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CALL FOR WRITERS: *PopMatters* has a few select **Columnist positions** available. Deadline for submissions is Sunday, 13 November.

JOHNNY CASH
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THE BELL RAYS

The BellRays @ the Barfly [DVD]

(Music Video Distributors/Punkervision)

Rating: 8

US release date: 25 October 2005

UK release date: Available as import

by Adam Williams

PopMatters Associate Columns and Music Editor

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Too Cool for School

The term *old school* has become a part of the lexicon, and is used to describe something that bears a romantic hint of nostalgia, but retains a present day hipness. Whether referring to athletic jerseys or motorcycles, the concept of *what is old, is new again* dominates the pop cultural landscape, often to the point of gratuitous inclusion. In a musical context, there are numerous artists being hailed (usually by self-serving record companies) as throwbacks to a time when rock 'n' roll was about spirit and rebellion, and little else. Not surprising, most of these pretenders are simply over-hyped and underwhelming, representing carefully marketed *style* rather than *substance*. As such, the presence of the fabulous BellRays is an electrifying blast from the past; the quintessential old school band, embodying an authentic punk esthetic and a hard rock pedigree, with an infusion of genuine R&B.

Existing in various incarnations for nearly 15 years, the BellRays continue to build on a reputation of explosive live performances, while flying below the fickle radar screen of the mainstream. That's not necessarily a bad



TODAY'S MUSIC

CD REVIEWS

[Wednesday, 9.Nov.05]

- :: Bobby Bare: *The Moon Was Blue*
- :: Early Man: *Closing In*
- :: The Crimea: *Tragedy Rocks*
- :: Bantu featuring Ayuba: *Fuji Satisfaction*
- :: The Dials: *Flex Time*
- :: The Campbell Brothers: *Can You Feel It?*
- :: Bliss: *Quiet Letters (U.S.Edition)*
- :: Various: *Jamie Oldaker's Mad Dogs & Okies*

[RECENT CD REVIEWS]

CONCERT REVIEWS

[Wednesday, 9.Nov.05]

Cat Power + Dexter Romweber

18.Oct.05: Memphis, TN

On an "off" night Chan Marshall's antics piss off more people than they win over. But what about an on night?

[RECENT CONCERT REVIEWS]

10/08/2005

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thing, as BellRays' fans can still maintain "ownership" of the group, while those unfamiliar with the band can expect a jolting, albeit immensely enjoyable, surprise. The new DVD, *@ the Barfly*, will appeal to both factions, as it captures the band in prime live form during an April 2005 stop-off at London's Camden Barfly club. It is an hour-long dose of full throttle fun, as the band blasts through its set list with nary a moment's rest.

Clearly, the focal point of the BellRays is singer Lisa Kekaula. Her smolderingly soulful vocals and commanding stage presence convey a "take no prisoners" attitude, as she belts out song after song, with a palpable ballsiness that grabs the audience by its collective throat. Backing Kekaula are guitarist Tony Fate (who should be charged with assault for manhandling his Gibson SG), bassist Bob Vennum and drummer Craig Waters (teaming to provide scorching rhythms), all channeling enough rage and power to shake the Barfly's foundation.

The band has always defied accurate classification, as it is a true amalgam of divergent artistic styles, and the Barfly performance does little to narrow down who and what the BellRays are. Falling somewhere between Sonic's *Rendezvous* and a polished version of the Stooges, with hints of the Ramones and Sly Stone, Kekaula and Company careen their way through 18 songs, most of which are the aural equivalent of a demolition derby. "Voodoo Train" is the first salvo of a steady bludgeoning, rapidly segueing into "Pay the Cobra", "Change the World" and "Sister Disaster". The onslaught doesn't let up until the midpoint of the set; at the halfway mark, "Making Up For Lost Time" deviates from the hard-charging punk blueprint, as the band offers up some classic soul, only to follow with the ultra-funky "Tell a Lie" (which would fit comfortably on Isaac Hayes' *Shaft* soundtrack).

The whirlwind continues with "Beginning From the End", highlighted by Fate's distinctive fretwork, then takes another momentary detour (two songs later) via the loping tribal stomp of "Lost Disciples". Any semblance of order is quickly lost however, as the band veers out of control with "Remember" as Kekaula looks to her mates, imploring them to, "Bring it down, I wanna make sure these motherfuckers are listening to me tonight!". Listening indeed, to every word and note the BellRays are generating.

