

The Kingmakers' Nashville adventure

The Kingmakers' affinity for 1950s rock 'n' roll led them to Tennessee in May to record their third CD, *Last Night in Nashville*.

When it came time to choose a studio, the Ottawa rockabilly band wanted a place with history, if only to give their band a bit of a back-story. Running into a gamut of rock legends was an unintended perk.

Steve Donnelly (upright bass) was searching the Web for marquee studios and stumbled upon the Nashville haven of Cowboy Jack Clement. He was a house engineer at SUN Studio in the 1950s, and a pal of Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash.

After a few phone calls between the band, Clement and his recording engineer Brooks Watson, The Kingmakers got the go-ahead to come to Nashville.

What followed were three music-drenched days and nights.

Watson recorded the album, while Clement lent his ear to a few tracks. As the sessions rolled along, Watson suggested an old friend drop by. That friend was Rockabilly Hall of Fame inductee J.M. Van Eaton. He was the house drummer at SUN Studio, who kept time on such hits as *Great Balls of Fire* and *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*. The Kingmakers were floored to be among the people they read about or watched in documentaries of the era.

Things got better when Kingmakers' drummer Ian Cook casually mentioned backing vocalists The Jordanaires. They sang on



CHRISTOPHER PIKE, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

The Kingmakers — John Cormier, left, Stephen K. Donnelly, Clark Lawlor and Bob Primeau — are at the Elmdale Tavern on Friday.

Elvis's hits *Return to Sender* and *It's Now or Never* and carved out a career of their own. And they were still for hire. The Kingmakers immediately booked The Jordanaires in for a studio session.

Between takes, The Jordanaires would casually discuss Elvis. Like, maybe things would have gone differently if "Colonel Tom" (Elvis's manager) hadn't pushed him around so much. Van Eaton and Cowboy Jack would continue a debate on whether *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On* was recorded in one or two takes.

"We're sitting there like flies on the wall, thinking we shouldn't even be there," singer Clark Lawlor says, stunned.

"This is the essence of the music we play," guitarist John Cormier says, "It's the get-go stuff."

■ The Kingmakers, *Swing Dynamite*, Elmdale Tavern, 1084 Wellington St., W., Friday, Sept. 10, 9:30 p.m., \$8 (\$15 with CD).

THIS WEEKEND

Tonight

■ The Burning Hell, Patrick LePoidevin, Black Sheep Inn, 753 Riverside Dr., Wakefield, 8:30 p.m., \$10.

■ Ron Hawkins, R.W. Haller, Elmdale Tavern, 9 p.m., \$15.

Friday, Sept. 10

■ Drew Nelson Band, *Underground Divas*, Irene's Pub, 885 Bank St., 9 p.m., \$7.
 ■ Geoff Berner, Lil' Andy, *Black Sheep Inn*, 9 p.m., \$15 advance.
 ■ Mahogany Frog, *Butterflies & Zebras*, Club SAW, 67 Nicholas St., all ages, 7 p.m., \$10.

Saturday, Sept. 11

■ Jon Reilly-Roe, *Tigershow*, Elmdale Tavern, 9:30 p.m., \$5.
 ■ Team Canada DJs, *Ritual Nightclub*, 137 Besserer St., 10 p.m., \$7.
 ■ Terry Gillespie, *Mighty Popo*, Black Sheep Inn, 8:30 p.m., \$10 advance.

Sunday, Sept. 12

■ Strung Out, Rufio, Mute, *We Are the Union*, Babylon, 317 Bank St., 5 p.m., \$22 advance.
 ■ Lisa Poushinsky, Erika Werry, Charlie A'Court, Chris Kirby, *Black Sheep Inn*, 4 p.m., \$7 advance.

COMING

■ Flatliners, *Against Me*, Sept. 13, Bronson Centre.
 ■ Caribou, *Russian Futurists*, Sept. 15, Babylon.
 ■ MoBadAss, Sept. 15, Zaphod Beeblebrox.

Fateema.Sayani@gmail.com