em Up**. The guitars twang over a backbeat strumming like a train on a track, the harmonica sings and scorches, and the vocals are absolutely terrific, with their tight, sharp harmonies under Davie Duncan's lead.

The band uses percussion and electric guitar in the studio, also guest Nick Clark on upright bass, and to great advantage, but their sound relies most on acoustic guitars, vocals and harmonica - meaning that the Pyramids still can (and do) shake, rattle and roll anywhere they please, from record shops to street corners to vacant lots. The material (mostly original) is well chosen; the lyrics make no pointed references to either the

1950's or the 1980's, getting instead right to the energetic spirit in all of us who ever loved rock'n'roll from its roots onward.

"Sunset of My Tears" is the only ballad of the set, and has a distinct country flavour, though it sounds more authentic than much commercial country music. Rich and sensitive, with a plaintive guitar break, it could be an old Elvis Presley standard. The best songs, however, are the most frenetic, such as "Wild Little Willie" and the incredible ode to life on the run, "Take a Trip". There are no eight-minute wonders here; these numbers are just long enough to get you addicted.

Skin 'Em Up features the best revivalist cover art since Elvis Costello's **My Aim is True**. (The Clash's **London Calling**, a rather obvious tribute to Elvis Presley's first, doesn't quite count.) This music does not strive to set musical or thematic precedents, but don't dismiss it. It celebrates, with love and conviction, the great early days of the music we call rock'n'roll. The Shakin' Pyramids do not need to produce art - these lads are "Hellbent on Rockin'" and if you want to dance, that's all right.

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