

THE ARTS

THE BUZZ

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

They dedicated an older song "Rock and Roll" to former Slice owner Jesse Freed.

Some of their more mellow, impassioned numbers reminded me of Leeroy Stagger.

They introduced a new song "Don't Want to Go No More."

They are always a lot of fun and funny. Sasso played kazoo with an extended bell horn for one song.

They wound up their official show just before midnight with Sasso and Laforet breaking out the ukuleles for a couple of older crowd favourites, but were called back for an encore of a couple other old favourites including "I Miss You Now," which lasted past that.

Biloxi Parish CD release party at the Owl

I've never seen the Owl Acoustic Lounge as busy as it was Sept. 22 for the "Providence" CD release party for Biloxi Parish. The place was wall-to-wall packed.

They had the full band, which played a tight set of original music, mostly from the new CD.

They started out full-blown electric as frontman Zach Passey wielded and thrashed around the stage with his Telecaster and witched to acoustic for a couple slightly slower songs and switched back for "Loose End."

They started off slightly slower and built up the intensity. The dance floor was filled from the start with revellers.

After an exuberant set, the rest of the band took a break as Passey did a couple numbers solo with acoustic guitar.

Too Soon Monsoon and Kane Incognito

I had to cut the Biloxi Parish's CD release party short because I needed a break from the crowd. I caught the end of an upbeat set of keyboard powered pop

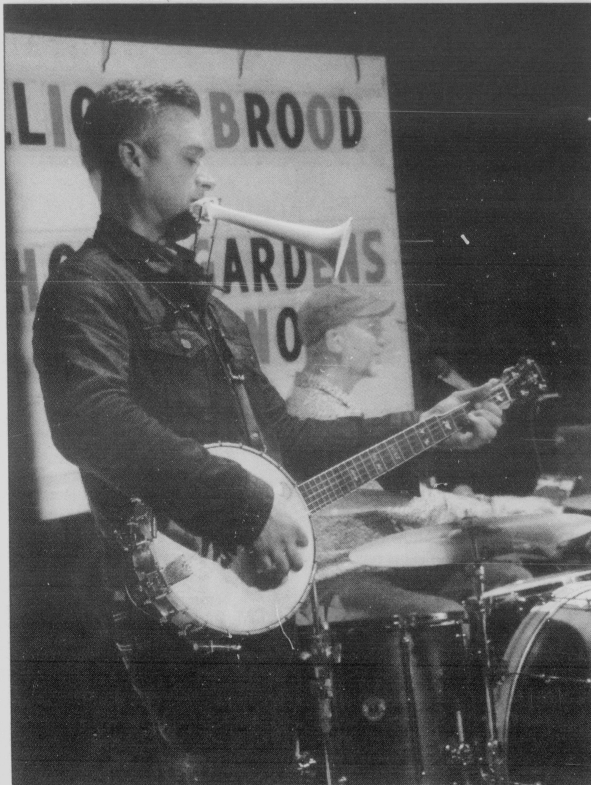


PHOTO BY RICHARD AMERY

Mark Sasso of Elliott Brood plays the kazoo at the Slice, Sept. 25.

unbeknownst to Phillips, who is trying to get him to re-sign with Sun. And Carl Perkins, who has just skyrocketed with his hit "Blue Suede Shoes," is desperately trying to record his second hit — ideally a cover of the old blues standard "Matchbox," with the help of a young upstart pianist, Jerry Lee Lewis.

Thus the scene is set for an impromptu jam session arising from Perkins' session with Lewis, and a visit by Cash plus Elvis and his new girlfriend/singer Dyanne.

The show is really well done. The set is a faithful reconstruction of the actual Sun Studios in Memphis, which is still a popular tourist attraction and which brought back a lot of fond memories from my visit there.

The actors are exceptional actors and musicians as well, except for Doug MacArthur who plays Sun Records boss Sam Phillips, who is the only one who doesn't sing or dance. Devon Brayne conveys a lot of emotions on just his face as Johnny Cash, whether he is trying to find the best way to break it to his old mentor, friend and original believer Phillips that he is leaving, or being the adult in the room, calling out **overly cocky upstart and snot-nosed young punk Jerry Lee Lewis played by show-stealing Hunter Semrau.** Brayne also accurately copies Cash's physical mannerisms.

Especially enjoyed the interplay between Semrau and Kevin Owen Clarke, who plays Carl Perkins. Clarke physically and subtly conveys a lot of Perkins' internalized anger towards Elvis and Phillips as Perkins has his own issues with Elvis, for playing his song "Blue Suede Shoes" on The Ed Sullivan Show.

Matt Cage is a veteran of "Million Dollar Quartet," having played Elvis in a couple of other productions of the show, so he has the Elvis character down, right down from the shaking leg to the sneer and dance moves.

All three of them relive their first moments meeting Phillips in various flashbacks, adding to their back stories, in between playing excerpts of their first hits and other classics of the day.

