

That'll be the day when their shoes are filled

'Down a Classic Country Road' Review By BURNEY GARELICK

Arrrrgh, Yee Haw, and Boy Howdy! Hot on the trail of the "Pirates of Penzance," the Buck and A Quarter Band galloped into town for the penultimate roundup in the last resort.

Florence is alive and eclectic with the sound of music, simultaneous entertainment from opera to opry. While the "Pirates" played its final weekend Nov. 11-13, the Buck and A Quarter Band opened its show, "Down a Classic Country Road," that weekend and continues next weekend, Nov. 18-20.

The six-piece band pays homage to country music icons — including Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, George Jones, Patsy Cline, Tammy Wynette, Merle Haggard, Buck Owens, Bob Wills, Eddie Arnold, Elvis Presley and Marty Robbins — and the classic country songs that are part of our collective unconsciousness. You'll recognize many of the 50-plus songs in the show, even if you're not a fan of country music.

The band opens each of its two sets swinging with adrenalin poppers: Buddy Holly's "That'll Be the Day" and Elvis's "All Shook Up," and closes in a surge of energy with Jerry Lee Lewis's "Great Balls of Fire" and Steve Goodman's "Perfect Country & Western Song." A kind of epilogue concludes the show — George Jones's "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?" This was the title of last year's wildly successful show by the Buck and A Quarter Band and an impetus for the current show. You can't go down that country road too often.

Singer, actor, and master of musical genre Mike Jacobson wrote and directed last year's country music retrospective, and enlisted the musical direction of keyboardist and singer extraordinaire Marty Adams for the current show.

Other Buck and A Quarter members are guitarist Doug Bushwar, bassist Earl Knight, longtime Florence drummer Bob Severy and cowboy's sweetheart Denise Dee, whose voice is her instrument.

Severy is the only non-vocalist and keeps the others on time, ragged but right — although there's nothing ragged about the program where all those songs are charted and played with

very little talk. Occasionally, Jacobson will mention the songwriter or the singer who popularized the song, and less frequently, Adams will crack jokes worthy of groans. This show is all about the music.

There is no hierarchy in the Buck and A Quarter Band. Solos are equitably divided, and tempos are balanced. The five voices blend in harmony and on duets like brothers and sister.

Most of all, the singers are relaxed and confident, and their demeanor spills into the audience for an all-around good time. You get the feeling they could jam all night, or as the song says, "I'll hang around as long as you will let me."

Dee is a terrific song belter and carries the vitality of those iconic divas. Her songs include "Blue Bayou," "Wheel of Fortune," "She's Got You," "I Don't Want to Play House" and "Help Me Through the Night."

Jacobson's big, somewhat ironic voice rings clear with the likes of "Cold Cold Heart,"

"Take This Job (and Shove It)," "Ghost Riders in the Sky," "Cattle Call," "Walkin' the Floor over You" and "Battle of New Orleans."

Bushwar played guitar with the Maddox Brothers and Rose, known as America's Most Colorful Hillbilly Band. While Rose packed a mean punch, Bushwar's singing is gentle on your mind. His songs include "All Shook Up," "Help Me I'm Falling," "I Got a Woman," and "Don't Worry About Me."

Knight, who played with Merle Haggard, did the honors with "Rambling Fever," "Today I Started Loving You," "Silver Wings," "Okie from Muskogee," "Good Hearted Woman" and "Pancho and Lefty," a cool duet with Jacobson.

In addition to his nifty tinkling piano, Adams rattled the keys and indulged in memorable songs like "You Fill Up My Senses," "Peaceful Easy Feeling," "Georgia," "Together Again," "Great Balls of Fire,"

"Young Love" and "Faded Love." Perhaps it was a stretch, including "Georgia" in the country genre, but Hoagy Carmichael's song has been recorded by many country artists, just as many country songs have been recorded by pop artists.

The show plays at the CROW Center for the Performing Arts on Highway 101 just north of 30th Street — one of Florence's newest venues for performing arts. It's not a classic honky tonk with dim lights and thick smoke, and the only cold ones are soft drinks.

But not everything needs to

be replicated to enjoy classic country music. The room is set cabaret style with tables, but there's room for two-stepping, if you've a mind.

Cowboy hats, cowboy boots, and singing along are encouraged.

Finally, the show will cost a little more than a Buck and A Quarter, but it's worth the fare because, in addition giving you pleasure, a portion of ticket sales will benefit CROW, the Children's Repertory of Oregon Workshop.

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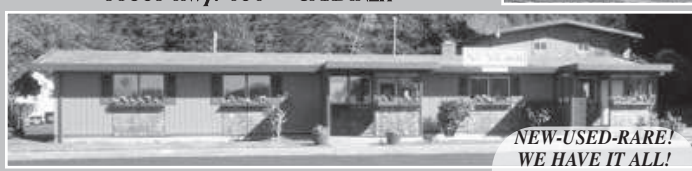
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