

ENTERTAINMENT

Sawyer Brown fuses rock, country

By Ming Rodrigues
Emerald Contributor

Forget the antiquated notion of country music being the twangy lullaby of hillbillies. If one can judge from the mostly teen-to-twenties crowd fascination with Sawyer Brown, country music may be in for a long spell of popularity.

The five-piece band from Nashville is on the cutting edge of redefining country music. Spiked with a solid dose of rock 'n' roll and blues, this is the contemporary, high-energy sound of country — Sawyer Brown-style. And it's a winner.

Last year, the band was one of the top-10 grossing country tours, and just this week, their latest single, "The Dirt Road," hit number one on the charts of *Radio & Record* and *Gavin* magazines while grabbing the number three spot on *Billboard*.

"They are one of the new country acts that is drawing a wider audience to country music, especially with the younger set because what they give is an exciting twist to the traditional sound of country," said Tim Fox, a disk jockey at KUGN radio station, a concert sponsor.

"And for some time now, country music has been the most popular music on national radio."

It all started more than a decade ago when Mark Miller and Gregg "Hobie" Hubbard met in college and began writing songs together. According to Miller, they appeared to be an unlikely duo — an intellectual keyboard player and a short story writer (Hubbard), and a basketball playing songwriter/singer (Miller). The two later headed for Nashville and hooked up with bassist Jim Scholten and drummer Joe Smyth.

The opportunity that skyrocketed their career reads like the stuff dreams are made of. Teaming up and calling themselves Sawyer Brown, the band entered *Star Search* and won, ultimately signing up with Capitol Records and becoming the first and only band to ever win the Country Music Association's prestigious Horizon Award.

Their success surged in the years that followed, and Sawyer Brown became the most successful touring band in the business, releasing hit after

hit.

With their latest album, *The Dirt Road*, Miller's writing skills are backed by some of the most powerful musicianship found in the recording industry.

"We've been writing together for so long, but somehow a lot of the songs never made it to Sawyer Brown albums," Miller said. "Lately, we've been way more productive with our writing out on the road, and I think, as a result, we've seen the writing gel. So many things we've done fit perfectly on this project, direction-wise."

The Miller/Hubbard duo penned the title cut and first single which features the banjo artistry of the legendary Earl Scruggs. Another one of the duo's cuts is "Another Trip To The Well," a song about the celebration of life, about facing the ups and downs and how one's memories are earned.

"Time and Love" is another song with a message. It talks about a human being making up for time and love that's been lost.

Their compositions seem to point out something about the music of Sawyer Brown — it makes you dance, but it also makes you think. What's found on the latest album expands the already broad dimensions of this band.

"As a writer, all you can do is try to reflect where you are at a given time, to be honest with the music, and then hope," Miller said.

"I've always felt that it's the 'furniture' of life that's important. I mean, you can go into a house and be overwhelmed by the architectural image and all, but the first impression really doesn't have anything to do with the reality of the people who live there.

"It's the pieces of furniture picked up here and there, the fabric and texture and color that make up a person's world. That's what this record's all about: the fabric and texture and color of our music."

Sawyer Brown performs at 8 p.m. tonight in the Hult Center's Silva Concert Hall. Tickets are sold out.

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WALT DISNEY WORLD COLLEGE PROGRAM

Walt Disney World Co. representatives will present an information session on the Walt Disney World College Program on Tuesday, Jan. 28, 7:00pm, in the Maple Room-Student Union. Attendance at this presentation is required to interview for the SUMMER/FALL '92 COLLEGE PROGRAM. Interview times and locations will be held, for summer/fall interns, Wednesday, Jan. 29, at Career Planning & Placement, time to be announced. The following majors are encouraged to attend: SUMMER — Hospitality, Communication, Theater/Drama, Recreation and Business. FALL — open to all majors.

Contact: Career Planning & Placement
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