

July 2009

HILL COUNTRY REVUE

Make a Move

Razor & Tie

When your big brother takes a break to play with someone else, what do you do? If you're Cody Dickinson, you start another band.

The North Mississippi All-stars first coined the name "Hill Country Revue" for the expanded lineup that performed at Bonnaroo in 2004. The large cast of players included brothers Duwayne and Garry Burnside and their father, R.L. Burnside, as well as Chris Robinson of the Black Crowes. Since then, guitarist Luther Dickinson has been working with the Crowes while his younger brother, drummer Cody, has teamed with Allstars bassist Chris Chew and other musicians to perform as Hill Country Revue. Along the way, Cody left the drums to play guitar (his original instrument) after Garry Burnside opted not to tour with the group. (Burnside co-wrote songs for *Make a Move* and appears as a guest guitarist.)

Rounded out by Kirk Smithart (lead and slide guitar), Dan Coburn (vocals), and Ed Cleveland (drums), Hill Country Revue delivers greasy, hard-driving blues in the Southern rock tradition. On *Make a Move*, the Revue shows off its Deep South blues roots and penchant for Allman Brothers-style rock, especially on "Don't Give Up," one of the album's more pop-friendly songs. That song's "don't give up" attitude has something of a twin in the harder-edged "Dirty Shirt" — as in "hanging in there like a dirty shirt."

The band has its call to arms in "Hill Country Revue," a song that states the group's purpose: to come to town and make you shake your ass. And there's plenty of music here bound to do just that. Where Hill Country Revue could use a little more work is in the lyrics department: Tracks such as "Let Me Love You" and "Talk About Me and You" don't add anything memorable to their familiar themes. If you want to re-invent the blues for the next generation, your songs need to transcend the genre, not just borrow from it.

— *Michael Cote*