Hunter Semrau is definitely the comic relief of the show, breaking up some of the more tense moments between Elvis, Perkins and Cash and Phillips. But the U of L opera student steals the show with some "killer" piano playing while easily portraying the misplaced cockiness of Jerry Lee Lewis as only a 20-year-old with the omniscience of the world can do.

Lewis shamelessly hits on Elvis's girlfriend and completely disrespects Perkins, which was on the way to being unbearable, until Cash and Phillips call him down for it.

Claire Lint, a well-known choreographer and dancer, also shows herself to be an impressive singer as well, belting out the Peggy Lee classic "Fever" with aplomb.

Even the band including guitarist Scott Mezei as Brother Jan, upright bassist Paul Holden playing Clayton and drummer Theo Lysyk as Fluke get to deliver lines in the show, while providing the musical complement to the main characters who all play and sing.

Semrau is a physical force on piano, playing it with his feet and butt and eventually jumping off it. Clarke nails Perkins' rockabilly sound, though I could barely hear his actual guitar and you can't take your eyes off Brayne and Cage during their Johnny Cash and Elvis numbers.

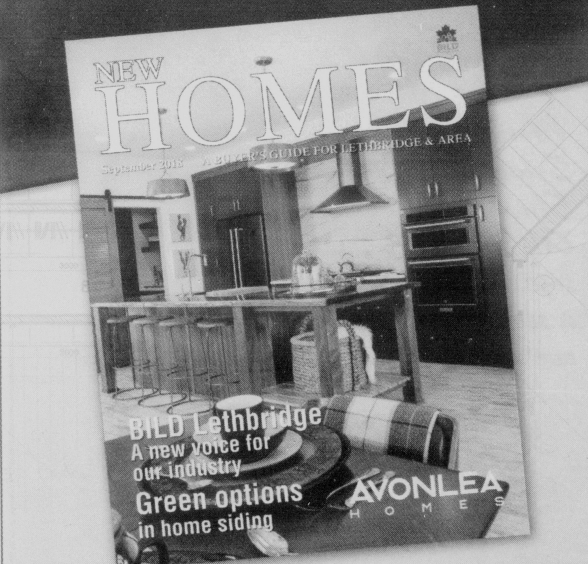
There are some pretty cool meta jokes in the show as well as Elvis comments he'd "never play Las Vegas," and drops the name of his future hit "Burning Love." The three predict Phillips will be concentrating on this "new kid Jerry Lee Lewis."

Cash comments on how he'd love to record a gospel album some time in the future, which he eventually did. Even at the end, when all seems lost for Sam Phillips, who basically started the first big independent record label — think Sub Pop if it was in the '50s instead of '90s — he reminds us he just signed some "funny looking guy" from Texas named Roy Orbison. So we know things will probably turn out all right for him. The show ends with the cast recreating the iconic photo of that jam session of the group around the piano, with the original photograph shining on the walls of the studio.

Oct. 3
Beaches — open mic

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

New Edition NOW OUT!



NEW HOMES

A Buyer's Guide for Lethbridge & Area
Delivered to your door & available online at Myih.ca

from Saskatoon duo Too Soon Monsoon who played a lilting set of appealing pop music.

Medicine Hat rock foursome Kane Incognito returned after that. They played a set of upbeat '90s-tinged alternative rock. They started off with a funky number which showed off excellent multi-part vocal harmonies.

They played another slower number which reminded me of Fleetwood Mac's "Landslide."

At the end of their set, the band all surrounded the lead singer and his acoustic guitar which drew a lot of applause.

A highlight was "Devil's Gold."

Richard Inman at the Owl

Winnipeg singer-songwriter Richard Inman had a good-sized crowd at the Owl Acoustic Lounge, Friday, Sept. 21.

He sang in his rich baritone voice which reminded me of country singer Travis Tritt, Chris Knight and John Mellencamp to an extent. Though he plays the Owl Acoustic Lounge a lot, seemed surprised that a lot of the audience had heard him before, though he may have been joking.

He told stories and, as usual, picked some pretty acoustic guitar.

He told stories about living in Ponoka and sang a song about Crowsnest Pass. He sang mostly original songs, but added covers of Utah Phillips and a Willie P Bennett.

He noted he will have a new CD out on Oct. 17.

He ended his set with Waylon Jennings' "Lonesome Orny and Mean."

If you caught **New West Theatre's exceptional production of "Million Dollar Quartet" you were indeed fortunate. If you missed it before it closed Sept. 29, you really missed out.**

The show takes place on Dec. 4, 1956, a pivotal time in the nascent days of rock and roll at the immortal Sun Studios in Memphis, Tennessee, where Sam Phillips has seen his tiny independent record label built in a refurbished auto parts store, explode. Cornerstone artist Elvis Presley has already gone Hollywood where he is making "terrible movies," Johnny Cash has become a bona fide country star who has signed to Columbia Records