

With a name like Ghetto Blaster, you might be expecting rap. Think again. Ghetto Blaster is just . . .

MAKING ROCK MUSIC

JOHN LYONS Staff Writer

When asked how they would define their music, members of Columbia band Ghetto Blaster said they play Southern indie rock and then quickly changed their minds.

At Pavlov's in Five Points, the band shared a pitcher of beer while chatting with The Gamecock.

Singer and guitarist Kipp Shives said he thought the indie rock classification complicated things.

"I think, more or less, we're just making rock music," he said.

Bassist, guitarist and singer Milton Hall agreed. He said the band played "basic rock."

Milton said, "We have almost a roots rock background. We ignore what rock has been for the last 10 years or so."

Ghetto Blaster started out as a two-man band with Shives handling guitar, and Brian "Chicken" Kennedy on drums and vocals.

The two-man setup lasted for about three months before Hall and guitarist and bassist Scott Taylor were added to the lineup. The four have been a complete unit for about one year.

In that time, they have written more than 40 songs. Shives has written the

majority, but Hall also writes songs and helps with lead vocals.

While they aren't playing to sold-out shows just yet, Shives' second-place finish as best local male vocalist in the 1995 Free Times readers poll indicates their potential.

Ghetto Blaster will bring their rock music, whether it's indie rock or not, to Rockafellas' tonight accompanied by Plexus and popular Charleston band Cletus.

They said they like to headline shows because they aren't as constricted by time limits.

Kennedy said they change their songs each time they perform them live.

"We loosen up a lot when headlining a show," he said. "We feel our way around songs while we play them."

In the past two months, the band opened for the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion and Man or Astroman?.

They said they hope the exposure from those shows will help draw an even more

diverse crowd for tonight's show. While the label of Southern indie

rock may not be completely accurate, the band clearly has its indie rock influences.

The music is tight and features the distorted, occasionally jangly guitar work characteristic of the indie scene.

They said they've been compared most frequently to Pavement.

Shives said, "There is a sarcastic tone in our songs, and we get compared to Pavement, who any band that plays a weird, sarcastic rock gets compared to."

Taylor agreed. "If any sarcasm is involved, it's an instant tie to Pavement."

He classified the band's sound as fun rock.

"We're not serious," he said, "but we're not a novelty band."

Ghetto Blaster will be included on an upcoming compilation being produced by Carolina Productions and plans to release a 7-inch record.

Currently, they have a very well-produced demo tape, "Eras of Rock." The 16 songs brilliantly

combine indie and punk rock with a strong '70s roots rock background.

On "Eras of Rock," the band never fully commits itself to any one style of music and can only be described as raw rock'n'roll.

The music is energetic and engaging, and while Ghetto Blaster is definitely not a light rock band, they never get so loud as to be inaccessible.

Shives said, "We try to be heavy. I like to think we have a little Black Sabbath going on."

The demo is a delightful find and can be picked up at Manifest, New Clear Days or Papa Jazz.

Comparisons to Pavement have a clear foundation in truth, but the band is definitely not an imitation.

Kennedy said, "I don't really hear it when comparisons are made. It's hard for me to hear what other people hear because I'm not coming from the same angle."

Tonight's show is very important for the band since it's a step up from playing Monday or Tuesday nights. They are hoping a lot of people show up to support them.

As Hall put it, "We're hoping to bring all the ladies out."



Photo special to The Gamecock

Ghetto Blaster is Kipp Shives, Brian "Chicken" Kennedy, Scott Taylor and Milton Hall.

The Pogues keep Irish music alive and kicking

SOUND ADVICE

STEPHANIE SONNENFELD Features Ed.

POGUE MAHONE The Pogues
★★★★ (out of four stars)

Besides Guinness and lovely lilting accents, Ireland has some damn fine music.

Artists such as Van Morrison, U2 and the Cranberries are certainly apt examples of just how successful and influential modern Irish music can be. Yet, it would be an awful mistake to fail to include The Pogues in this category.

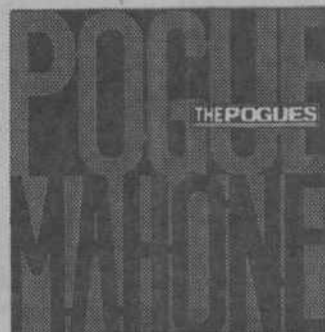
Though not entirely overexposed on the American music scene, The Pogues are just as worthwhile and praiseworthy as any Irish group, and their latest release, "Pogue Mahone," showcases the band's talents.

The first and foremost enticing aspect of The Pogues is their instrumentation. Spider Stacy is responsible for the vocals, while Jem Finer plays the najos, hurdy gurdy and the guitar. Darryl Hunt plays bass; Andres Ranken is on drums; Jamie Clarke plays guitars; and James McNally plays the accordion, piano and the whistles. Rounding out the lineup is David Coulter on the mandolin, violins and percussion.

With such a variety of traditional Irish musical instruments, The Pogues keep a major part of their music very close to the Irish folk style.

This aspect, combined with their rock influence, allows The Pogues to create a modern answer to a truly nationalistic form of music.

On "Pogue Mahone," there is a sampling of both The Pogues' rock influences and their native music styling.



"How Come," "Love You 'Till the End" and "The Sun and the Moon" are the more rock-influenced songs. There is no denying these songs contain a certain pop-like quality common to many rock songs from Elvis Costello to The Jayhawks, but they also contain a

swinging Irish tinge to them.

Other songs on the CD similar to Irish folk music are ballads such as "Anniversary" and "Pont Mirabeau,"

which Finer's father translated from the poem written by Apollinaire. "When The Ship Comes In," "Bright Lights" and "Tosspoint" are excellent examples of the band's musical talents and bawdy style.

This CD is one of seven albums The Pogues have produced since their debut, "Red Roses For Me." "Rum, Sodomy & The Lash" (1985), "If I Should Fall From Grace With God" (1988) and "Peace & Love" (1989) were three releases that established the group on the international music scene, giving them opportunities to play with acts such as U2 and Bob Dylan.

In 1991, original lead vocalist Shane

MacGowan left the group, allowing Stacy to move in as permanent lead vocalist. Other members to leave the group include James Fearnley, Terry Woods and Phil Chevron.

Despite internal changes, The Pogues moved forward and were able to assemble a group of musicians capable of retaining the integrity of the group, as well as their acclaimed music stylings. "Pogue Mahone" is just a fitting CD to show how well The Pogues have weathered change and the perils of modernizing tradition.

Perhaps this is one reason they can keep Irish eyes a smiling for at least a little while longer.

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EXPERIENCE

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