

THE LAST CLAM

ClamGun

Dave Dixon: Drums, Vocals
Jason Heald: Bass, Vocals
Ron Stephens: Guitar, Vocals

Photo and CD layout: Mary Stephens
Edited, mixed, mastered and produced by Ron Stephens

It all started in 1986 when Kraig Hutchens asked if I would play Pedal Steel with Buckboard (aka the Chuckboys) "just for the summer". After 18 months of county fair corn dogs and all night rides in the Buck Truck we wound up at the Round-Up and Fart Boy headed to Nevada to help Bubba Raye build a career. The remaining three of us just kept rolling, working every cocktail lounge, cowboy saloon, nudist camp and fraternal lodge (always pausing at 11:00 to throb and swell) for the next 9 years. But nothing lasts forever. Jason became "Dr. J." and moved to Roseburg. Dave took a gig that paid real money, and I moved to Nashville. ClamGun had left the building.



Ron & Kraig Hutchens 2006



Ron Stephens • David Dixon • Jason Heald

So we stepped up and rode the rough edge clear to the finish line. Sure, we'd played better, tighter, and made less mistakes, but we'd never had more fun.

This, the first, last, and only ClamGun recording, documents the tip of the iceberg of our decade-plus post-Buckboard tenure. I hope you'll overlook the flaws and tune into the heart behind the music. Power Twang. Big and Loud. The way it's gotta be.

Ron Stephens, August 7, 2001

THE RECORDING

The entire performance was recorded live, in real time, by Bill Feldmann on June 13, 2001 at Big Bad Jon's Greasy Roots Roundup at the White Eagle Saloon in Portland, OR. The direct outs of the Mackie 1604 PA mixer were plugged directly to the inputs of an Alesis ADAT 8-track digital tape recorder. The ADAT was later transferred optically into a ProTools LE rig at Cozy Dog Recording in Vancouver, WA (thanks Tad!) for mixing and mastering. There were no overdubs, punch-ins, fixes or additional recording of any kind.



Bill Feldmann: Aural Scrutiny

THE SONGS

1. Loves Gonna Get You

We "learned" this Ricky Skaggs tune by listening to it once, in my car, between sets at the Westwood in Milwaukie, OR. It seemed like a good opener because it's quick, catchy, country and kinda greasy.

2. One Night With You

Dave always sings the pants off this one, and an Elvis tune seemed appropriate in keeping with the whole roots-rock thing. The distortion on the vocal at the beginning reveals that there was no sound check prior to starting our set. This was plug and play, thrash and bash, in it's purest form.

3. Texas Woman

Jason sings real low on this basic blues shuffle. If you'll realize that nothing about the solo sections on this tune are scripted, you'll be as amazed as we are that they seem to make sense. That was always a cool thing with ClamGun: whichever direction you went musically, you never had to worry about it because when you got there, the other two guys were there waiting for you. I love that.



4. Take Me To The River

They tell me this arrangement is nicked from Delbert McClinton, but I've never heard his version. I first heard this tune when we (Buckboard) opened a show for Juice Newton at the Roseland Theater in Portland around 1987. Since I didn't know the song, I pretended to play Pedal Steel but kept the volume pedal all the way off. Later, after Kraig left, I just fell into the guitar parts. If it sounds like somebody else's version, it must be because the tune dictates the parts. Some songs - the good ones - do that. (And I still haven't heard Delbert's version.)

5. Love Has No Pride

Eric Kaz. American Flyer. I wanna sing like Craig Fuller when I grow up. My almost new, high-tech, digital modeling amp began to fart and fizzle during this tune, so I just stopped playing. That Dave and Jason carry the tune with drums and bass should give you some idea of how great these guys are.



6. The Race Is On

God bless 'em, but we always felt that Soylent Green's assault on this George Jones classic was just shy of blasphemous. So we took it upon ourselves to set things right. It's all straight eights and Don Rich licks in the key of A. You can't have much more fun on a Telecaster than that.

7. Six Days On The Road

I suggested this one because I've always like the version on Last Of The Red Hot Burritos. Jason likes to sing it in F, but I can't play in F. If I sound lost, it's because I am. BTW: Is Dave Dudley really dead? I gotta start reading the paper.

8. What Do You Want The Girl To Do

Lowell George. Allen Toussaint. 'Nuff said. My apologies for this not measuring up to Lowell's definitive cover on "Thanks, I'll Eat It Here", but I love singing it. This one was just for me.

9. All That You Dream

Little Feat changed my life. Thanks B.F. for turning me on to "Sailin' Shoes" (and Chivas Regal) way back when. As with all the songs we play, we never rehearsed this Paul Barrere number. We just tried it one night and it felt good. After that, this song was the highlight of my night at every gig we ever played. I copped the first half of the Bill Payne solo directly from "The Last Record Album". It is one of the most challenging pieces I've ever tackled, and I'm pleased that it seemed to fall right in to place this night. And pay attention to Dave and Jason. Sheesh! These guys slay me.

10. Hits Medley

This is a legacy from the Buckboard days with Kraig Hutchens. He would play the intro - and only the intro - to every classic rock song ever written. Talk about sore-face funny. At the opening notes of a classic hit the crowd would rise as one and charge the dance floor en masse, only to be left dangling mid-step. But then another favorite would ring out - and stop. Kraig could do this for hours. We only did a few as our tip of the hat to Chuckboy number one.

11. The Banner

Jason wrote this three part arrangement and taught it to Dave and I under a tree just before a gig at Blue Lake Park several years ago. As we reviewed this in the parking lot right before our set, we realized that too much preparation could work against us. This is all muscle memory and instinct. Nice arrangement J-Bob.

12. Life In The Fast Lane

I was worried that the hardcore roots-rockers would scoff at this Eagles tune. But apparently they recognized the Spinal Tap influence on this old Joe Walsh lick and went with the flow. I went sideways getting into the solo (or was that jazz?), but when we hit the last verse the crowd was still with us. Wrap it up with a Beatles nod during the rave up (did you catch that?) and cap it off with "Disco Strangler" and, of course, "Earache My Eye" and call it a night. A good time was had by all.



THANKS

"Big Bad" Jon Koonce (that's the way it's gotta be). Bill Feldmann and Ken Scandlyn at Slip Slide. Tad Suckling at Cozy Dog. Kraig Hutchens. John Bunzow. Jim "Redford" Sanders. Jay "Bird" Koder and Don Gallup. The fans and friends that followed us around for the better part of 12 years. (When's the next last gig ever?)