The final three songs, "Fire on the Moon", "Revolution Get Down" and "Startime", close the set as it opened, at a blistering pace of unbridled energy and power chords. This is one of those shows that leaves everyone, artist and audience, completely exhausted, and provides ample proof of the band's prowess on stage. It is well worth the price of admission if you're lucky enough to catch the BellRays live; if not, then *@ the Barfly* is mandatory viewing for any/everyone who remembers music from a simpler, more honest time.

And the BellRays couldn't be more honest in their presentation: no slick

I don't mean @*#&%*\$ in a disrespectful way...



THE
BOONDOCKS
SUNDAYS @ 11P
[adult swim]

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RECENT MUSIC

In bold are PopMatters Picks, the best in new music.

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Angels of Light & Akron/

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American Princes

Animal Collective

John Arnold

Atmosphere

Babyshambles

The Bats

Andy Bell

The Beta Band

Blackalicious

Bloodhound Gang

Boards of Canada

Brakes

Breakestra

Broadcast

Broken Social Scene

Vashti Bunyan

Uri Caine & Bedrock

Cartel

Johnny Cash

The Clientele

John Coltrane

Constantines

Shemekia Copeland

Lula Côrtes & Zé

Lynn Miles

Modeselektor

Mouse on Mars

Moutin Reunion Quartet

Múm

My Morning Jacket

The New

Pornographers

Mark O'Connor & Nadja

Salerno-Sonnenberg

Arturo O'Farrill

Old Time Relijun

Omega One

Ewan Pearson

Liz Phair

Portastatic

Public Enemy

Tim Ries

Rogue Wave

The Rosebuds

Scratch Perverts

Senor Coconut

Sigur Rós

Silver Jews

Simply Red

Soulive

Eddie Spaghetti

Sufjan Stevens

Marty Stuart

Super Furry Animals

marketing campaign or corporate image... just amped up, ass kicking, old school rocking and rolling.

Let the BellRays take you on a wild ride... going back to school has never been as much fun.

— 8 November 2005

Ramalho

Curumin

The Dandy Warhols

Danger Doom

The Deadly Snakes

Death Cab For Cutie

Deerhoof

Defunkt

Dengue Fever

Dirty Three

The Double

The Earlies

Mark Eitzel

The Fiery Furnaces

Tim Fite

FM3

For a Decade of Sin: 11

Years of Bloodshot

Records

Jason Forrest

Franz Ferdinand

Richard Galliano New

York Trio

Gang of Four

Gilles Peterson Digs

America: Brownswood

U.S.A.

Jimmie Dale Gilmore

The Go! Team

Goldfrapp

Goldie

David Gray

The Happy Bullets

Harvey Danger

Isaac Hayes

Hella

Michael Holland

Emmanuel Jal and

Abdel Gadir Salim

Calvin Johnson

Seu Jorge

Kurupt

Ladytron

Mark Lemhouse

Little Brother

Living Things

The Lovemakers

The Magic Numbers

Magnolia Electric Co.

Marah

Paul McCartney

Meat Beat Manifesto

Supergrass

Tangiers

t.A.T.u

Otis Taylor

Total 6

Twista

Bebo Valdés

Venetian Snares

Kanye West

Why?

Gretchen Wilson

Wolf Parade

Stevie Wonder

Wooden Wand & the

Vanishing Voice

Susumu Yokota &

Rothko

Young Jeezy

CONCERT REVIEWS

Akron/Family + Great

Lake Swimmers

Arthurfest: Day 2

Black Rebel Motorcycle

Club

Coheed and Cambria +

The Blood Brothers

Neil Diamond

Drive-By Truckers

Dungen

The Gravel Pit

Green Day

Sharon Jones and the

Dap-Kings

Jamie Lidell

Stephen Malkmus & The

Jicks

Metric

Bob Mould Band

Nada Surf + Shivaree +

Koester

The National + Clap

Your Hands Say Yeah

Willie Nelson

Pop Montréal

Ris Paul Ric

Jimmy Scott + Savion

Glover

Sigur Rós

Stellastarr* + Giant

Drag

The White Stripes +

The Shins + Brendan

Metric
Mew

Benson
Wilco
Wolf Eyes

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